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These manuscripts have been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the International Council of Professors of Educational Leadership as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of school leadership and K-12 education.

From the Editors

This issue of *Education Leadership Review* is published at a time during which many states are in conflict about the pay and working conditions of teachers and the funding of schools. While there is division among many, *Education Leadership Review* is an avenue through which to share knowledge and ideas. We believe that even in a time of educational turmoil, the diligent work of educational leadership professors will help to strengthen our schools and universities.

In this edition, Vicki Van Tuyle examined Illinois assistant principals' perception of themselves as instructional leaders and how they responded to their job responsibilities as instructional leaders or as disciplinarians. In her article, "Illinois Assistant Principals: Instructional Leaders or Disciplinarians," she reported findings from interviews and observations that suggested that few assistant principals who handled discipline issues expressed or exhibited protection of instructional time.

In "Practices that Support Leadership Succession and Principal Retention," Amie Cieminski reported a qualitative study in which she examined the succession practices of five large school districts in Colorado by gathering the perspectives of principals and school district leaders. The findings indicated several actions that educational leaders can take to address the challenges of well-qualified candidates and the do-ability of the principal position.

In "Comparing Perceptions of Dual-Role Administrators and Teachers Regarding the Effectiveness of Dual-Role Administrators in a Rural State," David De Jong sought to impart advice to school districts that, due to budgetary limitations, combined superintendent and principal positions. His results indicated that the districts that implemented dual-role administrative structures often had enrollments that were lower than the median enrollment of districts in the state. According to the author, dual-role administrators did not support combining positions and the perceptions of role focus differed between teachers and administrators.

In "The Relationship Between School District Instructional Related Expenditures to State Exam Scores in Small, Mid-Size, and Large School Districts in Texas," Robert Nicks, Gary Martin, Tilisa Thibodeaux, and J. Kenneth Young conducted a secondary analysis of data collected by the state of Texas to provide insight into the relationship between instructional related expenditures by Texas school districts and district-wide student performance on state mandated standardized tests. The authors found that regardless of the size school district, only two variables had a meaningful relationship.

Marlena Bravender, in her article, "Using Interactive, Problem-based Simulations in a Mentoring Program for Novice School Leaders," provided findings from her qualitative study exploring how practicing administrators perceived their interactions with simulations imbedded in an existing mentoring program. What she discovered not only provides some great insight for internships in principal preparation programs, but also has possibilities for ongoing professional development for school administrators.

Charles L. Lowery, Michael E. Hess, Sara L. Hartman, Christopher Kennedy, and Imran Mazid, in their article “Establishing Partnership Spaces: Reflections of Educational Leaders on Founding Professional Development Schools,” examined the perceptions of school leaders of rural districts regarding creating and sustaining school-university partnerships with a regional university. The authors discovered themes that centered on partnership development and importance and emphasized mutual trust between partners.

In their article titled “The Influence of Emotional Intelligence on the Overall Success of Campus Leaders as Perceived by Veteran Teachers in a Rural Mid-sized East Texas Public School District,” Gregory Bower, Johnny O'Connor, Sandra Harris, and Ed Frick interviewed teachers to examine their perceptions of the impact of emotional intelligence on school leaders’ success. The authors found that the school leaders who showed signs of higher emotional intelligence were perceived to be more effective.

Ted Creighton is the founding editor of the *Education Leadership Review* and an NCPEA (now ICPEL) Living Legend, as well as a past Executive Director. In his article, “Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants, Digital Learners: An International Empirical Integrative Review of the Literature,” Creighton looked to the future to focus on meaningful technology terms. He made recommendations based on the literature for educators to improve learning in the digital environment.

The authors of the articles in this edition of *Education Leadership Review* extend and enrich the conversation about quality education as they share findings that contribute research-based ideas to help educators in the battle for quality experiences for students.

Yours in education,

Casey Graham Brown

Sandra Harris

Kenneth Young

Editors, *Education Leadership Review*

Illinois Assistant Principals: Instructional Leaders or Disciplinarians

Vicki L. VanTuyle

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The purpose of this study was to determine the degree to which assistant principals perceive themselves to be instructional leaders and the degree to which they respond to their job responsibilities as instructional leaders or as disciplinarians. Data were collected from Illinois assistant principals invited to complete the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) (Hallinger, 1982, 1990) and from assistant principals who volunteered to be interviewed and to be observed at work for a day. Analyses of PIMRS responses yielded the highest means in Supervise and Evaluate Instruction and Protect Instructional Time. Findings from interviews and observations supported the survey results with a majority of principals engaged in supervision and evaluation of instruction. However, few assistant principals who handled discipline issues expressed or exhibited protection of instructional time.

Contextual Framework

Heyde (2013) noted that in 2010, Illinois lawmakers signed legislation that reformed teacher and principal evaluation through the Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) (Milanowski, et al., n.d.). PERA required districts to establish evaluation systems that assessed teacher and principal performance measured by student growth. This wave of reform was focused on the provision of exemplary instruction in the classroom and ensuring that principals were knowledgeable and trained in evaluating teachers' classroom instruction, both of which would lead to higher levels of student achievement in Illinois schools. Implementation of PERA substantially increased principal and assistant principal duties and responsibilities in Illinois schools.

Since August 2010, the researcher and author of this paper has been teaching in the Educational Leadership Department at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) and has spent significant time in the principal preparation program redesign, the redesigned program's implementation, and in the continuous improvement and evaluation of the program. In the role as an instructor in principal preparation courses, the author has heard from students how principals and assistant principals spend their time. An introductory activity in the entry course to the principal preparation program asks students to submit a list of the three most typical reasons students are sent from a classroom to be seen by the principal or assistant principal in their school building. Generally, the students identify these reasons as discipline issues. Typical lists might include: not doing work, not prepared for class, dress code violation, and cell phone usage. When lists are aggregated, discussed, and analyzed, the students are quick to see dress code violation and cell phone usage related to school policies, procedures, and practices—both of which seem to be poor reasons for a student to be sent to the office and to miss classroom instruction. In addition, the students are quick to assert that sending students to the office for not doing work and not being prepared for class may not be a matter of discipline issues but instructional issues instead. The students suggest that a lack of engagement in class work may be the result of academic deficiencies or social-emotional conflicts. Students may also be ill-prepared due to the lack of home and family resources. The class suggests that these students may not feel as though they are a part of the school community and that these students perhaps would rather not be in class. How an assistant principal views or understands the reason a student is sent from the classroom to the office--either as a student's discipline issue or as a teacher's instructional improvement issue--may be the tipping point between an assistant principal assuming the role of disciplinarian or the role of instructional leader.

In an article about assistant principals from several decades ago, Collins (1976), presented the notion that assistant principals were always antagonists when receiving students sent to the office for discipline referrals, despite the fact the teachers who sent the students to the office may have been the first antagonists with the students. The author asserted, "One area which merits some consideration is the role of the teacher in causing some discipline situations" (p. 65). Collins recommended in-service training for teachers to learn to monitor their verbal interactions with students, moving away from teacher-centered statements toward more student-centered statements. Once teachers had mastered positive student-centered conversations, the author contended that classroom instruction would follow in the same student-centered approach, which would in turn, diminish the discipline referrals.

A few years later, in an article about the work of secondary assistant principals, Reed and Himmler (1985) asserted that the position of assistant principal represented the status of a school with regard to wealth, size, and complexity. The authors added, "...the position of assistant principal stands as a public testimony that a school is having problems serious enough to warrant a full-time administrator who serves as school disciplinarian" (p. 59). Their research concluded the assistant principal's responsibility was to maintain organizational stability through the control of students not the improvement of instruction. The authors described the practices of these assistant principals for maintaining organizational stability, in three areas, monitoring, support, and remediation. All three areas focused solely on conforming student actions and behaviors to school rules, while ignoring any need to monitor school processes, implementation of policies, instruction in classrooms, academic, social, and emotional engagement of students, or to remediate any teacher's instructional practices. The evaluation of teachers was noted as "not central to the assistant principals' daily work" (p. 79).

With these references as a backdrop, the study explored three questions. First, to what extent do assistant principals perceive themselves to be instructional leaders or the disciplinarian? Next, to what degree do assistant principals act as instructional leaders compared to acting as managers of student discipline or as managers of adherence to policies, practices, and procedures? Finally, to what degree do assistant principals perceive themselves to be instructional leaders who can influence what happens in the school or in a classroom as opposed to acting on or dealing with what has happened in the school or in a classroom?

Review of Relevant Literature

According to the National Association of Elementary School Principals (1970), the assistant principal position came into being in the late 1800s when urban school enrollments were growing. As enrollments increased, so did the number of managerial duties of the typical school's head master or principal. The assistant to the principal was created to assume many of these duties to support the principal or to substitute for the principal in his absence. One of the first studies delving into who assistant principals were and what they did was for a master's thesis by Schroeder (1925). She summarized her research in a journal article, making a point that remains relevant today. One of her research questions asked, "Is the assistant principal really an assistant primarily or is he or she virtually an assistant to the principal?" (p. 396). Her research described the assistant principal duties as managerial, clerical, or "easily delegated" (p. 395), clearly indicating that the assistant principal was an assistant to the principal. In the conclusion to her article, Schroeder proposed, "The position of the assistant principal should be rendered truly professional. The necessary qualifications and the duties assigned should be of such character as to dignify the office" (p. 399).

It was not until 1970 that the role and responsibilities of the assistant principal assumed national attention with the publication of *The Assistant Principals in Public Elementary Schools—1969: A Research Study*, published by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP, 1970), then, an affiliate of the National Education Association (NEA). This national study was comprehensive in reporting characteristics, experience, preparation, working conditions, functions and financial status of assistant principals. The study delved into four specialty areas of assistant principal work: pupil

personnel (which included student discipline and student guidance), supervision, curriculum development, and public relations. Assistant principals were asked where among these areas they had major responsibilities and where they preferred to work. Nearly two-thirds of respondents cited major responsibilities in the pupil personnel area while only 24% cited major responsibilities in supervision of instruction. When asked in which responsibility area they preferred to specialize, 48% preferred specialization in supervision of instruction, while slightly less than one-fifth preferred pupil personnel (pp. 53-54).

There has been an increase of interest in the role and responsibilities of assistant principals in the 21st century. In a study of the socialization of new vice-principals, Armstrong (2010) reported a disturbing finding, "The pervasive pressure of these socialization tactics forced them to comply with normative expectations of the vice-principalship as a custodial disciplinary role and violated their professional rights" (p. 685). Many comments from vice-principals who participated in this study supported the notion of being trapped in the role of disciplinarian. While some vice-principals desired to step out of the role of disciplinarian into a role of instructional leader, they were discouraged. One vice-principal said, "People who raise questions and challenge the system are more likely to be seen as misfits than as potential leaders" (p. 691). Another vice-principal suggested he was forced "to conform to traditional expectations of vice-principals as 'enforcers,' 'firefighters,' and 'problem-solvers'" (p. 702). Predominantly, vice-principals felt they were not considered worthy of being in the classroom but were relegated to the lunchroom, hallways, and office. Sadly, another vice-principal concluded, "What I am finding is that the talents that were being underutilized were not necessarily appropriate to the job, so I've had to mourn the loss" (p. 706).

From Armstrong's (2009) extensive research into the professional passage from teacher to assistant principal came several recommendations which must come from "procedural and policy changes which reconfigure the assistant principalship as a substantive leadership role and connect it to school improvement and organizational change" (p. 126). As early as 1929, Professor Barr of the Department of Education, University of Wisconsin, skillfully set forth the idea that supervision of instruction for school supervisors meant "the direct improvement of instruction"..., "...a matter of diagnosing teaching situations and the planning of remedial programs..." and "...the direct improvement of teachers..." (pp. 142-143). This early definition appears to have endured the test of time.

Since the late 1970s, instructional leaders and instructional leadership have been terms associated with the principals. The importance of principals as instructional leaders was supported by Edmonds' (1979) research in Detroit's urban schools in the late 1970s. The term instructional leadership had early mention in research conducted by Brookover and Lezotte (1979), who found that improving elementary schools overcame their students' achievement deficits through having beliefs in their students' ability to achieve. In the improving schools, the principal's instructional leadership was key to this success. This research led to the creation of Lezotte's (2009), *Correlates of Effective Schools* which identified Instructional Leadership as the first correlate.

Instructional leadership became a desirable competency for principals and assistant principals following effective schools research. Shifting the focus for assistant principals from discipline to instructional practices was recommended by Greenfield (1985). The set of interventions mentioned had these expected outcomes:

to develop and institutionalize a school-based capacity for work-centered problem-solving activities that are pursued cooperatively and collaboratively by teachers and administrators, that reflect a continuous and action-oriented concern by school participants regarding how to improve instructional practices and learning outcomes, and that provides an ongoing cycle of renewal and development for individuals, instructional programs, and more broadly, the school as an educative community. (p. 87)

Despite the research touting the importance of instructional leadership, few assistant principals throughout the decade of the 1980s acted as instructional leaders. Pellicer, Anderson, Keefe, Kelley, and McCleary (1990) published a report about high school principals. In this study competent principals were identified. Their schools were visited, and interviews and observations were conducted among the faculty and administrators at these schools. One of three primary research questions in this study concerned the administrative team's definition of instructional leadership and how it was operationalized. During their observation, the authors identified an important characteristic of instructional leadership in improving schools, where instructional leadership was a shared responsibility. Researchers noted department chairpersons carried the mantle of instructional leadership with principals only stepping in when there were instructional problems. And finally, while assistant principals were mentioned throughout as members of the administrative team who were assumed to share responsibility in instructional leadership, they often were delegated authority in a specific area, for instance text selection.

While national organizations for principals recommended a role change for assistant principals, there were also pleas for change from aspiring assistant principals and assistant principals in the field. In an *Education Week* commentary, titled "A Wasted Reform Resource: The Assistant Principal" (Hassenpflug, 1990), who had interviewed for an assistant principal position, asserted that her graduate preparation in theories, research, instruction, supervision, data analysis, program development, and evaluation would go to waste as her responsibilities included discipline and numerous mundane duties. She suggested "the assistant principal's job should be made more intellectually challenging"..."one that contributes directly to school improvement and increased student achievement" (p. 23).

Likewise, in an article about effective assistant principals, Calabrese (1991) made a bold argument for assistant principals to become activists to establish a role change from disciplinarian to instructional leader. He related a personal story about his experience as an assistant principal, where he posited that regardless of what skills he demonstrated as an instructional leader, he continued to be regarded as the school disciplinarian. Most valuable in this particular article was Calabrese's summation of the role he contended assistant principals should realize every day, "...there is nothing that the assistant principal does that is unrelated to the school's educational mission" (p. 56). He painted a picture of the assistant principal as instructional leader with these words: "Effective assistant principals recognize that instructional leadership is involved in discipline, staff development, supervision, student activity programs, community relations, or curriculum development" (p. 54).

Kaplan and Owings (1999) made the case for shared instructional leadership in schools which would require principals to accept redefining the role of the assistant principal. The authors suggested that assistant principals must be involved in stewarding the vision of the school, coaching and evaluating teachers, scheduling, developing, and managing instruction. The authors concluded their article with these statements, "Many

assistant principals have the interest and the capacity to promote positive student achievement in their schools. Assistant principals can become key instructional leaders able to substantially help principals increase student achievement” (p. 92).

The new accountability measures, new definitions of instructional leadership, and new standards for the preparation of and for the evaluation of school leaders had an impact on the preparation of principals and assistant principals throughout the nation in the late 2000s, presumably changing from a managerial focus to an instructional leadership focus. For example, Searby, Browne-Ferrigno, and Wang (2016) conducted a recent study of assistant principals’ readiness as instructional leaders in Alabama schools and found that 60% of respondents indicated being ‘ready’ or ‘very ready’ for the 50% or more of their time spent on instructional leadership. Surprisingly, more than 60% of the respondents reported not knowing the impact of instructional leadership performance on their evaluations.

As the preparation of school leaders has moved from management toward instructional leadership, research reflects enduring challenges that limit assistant principals in their ability to be instructional leaders. Little has changed in the last 30 years to promote and sustain assistant principals as instructional leaders.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to determine the degree to which assistant principals perceive themselves to be instructional leaders and the degree to which they respond to their job responsibilities as instructional leaders or as disciplinarians. The study utilized mixed-methods, which included a web-based assessment of assistant principals’ perceptions of instructional management, interviews with assistant principals and observations of assistant principals in the field.

Instrumentation

The survey instrument used in this study was created by Hallinger (1982, 1990), the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS). The PIMRS was chosen because it has been used in numerous research studies and dissertations in the last three decades and has been proven as a reliable and valid data collection tool. The PIMRS assesses ten categories of Job Functions. Each category has a set of items introduced with the stem “To what extent do you....”. Respondents select one of the following responses with corresponding point value: Almost Always, 5; Frequently, 4; Sometimes, 3; Seldom, 2; and Almost Never, 1. The categories of Job Functions are aggregated into three dimensions of instructional management: Defining the School Mission, Managing the Instructional Program, and Developing the School Learning Climate Program. The survey’s reliability was established by Hallinger (Hallinger, 2010, p. 8) through internal consistency of 10 function sets in the three subscales of the instrument with Cronbach’s alphas ranging from .78 to .90 among the items. The following table represents the conceptual framework of the PIMRS (Hallinger & Wang, 2015, p. 28).

Table 1
PIMRS Conceptual Framework

Dimensions	<i>Defining the School Mission</i>	<i>Managing the Instructional Program</i>	<i>Developing the School Climate Program</i>
Instructional Leadership Functions	I. Frame the school Goals II. Communicate the school goals	III. Supervise & evaluate instruction IV. Coordinate the curriculum V. Monitor student progress	VI. Protect instructional time VII. Maintain high visibility VIII. Provide incentives for teachers IX. Promote professional development X. Provide incentives for learning

Mention should be made of Hallinger's use of the term instructional management. Hallinger (2010), credited Bossert and colleagues (1982) with defining instructional management, the term Hallinger used in the PIMRS and continues to use in the PIMRS. Hallinger noted that the term instructional leadership has become a more acceptable term in the field of educational leadership. Hallinger described the difference between the terms as such:

...the formal distinction between these conceptual terms lies in the sources of power and means proposed to achieve results. Instructional *leadership* became the preferred term because of the recognition that principals who operate from this frame of reference rely more on expertise and influence than on formal authority and power to achieve a positive and lasting impact on staff motivation and behavior and student learning. (Hallinger, 2010, pp. 275-276)

An interview protocol was developed to delve deeper into respondents' self-assessment of instructional management behaviors as reported by the PIMRS instrument. Some interview questions were based upon statements used in a questionnaire found in an article by Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman (1970) titled "Role Conflict and Ambiguity in Complex Organizations" (p. 156).

An observation protocol from a previous study of assistant principals, the *1970 Report of the Assistant Principalship*, (Austin & Brown, 1970) was approved for use and for modification. The purpose of the observations of assistant principals in their buildings was to explore typical daily actions of assistant principals interacting with administrators, faculty, teachers, parents, and students, which provided a snapshot in time.

Procedures

The EIS Public Dataset 2016 of all public school employees in Illinois, available from the Illinois State Board of Education was used to determine the assistant principals for the study. All school employees other than Assistant Principals of Elementary, High School and Unit districts were removed from the EIS dataset. The assistant principal dataset was organized according to Illinois Association of School Administrators' three geographical Super Regions: Northcentral, Northeastern, and Southern. For this study, the Northcentral and Southern Region assistant principals were selected as participants in this research based upon the facts that follow. First, the number of districts with assistant principals represented in the Northcentral Region and the Southern Region were similar in number, respectively, 96 and 97 districts. Second, district enrollment information from Illinois Interactive Report Card (IIRC) district and school report cards, demonstrated a similar distribution of districts when organized by enrollment. Geographically, the Northcentral and Southern Regions encompass nearly four-fifths of the state's territory and represent the diversity of public school in Illinois. With these facts considered, the Northeastern Super Region which includes Chicago Public Schools was excluded from the study's population. Email addresses were obtained for the assistant principals by consulting district and school websites or by making phone or email contact when necessary.

The PIMRS assessment was transposed to Qualtrics. A link to the Qualtrics survey was embedded in an email message sent in late August 2017 to 468 assistant principals in the database. The survey closed on Tuesday, October 3, 2017. Ultimately, 453 emails in the database received the survey. Survey participation represented 109 respondents, a 24% participation rate. As surveys were completed, contact was made with respondents who expressed interest in participating in an interview and/or an observation. Seventeen interviews and six observations were conducted with assistant principals who volunteered.

Limitations

Participation in the PIMRS survey, interviews, and observations was voluntary. Survey fatigue may have contributed to individuals choosing not to participate in the survey. Obtaining permission for an on-site observation in a school district may have been an obstacle for some assistant principals. Observations of assistant principals were scheduled in advance. If individuals in the school had advanced knowledge of the visit, this may have affected their engagement with the assistant principal for the day.

Findings

In the Findings, AP will be used for assistant principal. For this paper, limited descriptive statistics of the PIMRS are reported. A future paper will provide more specific analysis of PIMRS results. A triangulation of predominant themes from survey results, interview responses, and observation notes served as the framework for the analysis of data.

PIMRS

The PIMRS survey results were analyzed to determine the job functions with the highest mean scores. Themes from the interview responses and from the observation notes were compared with the PIMRS results to find alignment of their perceptions, their stated beliefs, and their actions. The following table represents the number, range, mean, and standard deviation of participant responses for each of the 10 Job Functions in the PIMRS.

Table 2
Descriptive statistics of PIMRS for Job Functions

PIMRS Job Function	N	M	SD	Variance
I. Frame School Goals	103	3.6621	.93433	.873
II. Communicate the School Goals	101	3.3604	.81683	.667
III. Supervise and Evaluate Instruction	96	3.8979	.67246	.452
IV. Coordinate the Curriculum	96	3.4125	.88297	.780
V. Monitor Student Progress	96	3.2245	.82816	.686
VI. Protect Instructional Time	95	3.8189	.66529	.443
VII. Maintain High Visibility	95	3.5621	.52616	.277
VIII. Provide Incentives for Teachers	95	3.1853	.69297	.480
IX. Promote Professional Development	94	3.6755	.84798	.719
X. Provide Incentives for Learning	94	3.1745	.90172	.813

Quoting from Hallinger and Wang's book (2015) "...the PIMRS is used to assess the extent of the principal's engagement in the practices that comprise the instructional leadership role" (p. 54). The authors contended that "...even the most effective principals do not necessarily score '5' on all subscales of the PIMRS" (p. 54). They added, "Mean scores of 4 and above should, therefore, be treated as indicators of 'high engagement'" (p. 54). The mean scores from respondents in this study would indicate engagement in each of the 10 job functions. The job functions with the highest mean scores are Supervise and Evaluate Instruction $m=3.8979$ and Protect Instructional Time $m=3.8189$. These functions became the subjects of further analysis with themes from interviews and observations.

Hallinger (n.d.) provided research-based descriptions of these two job functions, edited for space:

"SUPERVISION AND EVALUATION OF INSTRUCTION – to ensure that the goals of the school are being translated into practice at the classroom level...coordinating the classroom objectives of teachers with those of the school and evaluating classroom instruction...providing instructional support to teachers and monitoring classroom instruction...(Levine, 1982; Lipham, 1981; New York State, 1974)" (p. 3).

"PROTECTING INSTRUCTIONAL TIME – ...uninterrupted work time...classroom management and instructional skills are not used to the greatest effect if teachers are frequently interrupted by announcements, tardy students, and requests from the office...development and enforcement of school-wide policies related to the

interruption of classroom learning time (Bossert et al., 1982; Stallings, 1980; Stallings & Mohlman, 1981, Wynne, 1980)" (p. 3).

Interviews

Nineteen APs expressed interest in responding to interview questions, while only 17 committed to the interview process. Of the 17, 10 were high school APs, three were middle or junior high school APs, and four were elementary APs. Eight APs served in suburban school districts; six APs served in town districts; and three APs served in rural districts.

Responsibilities. The first interview question asked if the APs knew their responsibilities and if so, what they were. Discipline was identified as a primary responsibility for 11 of the 17 APs interviewed. Among these respondents five of them included attendance, absences, tardies, and truancy as a group of disciplinary issues for which they were responsible. Evaluation of teacher performance, was noted as a significant responsibility for most of the APs. Eight of the APs evaluate teacher performance for 10 or more teachers per year.

There were other responsibilities cited by some of the APs that were associated with instructional leadership. Two high school APs clarified how their approach to discipline was linked to instructional leadership. One said, "Last year we had an initiative to improve building relationships, measured by the number of student issues sent to the office from teachers' classrooms. About 80% of these issues can be solved with better relationships and understanding between teachers and students." Another said, "Fifty-one percent of my job is instructional leadership. We are trained in Valentine's engaged learning which works on the importance of relationships between teachers and students."

Among the responses from the remaining APs, seven made statements that they "help with," "contribute to," or "participate in." Others made stronger cases of instructional leadership responsibilities. One AP referenced a grant that allowed him to implement a social-emotional learning program for early learners and hire a counselor in his school. He commented, "We are seeing the impact of this program, when kids self-regulate we have fewer discipline problems. It has become a natural process, not a stand-alone program." Another AP said, "I'm all over programming in the school, any mentor programs, anything that goes with character education. I do both mentoring for students and for teachers. These are my main duties." An elementary AP, noted important work with School Improvement Plans, implementation and stewardship of reading program, and weekly teacher meetings regarding student progress.

Another elementary AP stated her job responsibilities very succinctly, "Supervise instruction, provide to staff professional development, build relationships between community and us, and to provide the best education for my students." Among other individual responses were responsibilities related to supervision of students, transportation, mandated testing, weekly communications, and student handbooks.

Autonomy and authority. The next interview question was posed to discern the AP's perception of autonomy relating to their responsibilities, questioning if an AP's autonomy is influenced at the school level by the principal or at the district or board level. A prevalent theme among the APs was one of having autonomy to carry out responsibilities.

Most of the APs interviewed expressed a high degree of autonomy in their schools and districts. One claimed a "stated belief is 'we recommend, board hires.'" He went on to

say, "If it got to the point that I would have to recommend dismissal, the response to me would be, 'That's why we hired you.'" There were individual responses of "no autonomy," "limited, but improving autonomy," and "autonomy only in discipline."

The autonomy question led to asking if the AP's responsibility and authority with teacher performance evaluation are supported at the building and district level. A hypothetical situation followed by a question that drilled down to the heart of the issue. The situation: A student is sent to your office for a classroom discipline issue, which in your estimation is an issue related to classroom instruction or management that needed improvement. The question: Do you have the authority through teacher conferencing, teacher evaluation, or teacher remediation, to ensure improvement in the classroom will be achieved? Four of the APs interviewed had no responsibility to informally or formally evaluate teacher performance. Among the APs that had teacher evaluation responsibilities, only one identified with having no support for teacher improvement saying, "I may make recommendations, they may not be given attention. At least I know I have been honest and done my job. I can often encourage and see improvements. I wish we were given more backup with regard to teacher improvement through the evaluation process." Twelve APs indicated they have the authority to ensure teacher improvement to a limited degree. Some of these assertions of authority were weak and not very formidable. Among their responses were these statements: "I try to address things," "I try to step in and provide guidance and support for teachers," and "We expect our teachers to make changes in the learning environment." Other principals spoke extensively, in sharp contrast to the previous remarks, illuminating a theme of instructional leadership which is supported by the authority to act and to get results.

One AP said, "I have been in a position of having to assume authority for a teacher dismissal. Our approach is to hire well." He went on to explain the school system, "PBIS drives our student expectations, in the school, on the bus, and in the classroom." About teacher improvement he mentioned conferences with teachers asking about what to do differently, how to help students be successful, and what accommodations can be used. He employs peer observations. He asks teachers rated as excellent, "Have you met your ceiling?"

Another AP said, "In my first year, we dismissed two teachers as a result of poor evaluations. One reason for this is I have the responsibility and the authority....Teaching is relationship-driven. We recently had a social-emotional wellness workshop to remind teachers to think of the whole student. I check for retention of and action on PD with exit slips and follow up at faculty meetings with discussion of the application."

A high school AP assured me of his authority to ensure teachers make instructional improvement when necessary. "I couch my assurance in the mission, a community of learners. I am the learner-in-chief. I am an approachable, nice guy. I have never given a discipline sanction, detention [to a student]. I am collaborative. Some relational discipline does come to me. I ask: What is the teacher doing? What can be done? I try to be intentional in feedback. Learning comes from reflection." As well, this AP spoke of acting as an instructional leader by facilitating difficult conversations over a period of time, among the administration, parents, and a teacher where the primary concern of the discourse was a health-related issue which contributed to a student failing a final exam. Ultimately, the AP was "proud of the outcomes for this student" as the student was able to retake the exam. This same AP along with the school nurse negotiated an early school dismissal for a high school father and mother to be able to take care of their infant.

These are important instructional leadership actions that APs have facilitated to attempt to ensure success for students who may be at-risk of failure without these accommodations. In each of these examples, it was apparent teachers were not helpful in developing or providing accommodations for student success. APs much be granted the authority to ensure accommodations are provided. APs much be drivers of belief systems in their schools that incorporate what is best for each student and must be empowered to uphold this belief among faculty.

Another high school AP asserted a similar approach to ensuring instructional improvement in respect to teacher evaluation and collaborative conversations. "If I have a teacher needing coaching, I describe concerns and areas of improvement with the department head. I expect coaching to make an improvement which will then be looked for in a formal evaluation. Teachers are comfortable to come to me for help, for advice. My practice is establishing relationships outside of classroom. Informal observations and classroom visits have established a level of trust and helpfulness and encouragement to succeed. If necessary, following an evaluation, I get best results asking for self-reflection. If not, I am up front about PD that is needed for improvement. We do assign mentors for new teachers to help them adapt and improve."

Another high school AP responded, "I'm a primary evaluator. I have created extensive documentation and am very certain my experience and relationship of trust with the principal that dismissal will not be problem, if necessary. We have collaborative conversations about teachers who may be at-risk. Conversations with teachers are direct, follow protocol to improve, and will be held accountable."

While APs have demonstrated instructional leadership with teacher supervision and evaluation, they appear to lack instructional leadership by failing to protect instructional time. Their implementation of certain policies and practices frequently reduces or eliminates a student's instructional time with their teacher of record. In many instances, this reduction or elimination instructional time is a repeated practice with individual students.

While this example of instructional time is not explicitly referenced in Hallinger's definition of protecting instructional time, it is widely recognized that the instructional time a student spends with an effective teacher has a positive effect on student achievement. There appeared to be limited recognition of this among some of the APs interviewed.

One example of reducing a student's classroom instruction time was explained this way by an AP. "...Whenever a situation like that has arisen in the past,...it is because both the student and/or the teacher have become frustrated with one another, and they need a break from one another....I make my presence known there, so that way the kid knows that we mean business and they have to make sure that they are following along etc. And then after school, I'll sit and talk with the teacher...". Later in the interview this AP went on to explain how he handles discipline problems saying, "...teachers will get frustrated with other teachers, because...why can't they deal with this....Some teachers get frustrated with administration, because how come this kid keeps on continuing to do this....So I drew up a...split chart...teacher managed behaviors...office managed behaviors."

One AP related the story of a student who could not attend school for a week because he did not have the required vaccinations for school attendance. This week-long absence from class resulted in being assigned to ZAP (Zeroes Are Not Permitted) first hour and missing advisory support. Then the student was assigned to the after-school teacher until the make-up assignments from the week's absence were submitted to all of his teachers.

A high school AP who had no responsibilities relating to teacher evaluation, has substantial control over attendance, absences, tardies, and truancy. The AP explained, "First and foremost, we rely on teachers to take accurate period attendance everyday....if you are late to school first period and...if unexcused, we no longer send them to first period. We send them down [ISS] or we keep them here in-house, until second period begins. And then it becomes the student's responsibility to follow up with that first period teacher." The AP shared that attendance, tardies, and truancy were over one half of the nearly 600 discipline referrals in the previous year's first semester. He asserts that this "tightening of policy" has reduced referrals to approximately 120 at mid-semester this year. The AP went on to say, "Secondly we run our Wednesday reports...of students who have missed two consecutive days and Wednesday mornings are devoted to home visits." The AP and the counselor make these visits, and attempt to identify the root cause of truancy, provide sources of services to help, and express their desire to see the student graduate. However, there is a negative academic impact inherent in the truancy policy. The AP explained, "If you are truant for any part of the day, even 10 minutes, you are considered truant and in an in-school-suspension for all day. Truant for any part of the day, it is one day ISS. Work is sent down and no adverse impact with regard to academics....Not punitive."

Student achievement. The final item in the interview asked the APs to explain which of the following two statements they agreed with: 'I know exactly how my job is related to student achievement.' or 'I am uncertain as to how my job is linked to student achievement.' They were also asked to provide an example of how they know this. This question produced a significant, three- to five-second pause before answering among several respondents. There was one audible "Hmmmm" before answering from one AP, and another AP, after a pause, said, "Boy! That is a tough question!"

Most of the APs articulated the importance of their role in establishing a school culture that enables all children to learn. One AP said, "Yes, I know how my job is connected to student achievement. Most student achievement is based upon having a trusting relationship with students who come to our school. We need to see they feel welcomed in school. Can you care? Can you try? The more they are engaged with learning, meaningful practical everyday connections, they more they will flourish. Relationships, connections, feel valued and trusted." Another said, "A teacher's efficacy and involvement with students is really the number one determinant of student success. My involvement with staff, what I bring to those relationships with coaching and guidance has made a profound difference."

An elementary AP said, "I do know exactly how my job is linked to student achievement. I make efforts to support the teachers in the things that they need to help students be successful whether that's behavioral support for specific students or academic support....and those things are directly related to student achievement." Another elementary AP said, "There are so many things that go into student achievement. Social emotional learning is key. In this school they have their first social interactions. We are huge proponents of social emotional growth in our building. As well, our first-grade reading growth is of huge importance to overall student achievement."

A high school AP said, "I'm pretty sure what I do is linked to student achievement. What I do affects how teachers feel about their jobs and how students feel about attending school." One AP cited his role in conducting evaluations positively impacted student achievement, but added, "Also as an assistant principal you take on a role helping with the educational culture which I think is a large factor in achievement. We are seeing this as we

are doing a book study with our teachers on culture of institutions around the world right now.”

One AP is very involved in data analysis and curriculum evaluation and added, “But with the evaluation system, I have a direct route to improve teaching to impact their teaching performance.” Curriculum work with teachers at the building level was cited by several APs. When APs worked with curriculum their comments revealed the importance of curriculum that met the needs of specific students through critically selected interventions that would lead to student growth behaviorally, social emotionally, and/or academically.

Two APs’ responses indicated the role of establishing a welcoming and inviting culture appeared to be their job alone. One AP who works primarily with high school students whose success relies on instructional support through MTSS said, “My job is to keep these high-risk kids in school. I related to them because I’ve been in their shoes in a lot of my life situations. It’s easier for them to come to me and trust me.” This principal, as well, expressed he had responsibility or authority to evaluate teachers or to work with them in creating a more inviting environment in their classrooms for students he worked with. Another AP in an elementary school, expressed the importance of his morning greeting of the students getting off the bus in the morning. “Yes, I know exactly how it is connected to student achievement. It is the exact same reason why I go to the bus stop each morning...wait for the kids to get off the bus. I have rewards when they do well on the bus. I know that 10 minutes of my morning prior to the kids getting there is going to save everybody’s day without a headache. Because if kids feel good and they’re ready to come to school and feel it’s a good place to come and learn then that’s going to make the classrooms pretty easy to learn in.” While this is a statement of the APs impact on the start of the day, it raises a question about the importance of the teacher’s impact on individual student classrooms every hour of the day.

Three APs struggled with their initial response, opening their answers with these statements, “Well, that could be interpreted in different ways,” “I am uncertain. But I guess I know how it is linked to student achievement,” and “I am uncertain.” The first of these two principals did complete her response in this way, “I don’t have data. I know scores on tests. Although I try to be an instructional leader, I do believe that reducing student tardies, absences, and truancy affects student achievement....If I need to see a student, I do not remove them from a class where they need to be.”

Another high school AP, paused and then said, “Boy! That is a tough question.” This AP struggled with an answer, but said he functions as a resource for teachers. In a previous answer, this AP shared detailed information about a school goal to improve attendance, reduce absences, tardies, and trancies. It is curious that he did not connect this school goal as one that is linked to improving student achievement.

A few responses were unsettling. One AP said, “I am uncertain. Discipline and student achievement are the same thing.” Another AP said, “The first one. If there is no discipline in a school nobody’s going to learn very much. Your angel students will still behave and come and sit down and listen to the teacher, but your sort of students who maybe have less self-discipline or less home discipline aren’t going to act properly if there aren’t any consequences. You know, it undermines the whole process.” Another AP who failed to identify agreeing with either statement offered this, “My teachers here are hesitant about change and....they don’t want to put time and effort into the next step. I don’t want to say

they are spoiled, but they are needy. If I need to lead them to water, that I can do, but to get them to drink that is a tough one. Discipline-wise it is easy.”

Observations. Of the six APs observed in their schools, five were high school APs and one was an elementary AP. Observations of APs at work demonstrated the importance of their visibility in the school, contributing to relationships with students and faculty and to building a school culture that is welcoming but also accountable. The APs who were observed spent one-quarter of their time supervising students. Supervision of students included mingling with them, supervising them, and having deliberate conversations with some students, on the school grounds, in the school, as students arrived on campus to start the school day, during lunch hours, and during class breaks. While most students were unaware of the AP’s presence as they went about their day, with little recognition of them, many students “checked-in” with the APs. Students would approach an AP with a dilemma saying, “Here’s my problem. What should I do?” As well, students would approach with expressions of accomplishments saying, “I got my homework all done last night!”

High school APs engaged more frequently with students in their office or in the attendance office as the school day started having conversations with students about absences, tardies, and truancy and in-school suspensions. Many of these conversations were routine. The AP would report the calculation of days missed, review the policy, and ask the student how they planned to correct the situation. Many of the situations described were well beyond a student’s ability to correct. APs did offer suggestions to students, such as using the alarm on their cell phone to awaken in time to get to school. The student would typically listen, offer a willingness to improve, and then be sent to class.

Several APs demonstrated instructional leadership in a variety of ways. Most frequently, APs were observed ensuring students with special needs had their needs met. For example, one high school AP met with the special needs coordinator to ensure that a teacher complied with accommodations for a student who had difficulty reading aloud in class. The conversation was problem-solving and solution-finding to meet the student’s instructional needs. As well, there was a purposeful agreement to hold the teacher accountable for providing the appropriate accommodations for the student.

One high school AP had personal and more meaningful conversations with students who had absences. Each student was asked about their academic performance in at least two different courses. The principal was knowledgeable about their class schedules and their current grades.

During the observations, two of the APs conducted teacher evaluations--one of an elementary teacher, another of a high school teacher. The high school AP evaluates over 20 third- and fourth-year teachers and three non-certified staff persons. This AP is confident of his expertise in teacher evaluation and in his relationships with teachers concerning instructional improvement. This AP led the professional development for teachers as the state’s Performance Evaluation Reform Act was initiated.

One AP conducted a post-evaluation conference. In the post-conference conversation two of the teacher’s responses demonstrated a relationship between the teacher and the AP that could be characterized as a trusting relationship that allowed the teacher to grow instructionally. One example was the teacher’s response to the question “What went well in class and what didn’t?” The teacher described how she configured a group discussion, how it did not go as planned, and how she had reflected on the situation and did not consider the individual needs of a specific student in one group. Later in the post-conference, the AP

complimented the teacher about a willingness to develop new initiatives. The teacher proudly talked about a peer-group she had organized that conferences about individual students each week. They collectively support each other and the students they have in common. Soon, another teacher will join this group. Supporting new teachers in new endeavors and in respect to their new ideas builds their capacity for growth--an excellent example of instructional leadership.

One AP attended a high school administrative team meeting. All items on the agenda had a thread of connection to instructional leadership: school improvement goals, graduation rate, course test scores, district and building climate surveys, IEP meetings, and PSAT.

All APs had business to take care of. Among these business items were follow-ups on discipline issues such as a cafeteria fight, a student returning from juvenile detention, a possible criminal case, a return call to a parent. As well, one AP handled transportation issues and followed up on a reported case of a driver who fell asleep. Another AP was highly focused on safety plans and safety drills. Another AP provides oversight of National Honor Society selection, induction, and parent questions. Two APs managed substitute teacher assignments in the school. One of these APs covered a class period for a substitute teacher who became ill and had to leave the school. A significant issue occurred during one observation when an AP had an hour of his day taken because of a campus-wide search for two students who did not report to class. This event caused the AP to miss a scheduled IEP meeting. An elementary AP spent time working with a social worker attempting to calm a student with anxiety. Another elementary AP spent an hour setting up and supervising a teacher's beard-shaving ceremony, a reward to students for meeting a fund-raising goal for an organization that provides food and supplies to needy families.

Most of the APs found 15 to 30 minutes of time, at least once during the observation hours, when they checked and responded to emails, text messages, and phone calls. In fact, any available free minute was spent checking and responding to emails, messages, and phone calls. With some APs, a block of time, 15 or more minutes was set aside for these tasks. It was apparent that any task requiring extended concentration or attention was probably scheduled after regular school hours. Several APs responded to emails and texts 'on the fly,' while walking the hallways, while supervising lunch, while in the office. While it was not always apparent what the subject of these responses were, in most cases they were managerial items.

Implications for Practice

The triangulation of PIMRS data, that indicated an engagement in supervision and evaluation of instruction, with interview and observation themes supported a finding of many assistant principals acting as instructional leaders. The assistant principals who were responsible for teacher evaluations were more likely to act as instructional leaders than those assistant principals who handled discipline exclusively. Assistant principals who evidenced acting with high levels of instructional leadership had expert skills concerning teacher evaluation and believe their leadership resulted in better instructional practices and higher levels of student achievement. In addition, assistant principals acting with high levels of instructional leadership, ensure that individual student needs are accommodated by teachers, where the teachers employ appropriate strategies that lead to student success and engage students in

constructive relationships. In many of these cases, assistant principals act on their own and operate outside of the assumed role of assistant principal, which often occurs through leveraging instructional leadership without the direct support of their principal. Mertz and McNelly (1999) learned through their study of assistant principals that this was not unusual. Among the assistant principals in their study, they found that an assistant principal must choose to conform to the norms or the role as established by the organization or by the last person in the role, or to “retain and operate out of the values brought to the position, and in so doing, influence the position held” (Mertz & McNeely, 1999, p. 15).

School principals influence the assistant principals who are chosen to work with them. They also influence the work they do and the way they perform their duties. Principals must hire assistant principals who are experienced and tested instructional leaders, and they must support them in the role of an instructional leader rather than the role of disciplinarian. Furthermore, principals must protect their assistant principals’ time for evaluating teachers and support their assistant principals’ recommendations for instructional improvement in the classroom.

Assistant principals who acted as instructional leaders were members of an administrative team and of a school culture that embraces a belief system of success for every student. Of the assistant principals in schools where this belief was most widespread, there were few students sent to the assistant principal from a classroom for a discipline issue. As one high school assistant principal said, “We don’t have problems because we have the right people who understand the relationships necessary for student success.” In other high schools, teachers were committed to practices that engaged students in a desire to come to school and to actively engage in class work. One principal remarked, “Teachers in this group call meetings with students, parents and teachers, and guidance to discuss particular student needs.” Superintendents are responsible for ensuring that district core beliefs about the importance of instructional leadership as the work of assistant principals is embraced and modeled by building administrative teams.

Following on this recommendation, the assistant principal must be re-imagined as a member of a school’s professional learning community, not a “siloe” administrator who functions as a manager of policies and people. The assistant principal’s position can be an administrative position that engages with teachers, school service personnel, parents, and students as an expert practitioner focused on instructional improvement and academic achievement. Assistant principals operating as instructional leaders in this study were treated as an instructional colleague who had conversations with stakeholders about helping students reach their potential. They were not seen as the person who took care of teachers’ issues with students sent from their classrooms.

There is room for improvement related to changing the role of assistant principal from disciplinarian to instructional leadership among some assistant principals. The greatest need for improvement is in the implementation of policies and practices dealing with absences, tardies, and truancy. In most interview responses and during observations, policies for absences, tardies, and truancy were punitive. These issues are rarely solved with disciplinary actions. The typical disciplinary actions reduce students’ instructional time with a teacher of record. The disciplinary actions diminish a student’s opportunity for relationship building with a teacher of record and deny a student appropriate academic instruction or academic engagement with a teacher of record. There is burgeoning research on solutions to school absenteeism and truancy taking into consideration family needs and

social emotional needs of students. Districts wanting to move toward greater academic success for at-risk students may find this research helpful. As well, principal preparation program must make principal candidates aware of current research on the cause of and solutions to absenteeism and truancy changing the approach from a disciplinary action to an intervention.

Finally, as boards of education and superintendents are focused on accountability and student achievement, they should examine the role and responsibilities of the principal and assistant principal administrative team considering two things. Consider whether the principal's disposition and beliefs are focused on student learning or focused on student compliance with policies, since the principal typically determines the assistant principal's role and responsibilities. Consider the return on investment associated with student academic and behavioral outcomes in schools where assistant principals act as disciplinarians or act as instructional leaders.

Resistance to change the way assistant principals have primarily operated as disciplinarians and the recognition by some assistant principals of the professional advancement risks by acting outside established assistant principal norms, may mean there will not be much gained in numbers of assistant principals acting as instructional leaders. The responsibility for achieving this change is in the hands of superintendents and principals who work with assistant principals. They must support the change with as much conviction as assistant principals desire the role of instructional leader. The assistant principals who acted as instructional leaders in this study provide hope for their ascension to positions where they will be able promote instructional leadership among assistant principals.

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Practices that Support Leadership Succession and Principal Retention

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Principals are instrumental to successful school improvement efforts and positive student outcomes. However, recent workforce trends, increased accountability, demands of the job, and turnover rates for school principals are worrisome. Succession planning is a systematic approach that involves all aspects of identifying and retaining leaders (Rothwell, 2010) including preparation, recruitment, selection, onboarding, induction, development, and retention. Although succession planning is underutilized in public school settings, it is one avenue to address leadership issues and help school district leaders meet their long-term leadership needs. This qualitative study examined the succession practices of five large school districts in Colorado by gathering the perspectives of principals and school district leaders. The findings indicate several actions that educational leaders can take to address the challenges of well-qualified candidates and the do-ability of the principal position. Findings further indicate that leaders may influence principal retention by differentiating support and purposefully fostering relationships. These findings might be used by other educational leaders to strengthen their succession practices and policies and affect the retention of school leaders.

Keywords: principal retention, leadership development, educational leadership, succession, succession planning

In recent years, the role of the principal has changed from manager to instructional leader with an increased focus on accountability for results and evidence has accrued that demonstrates the importance of the principal in school improvement and student achievement efforts (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). During this same time, principal workforce trends have included turnover at “an unsustainable level” (Schmidt-Davis & Bottoms, 2011, p. 1), an aging population as a large number of principals near retirement age (Gates, Ringel, Santibañez, Chung, & Ross, 2003), difficulties retaining principals in urban and challenging settings (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006), and less job satisfaction among principals (Markow, Macia, & Lee, 2013). The result is a dichotomy: schools and school districts need qualified leaders to implement school improvement initiatives, but increased demands and accountability have led to the disenchantment of school leaders (Hargreaves & Fink, 2011). This dissatisfaction, in turn, has created higher turnover and fewer applicants, which has hampered improvement initiatives (Brundrett, Rhodes, & Gkolia, 2006). This vicious circle of principal turnover is detrimental to school improvement and student achievement initiatives (Louis et al., 2010; Schmidt-Davis & Bottoms, 2011) and is costly to school districts (School Leaders Network, 2014). Attrition may also be higher in schools with high poverty, ethnic minorities, and low performance (Fuller & Young, 2009; Goldring & Taie, 2014).

Practitioners and researchers have offered many explanations for perceived leadership shortages and high turnover rates. Leadership shortages are due to increased responsibilities and lack of support (Zepeda, Bengston, & Parylo, 2012), teachers not interested in serving as principals (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2008; Kearney, 2010; Levine, 2005; Rhodes & Brundrett, 2009), and principal salaries not commensurate with responsibilities (Whitaker, 2003; Zepeda et al., 2012). The reasons for principal turnover include increased accountability (Farkas, Johnson, & Duffett, 2003; Rangel, 2018), desire to serve easier to staff schools (Beteille Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2011; Gates et al., 2006), and desire to leverage position moves for better salary (Baker, Punswick & Belt, 2010). The rewards of giving back to the community, supporting teachers, having greater influence, and progressing on a career path have been overshadowed by the downsides of accountability pressure, lack of support, lack of job security, and demanding schedules (Kearney, 2010).

States and school districts are looking for solutions to solve the principal leadership crisis. Solutions to address the supply of leaders include making school leadership a more attractive career (Olson, 2008); revamping college and university preparation programs (Levine, 2005); and offering signing bonuses (Mitgang, Gill, & Cummins, 2013), alternative licensure programs (Schmidt-Davis & Bottoms, 2011), recognition programs, salary adjustments, or pay for performance incentives (Kearney, 2010). Some have proposed clarifying roles and responsibilities (Olson, 2008), redesigning the structure of the position (Whitaker, 2003), making the position more doable by hiring other leaders to take on business or instructional roles (Tucker & Coddling, 2002), and limiting the number and pace of initiatives (Hargreaves & Fink, 2011). A third solution involves providing better professional development including specialized training for current and future leaders (Mitgang et al., 2013) and coaching and mentoring for new principals (James-Ward, 2013). Likewise, distributed or shared leadership has been found to make a positive difference on student learning and organizational outcomes and can be a productive response to principal turnover (Mascall, Monroe, Jantzi, Walker, & Sacks, 2011).

Although states, school districts, and school leaders are responding to the issues of principal workforce trends in a variety of ways, there has been little attention given to succession planning within schools (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Mascall et al., 2011). Succession planning

“consists of a systematic, long-term approach to meeting the present and future talent needs of an organization to continue to achieve its mission and meet or exceed its business objectives” (Rothwell, Jackson, Knight, & Lindholm, 2005, p. 27).

Conceptual Framework for Leadership Succession

For this research, I used the conceptual framework forwarded by Schmidt-Davis and Bottoms (2011) that asserted that succession was a complex phenomenon and a feasible solution to school leadership issues when states, districts, and principals take steps to improve leadership development. Their model of succession describes a virtuous cycle that included six components: talent identification, talent development, selection, onboarding and support, evaluation and process improvement, and the development of future leaders.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

Given that schools in the United States experience high turnovers with a new principal every three to four years which has negative effects on student achievement (Louis et al., 2010) and that succession planning can help organizations fill leadership needs (Rothwell, 2010), the purpose of this study was to illuminate the nature, characteristics, and practices of principal succession leading to principal retention. Since minimal research has been conducted regarding school district succession practices (Rhodes & Brundrett, 2009), a qualitative approach was selected to gain a nuanced understanding of the topic. This study delved into succession practices in five Colorado school districts with higher principal retention and/or teacher satisfaction regarding leadership from the perspectives of principals and the school district administrators that hire and supervise them. The findings may provide useful insights to be used by educational leaders to strengthen policies and practices to retain principals. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the principal succession practices of large school districts with high teacher satisfaction as reported on the Colorado Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning (TELL) Survey when controlling for student demographics?
2. What are the principal succession practices of large school districts with high principal retention rates when controlling for student demographics?
3. What are the policies and practices that school district employees believe influence the retention of principals?

Literature Review

Louis et al. (2010) indicated that principals exert considerable influence on school improvement and that principals are uniquely positioned to leverage the human and institutional resources to increase achievement. Principals serve as a link between teacher satisfaction, teacher retention, and student achievement. Johnson, Kraft, and Papay (2012) concluded that school culture, collaboration with colleagues, and principal leadership were predictive of teachers' satisfaction and intent to stay. Also, Boyd et al. (2011) found that teachers' perceptions regarding school administration had the greatest impact on teacher retention decisions among school contextual factors. Moreover, Beteille, Kalogrides, and Loeb (2011) found that principal turnover was positively associated with teacher turnover and negatively associated with student achievement.

These studies suggest that policies aimed at the recruitment of experienced principals may allay the detrimental effects of turnover on student achievement (Beteille et al., 2011), that improving school administration, especially in high-turnover schools, may be effective at reducing teacher turnover (Boyd et al., 2011), and that one of the most important actions that superintendents can take to improve schools is to hire principals who know how to provide a supportive, collaborative working environments for teachers (Johnson et al., 2012).

In one of the earliest works on principal succession, Hart (1993) explained that leadership succession can be disruptive with dysfunctional outcomes or have a positive impact on a school and its performance. Leadership succession has an impact on the culture of the school and teacher morale, individually and collectively (Meyer, Macmillan, & Northfield, 2009) and rapid succession has been found to be detrimental to staff culture and morale (Macmillan, Meyer, Northfield, & Foley, 2011). Leadership succession is an intense process for teachers in which teachers' emotions can range from hope to fear, abandonment to relief, and expectation to loss (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). In studying the effects of principal turnover on teachers, Macmillan et al. (2011) found that rotation and hiring policies that served the needs of the district rather than the individual school hindered teacher trust in the new principal and had unanticipated consequences which could sabotage initiatives. However, when administrators, policymakers, and principals pay attention to succession issues, it is possible for schools and principals to change, develop, and grow because of leader succession (Hart, 1993).

Succession Planning

In the private sector, succession planning has been a topic of research since the 1980s and leadership succession has become a major initiative (Fink & Brayman, 2004). Succession planning offers a viable solution to the issues of leadership recruiting and development to address the current realities of principal workforce trends (Schmidt-Davis & Bottoms, 2011). Unfortunately, in education, people believe that succession planning is needed, but is not practiced widely (Mascall et al., 2011).

Critical features of succession plans that had a high-impact on business were the inclusion of many leadership levels and positions (Groves, 2007; Lamoureux, Campbell, & Smith, 2009; Rothwell, 2010), actionable development plans that were reviewed regularly and included follow-through (Lamoureux et al., 2009), and the involvement of senior management rather than just the human resources department (Butler & Roche-Tarry, 2002; Lamoureux et al., 2009). Businesses use individual leadership development plans, job rotation, special assignments, and action learning projects as tools for succession (Fulmer & Conger, 2004). Managers are also an important aspect of succession planning because they provide training, performance feedback, coaching, and mentoring; create a supportive culture; and expose high potential employees to various stakeholders within the organization (Groves, 2007).

Succession planning has many benefits for companies and employees. It assists organizations in aligning human capital needs with strategic goals, addressing an aging management workforce, ensuring that leadership is ready in the event of an unexpected event, and conducting an inventory of human capital strengths and gaps (Butler & Roche-Tarry, 2002). While there are many benefits of succession planning, succession planners must acknowledge the dynamics and unique needs of organizations in terms of culture, industry, economic sector, leadership structure, and size (Rothwell, 2010). In schools, succession practices run counter to the egalitarian ethic of equal pay and opportunities (Myung, Loeb, & Horng, 2011) and to the notion

that teachers should self-select into leadership positions (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). Furthermore, procedures requiring job postings and competitive searches, budget constraints, and union agreements may prevent schools from using some succession practices (Rothwell, 2010).

While succession planning is not the norm and structured succession plans are rare in the field of education (Hartle & Thomas, 2006), Hargreaves and Fink (2003) noted that, “Education has much to learn from private sector about planning for succession” (p. 700). Hart (1993), in her seminal study of principal succession, urged those who appoint and support principals to act deliberately to improve the overall quality of succession processes through purposeful attention to socialization, orientation, professional development, mentoring, and evaluation. More recently, Zepeda, Bengston, and Parylo (2012) concluded that the theory of succession planning found in the private sector can be applied to school systems although there may be unique characteristics or practices within the school setting. The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) has articulated a need to stop “hire and hope” practices (Schmidt-Davis & Bottoms, 2011, p. 5) and delineated succession practices that states, school districts, schools, universities, and principals can adopt as part of succession planning.

Succession Practices Related to Stages of a Principal’s Career

Educational leaders are responding to the issues of principal succession in ways that affect school principals at three points in their career: before the principal is hired (practices for preparation, recruitment, and selection); when the principal takes on a new position (onboarding, socialization, and support); and through the principal’s career for (sustained retention through professional development, ongoing development, and evaluation).

Preparing, recruiting, and selecting leaders. There are several ways in which states, universities, and school districts are changing the preparation and selection of principals to affect the succession landscape. While certification is not a guarantee for quality candidates or for performance (Roza, 2003), state policymakers can influence the quality and content of preparation programs, standards, and certification requirements (Kearney, 2010; Orr, King, & LaPointe, 2010). Preparation programs can be overhauled to be more relevant to the realities of principalship and to include research-based content, curricular coherence, field-based internships, problem-based learning strategies, cohort structures, and mentoring or coaching (Black, Martin, & Danzig, 2014; Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe, & Orr, 2010). School districts can create partnerships with foundations, non-profit and for-profit agencies, grant recipients, and universities to supply their leadership needs (Fusarelli, Fusarelli, & Riddick, 2018; Levine, 2005; Orr et al., 2010). Some school districts have also adopted Grow Your Own leadership academies which Joseph (2009) claimed may help solve leadership issues and retain leaders because they are more cost effective, use internal expertise, and align with organizational goals.

Active recruitment of teachers with leadership potential is another approach to combat the shortage of leaders. Myung et al. (2011) found that “tapping” (when current teachers are approached by school leaders to consider leadership) had a significant impact on a teacher’s interest in school leadership. Finally, Stutsman (2007) recommended that school districts train administrators in the use of a systematic recruitment and selection process that includes web-based personnel systems, standardized interview guides, diversity and sensitivity training, and selection based on observation and/or simulation aligned to principal leadership standards. Some school districts have begun using competency models and screening tools that measure a principal’s

motivations and abilities to be successful to help place principals (Mitgang et al., 2013). Each of these practices may have potential to impact principal retention and succession.

Socializing, onboarding, and inducting leaders. By prescribing orientation events, activities, and timing, school district leaders can better control the outcomes of principal succession (Hart, 1993). Crow (2006) urged school district leaders to re-conceptualize the ways in which they socialized principals so that they stressed connections between the school district and the university, involved teamwork and collaboration, and emphasized the internship as an opportunity to interact with current principals, complex situations, and student demographics. New principals need to establish themselves quickly by practicing consistency, providing clear communication, and demonstrating congruence between words and actions (Meyer et al., 2009). School district leaders can encourage new principals to respect the school culture and improvement efforts that are already underway (Mascall & Leithwood, 2010).

States and school districts are encouraged to establish induction programs with clear goals aligned with administrator standards (Kearney, 2010) so that new principals are more successful and stay in the job longer. Support for new principals can include well-trained mentors, networking opportunities, and training on leading student achievement (Hart, 1993; Kearney, 2010). Mentoring or coaching can benefit a school district's efforts to recruit, hire, train, and retain school principals and should be part of inducting aspiring and new leaders (Stutsman, 2007). Coaching can help novice principals feel that their job is manageable, support job satisfaction of principals, and develop principal efficacy and skills (James-Ward, 2013).

Retaining leaders. District-level rotation practices or policies may add to the problem of principal turnover (Mascall & Leithwood, 2010) and have negative, unanticipated consequences (Fink & Brayman, 2004; Macmillan et al., 2011). Instead of systematic rotation, school district personnel are encouraged to adopt practices that lead to sustainable leadership including training, support, and encouragement for staff carrying out shared leadership and to leave principals in positions for at least four years, preferably five to seven years (Louis et al., 2010; Mascall & Leithwood, 2010).

Quality professional development that connects learning to practices, provides ongoing learning, and communities of practice supports principals to lead school improvement efforts and is an avenue for the ongoing support and retention of principals (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010; Parylo & Zepeda, 2015). Another path for principal retention is insisting that assistant principals learn and experience all aspects of school leadership including instructional leadership (Schmidt-Davis & Bottoms, 2011). Korach and Cosner (2017) noted recent approaches to leaders' development are professional development, mentoring and leadership coaching, principal evaluation systems, and leader supports. This may include the development of instructional leadership for principals through professional learning communities (Honig & Rainey, 2014) and altering the role and activities of principal supervisors (Gill, 2013; Rogers, Goldring, Rubin, & Grissom, 2019).

Finally, incumbent leaders are encouraged to take an active role in developing future leaders by creating a talent pool, encouraging staff to take on new roles, and developing a culture of leadership distribution (Brundrett et al., 2006). Current leaders can cultivate sustainable leadership by grooming successors, as well as planning and preparing for succession (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003). Schmidt-Davis and Bottoms (2011) further recommended that states incorporate the development of future leaders as a professional responsibility within principal standards to complete the circle of succession practices from preparation through individual development to the development of others.

Research Design

In this study, I examined the phenomenon of principal succession through the eyes of the administrators who implement these practices and the principals who are the recipients of these practices. I used a basic, interpretive qualitative design (Merriam, 2009) to report multiple perspectives, focus on the meaning that the participants ascribed to the issue, and understand the phenomenon of succession (Creswell, 2007). From a constructionist, interpretative perspective I studied the meanings, intentions, and actions of the participants (Charmaz, 2001) by interviewing different stakeholders using open-ended interviews, constant comparative procedures, and participants' words in my analyses. The goal of the study was to bring attention to attributes and dimensions of the phenomenon of principal succession (Polkinghorne, 2006).

Research Setting and Participants

Colorado is a state with 178 diverse school districts with large, medium, and small student populations located in rural, suburban, and urban settings without coordinated efforts to recruit, train, or retain well-qualified principals. In 2012, there were over 2,500 principals and assistant principals in the state of Colorado with a turnover rate of almost 17% (Colorado Department of Education [CDE], 2012a; CDE 2012b). Colorado had 11 private and public higher education institutions with principal preparation programs and allowed alternative licensure (Colorado Department of Higher Education, 2013). In 2010, Colorado adopted Quality Teacher and Principal Standards for evaluation purposes and to which preparation programs started aligning in 2011 (CDHE, 2013). These conditions may affect the supply and demand of principals (Roza, 2003) and, thus, affect principal succession practices.

The Colorado Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning (TELL) Survey was administered to Colorado educators in 2009, 2011, and 2013 (New Teacher Center [NTC], 2013b). The TELL Survey is a full-population survey that is a statistically valid and reliable instrument that measures research-based factors that have been empirically linked to teacher retention and student learning (NTC, 2013d). When teachers were asked to identify the factor which most affected their willingness to keep teaching at their school, school leadership was ranked the highest (NTC, 2013c). NTC (2013a) recommended that states assess their policies regarding principal preparation, recruitment, induction, and support to ensure that through preparation programs and professional development leaders have the skills and capacity to build strong school cultures, positive trusting school climates, and supportive conditions for teaching and learning. Thus, Colorado had many factors which made it suitable for this study on principal succession practices.

Sampling Strategy for School Districts for Inclusion in the Study

Since the purpose of this study was to illuminate the nature, characteristics, and practices of principal succession and there is no principal satisfaction survey data which identifies specific school districts in Colorado, I applied purposeful sampling to choose school districts for participation. A review of the literature supported using the following four factors: (1) size of district since it may indicate the need and urgency for succession practices (Roza, 2003; Zepeda et al., 2012); (2) student demographics since schools and districts with more challenging student populations have been tied to more principal mobility (Battle, 2010; Baker et al., 2010); (3) teacher

satisfaction, especially in regard to school administration, since teacher satisfaction has been connected to school leadership (Boyd et al., 2011); and (4) principal retention rates given that principal retention has been linked to school improvement and overall school climate (Louis, et al., 2010) and that retention may be an indication of working conditions (Boyd et al., 2011).

Through a combination of criterion, maximum variation, and theory-based sampling, I identified school districts for inclusion in the study. Large school districts that had over 5,000 K-12 students and over 350 licensed, school-based professionals and with at least 40% participation rate on the TELL Colorado Survey were considered. Twenty-two school districts were identified as possible districts for this study. Then, to minimize the possibility that higher principal retention and teacher satisfaction rates were merely a reflection of less challenging student demographics, I calculated a demographic score which equaled the percent of students who received free and reduced lunch benefits plus the percent of students who received special education services and the percent of students who were classified as English language learners. I reviewed TELL Colorado teacher satisfaction data concerning school leadership to determine one school district in each demographic group (low, average, and high) to investigate to answer the first research question. I then selected the district with the highest principal retention rates within each of the same three demographic bands to answer the second research question. One school district, Colorfield, had the highest TELL score and the highest principal retention rate for its demographic band (less than average), thus producing five participant school districts instead of six. Information for all five school districts is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1
Colorado School Districts for Study

Location	K-12 2012 Pupil Count	Demographic Score	Site-based Licensed Educators	TELL % Participation	TELL Factor Score	% Principal Retention
State School District	833,200	66.12	60,900	54.52	78.17	83.31
Colorfield	27,100	44.23 low	1,950	73.32	85.00	90.28
Meadowview	8,900	60.68 average	600	56.02	76.87	92.86
Forestglen	5,100	65.53 average	350	41.64	82.27	83.87
Ridgetop	5,900	81.29 high	400	65.68	81.67	70.59
Riverbend	5,250	83.42 high	450	77.21	78.73	86.36

Note. Counts are rounded to the nearest 50. Demographic Score = % of K-12 FRL students + % of PK-12 ESS students + % of PK-12 EL students where FRL = Free and Reduced Lunch Status, ESS = Students receiving special education services, and EL = students identified as English language learners. TELL Factor Score = Average of Q7.4, Q10.1, and Q10.6 from 2013 TELL Colorado Survey. % Principal Retention = Retention of Principals from 2011-12 to 2012-13 as reported by CDE (2012a).

After securing permission to conduct the study in the selected school districts, I asked a key contact person in each school district to nominate other school district personnel and principals as possible participants. The study was approved by the university and participating school districts, and individual participants gave informed consent before participating. I took precautions to ensure confidentiality and assigned pseudonyms for all school districts and individuals.

Participants from each school district included a human resource directors and/or supervisor of principals, at least one recently appointed principal who experienced orientation and induction, and at least one veteran principal with at least four years of experience in the same school. It was hoped that this approach would produce rich and trustworthy data, and that the final product would help the reader better understand the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009).

Data Collection and Analysis

I spent one or two days in each school district and interviewed 18 participants including seven school district/system administrators and 11 school principals. The six veteran principals had at least 10 years of experience as principal in their current school. The five newer school administrators were in their first to fourth year in their position and included one assistant principal since all principals in Colorfield had more than four years of experience. Data sources included hour-long semi-structured individual interviews with the participants, artifacts related to succession practices, tours at many of the schools, and observations of induction, school board, or community meetings. Topics for the interviews were aligned to the conceptual model and included: succession activities that address a school district's need to create and maintain a pool of qualified and willing principal candidates; recruiting and hiring practices; programs and supports that help new and experienced principals to transition into new roles and continue to develop as leaders; and policies and practices that aid in the retention of well-qualified principals. I audio recorded the responses and took notes for review during the data analysis while taking customary precautions to protect the participants and the data.

Data Analysis

I coded the data throughout the data collection using open coding, followed by axial coding. Some codes were subdivided and some subsumed under other codes and categories as I coded the individual data sets and began the constant comparative process (Merriam, 2009) and theme development. I analyzed the additional documents and observational data to support and verify participant responses. I wrote short drafts related to each theme and created charts, tables, or mindmaps of the ideas and themes, always trying to make sense of the compilation of data, rather than focusing on one individual or school district. Theme development was an outcome of decoding, categorization, and analytic reflection (Saldaña, 2013).

Provisions of Trustworthiness

I built in strategies consistent with qualitative methodology during the design, data collection, data analysis, and reporting phases of my project to increase the trustworthiness of my findings. I triangulated sources (Patton, 2002) by comparing different types of data gained through interviews, documents, and observations, as well as comparing perspectives from different stakeholder roles and in different school district cases using constant comparative procedures. I used member checking to allow participants to review interview transcripts, descriptions, and emergent themes.

Discussion of Findings

The purpose of this qualitative study was to illuminate the nature, characteristics, and practices of principal succession leading to principal retention in select Colorado school districts.

The findings from this study support that school district leaders are responding to the issues of principal workforce trends in a variety of ways. The sampling techniques produced five school districts, which proved to be information-rich cases that yielded themes that are supported by the literature on principal succession, regardless of if the district was selected due to high TELL Survey results or high principal retention rates. As way of introduction, I will highlight one aspect of each school district's practice that participants believed help them satisfy their future leadership needs and retain leaders.

Colorfield, Forestglen, and Ridgetop school districts were selected to participate based on TELL Survey results which indicated high teacher satisfaction with leadership. Leaders in Colorfield did not have issues attracting experienced principals for any openings and therefore, the assistant principalship was not seen as a path for ascension into the principalship. However, the district leaders were focused on individualized support for the principals from the time leaders hired a new principal through the first couple of years in a position. This support included phone calls, text messages, and personalized visits and resulted in higher principal retention rates. Forestglen leaders focused on hiring principals that were a fit with their community. Once a principal was hired, the leaders used two specific transition activities to support principal success: a listening tour in which the principal listened to the needs and hopes of various stakeholders and an entry plan collaboratively developed with the district leaders that set goals and strategies for the first months. Ridgetop leaders focused on tailoring the job description and hiring process for each opening to find a good match between the principal candidate, the needs of the school, and the needs of the school district.

In addition to Colorfield, Meadowview and Riverbend were selected for participation according to high principal retention rates. In Meadowview, leaders had a strong commitment to the development of people within their system. They had a tradition of hiring from internal searches and 14 of the 16 principals had held other positions before being appointed to the principalship. They also used a cadre of former, retired principals known as "Principal Whisperers" to work with struggling principals and assistant principals "to get a hold of any of those deficiencies or needs before they actually become a principal," according to the human resource director. Riverbend was the only district with a formalized goal to attract and retain talent. Stakeholders across the community had come together to write a strategic plan with a goal of talent development. The five key strategies within the talent development goal were to align professional development with student learning needs, provide competitive compensation and benefits, develop leaders, create an exceptional work environment, and recruit the best teachers and leaders. Also, Riverbend had defined principal competencies which were used for hiring.

These findings are organized by research questions. Throughout the findings the participants are identified with their pseudonym and an abbreviation of their position in the school district as it may help the reader interpret the findings. The following acronyms were used: elementary (E), middle (M), high school (H), principal (P), assistant principal (AP), assistant superintendent (AS), and director of human resources (HRD).

Research Question 1: Succession Practices of School Districts with High TELL

The first research question explored the principal succession practices of selected Colorado school districts with high TELL Survey results (Colorfield, Forestglen, and Ridgetop). Four themes emerged: the importance of stakeholder input, professional development focused on instructional leadership, attention to transition, and a focus on teacher-principal relationships.

School district administrators from these school districts were mindful to involve stakeholders in the hiring of principals, rather than focus solely on the needs of the district which can hinder improvement and commitment (Macmillan et al., 2011). They had a process that was used to solicit information about desired characteristics of the next principal and needs of the school. Second, principal meetings were a mix of business and ongoing professional development for the principals. School district leaders moved toward more professional development opportunities focused on building principals' instructional capacity (Parylo & Zepeda, 2015; Rogers et al., 2019; Turnbull, Riley, Arcaira, Anderson, & MacFarlane, 2013). The topics were timely and focused on high impact areas, such as the newly adopted teacher evaluation system. Finally, leaders in all three school districts provided a transition plan that was tailored to the needs of the incoming leader and situation (Gothard & Austin, 2013; Hart, 1993) and if the succession was planned or unplanned (Lee, 2015). The leaders were committed to making sure that new principals were set up for success.

The importance of the relationships between teachers and building principals emerged when analyzing data from the school districts with high TELL results. School district leaders stressed that stakeholders' input, especially teachers', must be valued and acted upon. Forestglen used a group of staff members who worked with the superintendent and cabinet regarding salaries, budgets, and other important topics. Likewise, in Colorfield, White (EP) remarked that it was "a very teacher-centered district," and both Turquoise (AP) and Pewter (AS) commented that recently the school district leaders had been more authentic in responding to teacher feedback. At the building level, principals discussed different ways that teachers gave input into how the school was managed. Principals also conveyed their belief in their teachers and their teaching abilities. White (EP) summed up the feelings of many principals by saying, "I think in our most successful schools, teachers feel empowered. They feel trusted. You know, we hire really smart people who make good decisions, so we don't really try to micromanage them. And when you have a school that does, they will leave."

Participants emphasized that principals must genuinely care about the staff and students. Oak (AS) stated, "Our principals have a bond with their staff and the ones that don't, are the ones that aren't principals anymore." Principals reiterated this sentiment such as Pine (EP) who stated that "It comes down to relationshipsWe're in the people business, the people growing business." Likewise, Green (MP) had lots of little ways that she demonstrated her caring including calling, touching base with people, sending personal birthday cards, celebrating successes, and constantly affirming things that were going well. Lastly, school district leaders discussed that principals must be leaders "that people will follow" In Forestglen, they looked for leaders who wanted to establish close relationships with community members. In Ridgetop, they used perception surveys of the teachers, staff, and parents as part of the principal evaluation process. In all three school districts with high teacher satisfaction with the school leadership as measured by the Colorado TELL Survey, the relationships between teachers and principals were important.

Research Question 2: School Districts with High Principal Retention

The second research question was used to explore the principal succession practices of three Colorado school districts with high principal retention rates (Colorfield, Meadowview, and Riverbend). Many succession practices were similar to practices in the school districts with high TELL Survey results. For example, the participants identified stakeholder involvement and input as important in the principal hiring process. Teachers were involved in several committees that discussed working conditions and, in Riverbend, they gave input into the creation of a new strategic plan. Likewise, professional development was provided on a variety of topics specifically designed to help the principals refine their instructional leadership skills. Two additional themes emerged from the school district leaders with high principal retention: leaders focused on individualized support and capitalized on unique features of their school community.

For school districts with high principal retention rates, differentiated and individualized support was an important theme. Principals like Green (MP) recognized the need for individualized support for principals saying, “I don’t think there is a one-size-fits-all something you would do. I think it really is about individualizing....Because my need with my experience is very different from a first or a second year principal.” Leaders like Eddy (AS) expressed an individualized approach, “I think a lot depends on the needs of the individual....Who are they and are they ready and what kind of support do they need?”

School district leaders capitalized on the use of current district leaders, retired and/or current master principals as coaches and mentors (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010; Schmidt-Davis & Bottoms, 2011). For example, Eddy coached and visited with each of the high school principals every one or two weeks. He offered feedback, checked on principal goals, and used a tracking form to record individual progress. In Colorfield, Pewter (AS) shared that he made weekly calls to new principals to check-in and that he provided guidance and funding for each principal to partake in individualized development. In Meadowview, each principal was assigned a mentor and, perhaps, a Principal Whisperer. Each Meadowview administrator visited principals regularly through scheduled and informal appointments for individualized support. Leaders in these three school districts seemed attentive and responsive of the need to provide individualized and differentiated support to help principals be successful and to retain principals.

Furthermore, leaders in each of these three school districts described unique characteristics of their district that they believed attributed to their success in retaining principals. Leaders in Colorfield commented on the strong community support and reputation of the school district. Leaders in Riverbend cited the area, the community, and relational trust as factors for retention. Eddy (AS) explained, “We’ve made a big commitment as an organization to relational trust and we’re working harder on that. So transparency, competency, clarity, fairness, those things that build trust.” Leaders in Meadowview mentioned the collegial relationships and ties to the community as reasons for retention. Additionally, Sage (HRD) concluded that Meadowview had a “unique set of factors” that contributed to higher principal retention such as a focus on internal preparation and training for current and future leaders, being an optimally-sized school district, and having a strong sense of how things were done, called the “Meadowview Way.” From the perspective of the participants, reasons for principal retention were distinctive to the individual school district.

Research Question 3: Practices that Influence Principal Retention

Participants in the five school districts discussed several practices and whether they believed these practices influenced the retention of principals. These actions related to two of the challenges to leadership succession: having enough well-qualified applicants and making the principal job do-able. Participants in all school districts discussed professional relationships as a key to retention also.

Adequate pool of qualified applicants. Participants in the study had different approaches to strategies which could be used to improve the quantity and quality of potential principal candidates. Three of the school districts focused on developing assistant principals to meet their future needs for principal candidates which could be part of a principal pipeline (Korach & Cosner, 2017; Turnbull et al., 2013). Meadowview School District had a strong tradition of internal hiring, partnered with two different university programs, and employed Principal Whisperers to mentor assistant principals. In Forestglen, the school district administrators made sure that assistant principals would be ready for an appointment through their induction and mentoring programs. Riverbend had a recent focus on developing assistant principals through inclusion in district leadership meetings, instructional rounds, and induction tailored to their specific needs. Conversely, school district leaders in Colorfield and Ridgetop expressed that the assistant principalship was not seen necessarily as an ascension to the principalship. In those two school districts the selection and development of assistant principals was delegated more to the principal of the building.

Another trend in leadership development is recruiting or tapping rather than allowing leaders to self-select (Myung et al., 2011). Participants in this study held disparate views regarding the role of current leaders to grow and secure more future principals through tapping and encouraging teachers to become principals. For example, Boulder (MP) said “I encourage people if they are interested in it or if they come and talk to me” while Elm (HP) stated, “As a true leader, you try to push those people to what they can be great at.” Eddy (AS) in Riverbend recognized the underutilization of tapping by saying, “Sometimes people self-identify. We have not done a good job as a district of identifying talent and encouraging people.”

Researchers have suggested that school districts and universities forge new relationships so that districts have candidates that are well-prepared to enter the role of principal (Fusarelli et al., 2018; Harchar & Campbell, 2010). However, partnerships with university preparation programs were not well established in these school districts, except in Meadowview. Meadowview had a strong history of partnering with universities and offering preparation program cohorts which Sage (HRD) revealed had many benefits for the cohort participants and the district. Eddy (AS) in Riverbend was most critical of current preparation programs mentioning that some were not standards-based. Other participants felt that they had benefitted from various programs in the area or when a university partnered with them. Most school district leaders provided support for individuals through internships, leadership opportunities, and added responsibilities, but, as Peak (AS) stated, “We haven’t been real systematic about that.”

The challenge of do-ability. One remedy to the job of principal being almost undo-able is to distribute leadership and to empower more teacher leaders (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). These school districts had a plethora of opportunities for teacher leaders, including committee leader, grade level or department chairperson, member of district-level and building level committees, or summer school principal. Likewise, the principals realized the value of their background experiences such as serving as instructional coaches, teachers on special assignment, or in other

leadership roles. However, these teacher-leader opportunities did not appear to be part of any intentional efforts to prepare more principal candidates in the future.

The role of the principal has become more complex and demanding in the last few years (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010; Hargreaves & Fink, 2011; Tucker & Coddling, 2002). Principals and school district leaders alike recognized this to be true and shared ways that school districts could address the challenge of do-ability. Participant principals recommended that school district leaders be mindful of the number of changes, make sure that the expectations regarding changes were reasonable, and ensure support to principals making those changes. Hargreaves and Fink (2011) recommended limiting the number and pace of external initiatives and participant school district administrators seemed conscientious and tried “take things off the principals’ plates.” Pewter (AS) in Colorfield discussed that he strove for high engagement and high satisfaction and that the district assigned less “minutia and hoops to jump through as other places.” School district administrators also provided flexibility in staffing so other leaders to take on business or instructional roles (Tucker & Coddling, 2002) and in budgeting to support school needs. School districts provided technical support through district office positions and departments as well as professional development geared toward the needs of principals in attempts to support the work.

The five school districts had many formal and informal supports in place to help novice principals and assistant principals. Some of the veteran administrators had noticed a recent, deliberate attempt by the central office administrators to provide support and training for new administrators and move away from the “sink or swim model.” Boulder (MP) noticed “a more thoughtful, reflective approach” to the retention of principals stating that in the past, “Principals would just come and go. And, if they stayed, great. And if they left, we’d just find somebody else.” Summit (EP) mentioned that that onboarding for principals and teachers was a new concept this year which she was hopeful would help stabilize the elementary principal ranks.

Importance of relationships for retention. Without exception, every one of the 11 principal participants contended that fellow principal colleagues in the school district were valuable, informal supports. Participants described their relationships with other principals using the following terms: “collegiate atmosphere,” mutually supportive,” “pretty close group of colleagues,” “a family,” and “a tight group.” Several of them mentioned that they frequently call other principals, especially those at their same level, to get ideas about how to do something, problem-solve, get advice, ask questions, or, simply, “bounce ideas off of each other.” Additionally, colleagues were perceived as supports when times were tough. Banks (HP) in Riverbend commented, “I think the culture of the school district is to have a team of people who are mutually supportive, work together, work really quite closely together.” School district leaders also noticed and encouraged the close, collaborative relationships between principals. For example, Pewter (AS) described the close relationships among the elementary principals in Colorfield as “a family” and as a factor in retaining principals.

In addition, supportive relationships between the principals and their supervisors and/or other school district administrators were cited by leaders in every school district as a factor for principal retention. These supportive relationships were characterized by accessibility and visibility of school district administrators, feelings of support and safety, and an evaluation process that supported growth (Rogers et al., 2019). The intentional efforts on the part of the central office administrators to be available and accessible “24/7” were noticed by the principal participants. Sedge (MP) remarked, “You can also call anybody above you...They [the central office administrators] encourage it....So it’s very, very nice.” Central office administrators from various departments were also in the buildings several times per week for regularly scheduled meetings

and informal visits just “to see how things are going” or “to check on me.” Stream (HRD) noticed that the increase of time that school district leaders spent in the schools made a “huge difference” for relationships and retention. School district administrators spent considerable with each of the principals for purposes of professional growth and supervision, thus indicating a shift from serving as managers of principals to developers of principals (Rogers et al., 2019; Turnbull et al., 2013).

Accessibility to school district leaders was often coupled with feelings of support. Both newer and more veteran principals conveyed that they felt supported, especially when critical issues came up. Brook (EP) said, “The whole leadership team makes me feel like I’m their focus.” Also, there was safety to ask questions or ask for help. For example, Sedge (MP) stated, “We’re [the principals are] not afraid of our supervisors and our supervisors aren’t afraid to have tough conversations if they need to with us. But we do it out of relationship.” Relationships were characterized as providing support and challenge. Sedge (MP) concluded, “We’re friends and we can mess up and challenge each other and push each other to grow and speak our minds without taking offense with someone.” Stream (HRD) concluded, “What keeps people here is their relationship with their supervisors and with their team.”

Other factors for retention. Improvements in salary or other working conditions have been shown as an impetus for principal moves to other school districts (Baker et al., 2010). However, participants in this study did not regard increasing principal salaries as a strong strategy for principal retention but expressed that providing competitive salaries may help. Rather, participants mentioned quality of life and the geographical location or characteristics of their community as an aid for retention. White, Cooper, and Brayman (2006) noted that principal succession issues can be compounded by the apprehension of younger candidates to embark on the principalship due to the complexity of the task and the dubious benefits. In this study, novice leaders expressed concerns about job security and demanding schedules, and they conveyed desires for more supports tailored to their specific needs.

In general, the leaders used a variety of practices that may influence the retention of principals, but there was little attention given to succession planning within schools (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003, 2006; Mascall et al., 2011). The various parts of the succession cycle seemed like distinct activities and there was an overall lack of understanding of what leaders can do systematically to increase the retention of well-qualified principals (Schmidt-Davis & Bottoms, 2011). Although most districts had documents to outline hiring, induction, and evaluation, participants indicated that there were few policies that guided the work to prepare, induct, develop, and retain principals. Only leaders in Riverbend discussed some succession planning through a focus on talent development as part of their strategic plan while most participants mentioned that that they had not thought about actions that school district leaders could take to improve the retention of principals.

Conclusions and Implications

These findings, developed from the examination of the data and current literature, reveal several implications for educational leaders. Based on the findings of this study, educational leaders should leverage current supports for incoming principals such as induction, mentoring, and transition plans as well as provide continued professional development and instructional leadership support for all principals. Although the participant school districts and participants implemented leadership development strategies like partnerships and growing assistant principals to varying degrees, leaders might focus more intentionally on the development of teacher leaders and assistant

principals to fulfill future leadership needs. Moreover, leaders should apply the following strategies to retain successful principals: 1) be mindful of the workload to keep the work engaging and meaningful; 2) provide differentiated support, especially for newer administrators; 3) foster a collaborative culture among principals; and 4) build and maintain supportive relationships between principals and their supervisors at the district level.

Perhaps, the most important implication is to focus on supportive and collaborative relationships. In this study, the relationships between various stakeholders and principals, principals and their supervisors, and among principals were recognized as important to the development and retention of leaders. District leaders influenced the retention of the principals in ways that were centered on relationships also, such as differentiating support for individual principals, fostering a collaborative culture, and maintaining supportive relationships with the principals. A final recommendation is to formalize succession practices and policies (White, Cooper, & Brayman, 2006) so that changes in district leadership do not change succession practices. Recently, Parfitt (2017) developed an instrument which may help districts analyze perceptions of succession planning and a number of models for succession planning such as Dynamic Leadership Succession (Peters, 2011) have been advanced.

There are several limitations to this study. Participants in this study were limited to the small number of participants in five Colorado school districts identified through the sampling procedures described in the article. Although, the findings are not generalizable, I have attempted to help readers determine if the findings are applicable their setting by providing descriptions of the contexts and activities (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007) and by using direct quotes and participants' words in the findings (Charmaz, 2001).

Given that succession planning in schools is a relatively new and under-developed concept, it is recommended that studies be conducted with a wider range of participants including those in other states and those from school districts with higher turnover or lower teacher satisfaction to explore similarities and differences. Since this study also revealed some differences between principals nearing retirement and younger school leaders, additional studies that explore these differences could provide recommendations to support the next generation of principals also.

Schools will continue to need well-qualified principals that are committed to leading today's schools. School district leaders have an interest in hiring and retaining school leaders who are a good fit for their school district and will serve as long-term effective leaders. Succession planning can improve both the quality and quantity of leaders. This study of the succession practices in five Colorado school districts provided insight into several actions that educational leaders can take to address two major challenges regarding the principalship: developing adequate potential principal candidates and retaining successful principals. All of these actions could be fortified through the development of more formalized succession plans. Without strong succession practices, school district leaders may continue to struggle to fill these positions and jeopardize the future success of schools and students.

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Comparing Perceptions of Dual-Role Administrators and Teachers Regarding the Effectiveness of Dual-Role Administrators in a Rural State

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One increasingly utilized option for rural school districts under fiscal constraints is to utilize one person to fulfill both administrative positions of superintendent and building principal in the same school district. This study compared the perceptions of rural school administrators in this Midwest state who are serving in these dual-roles with the perceptions of teachers in this Midwest state whose principal is also tasked with serving as the superintendent. The population for this study consisted of 58 dual-role administrators and a sampling of approximately 350 teachers in schools with dual-role administrators. Results of the t-test for independent samples indicated that dual-role administrators identified school board relations, public relations, and school finance as significantly more important than did their teachers. Teachers desired that dual-role administrators spend significantly more time on student discipline and attendance. A significant difference existed in the perceptions of time allocation between dual role administrators and teachers, with teachers perceiving that dual-role administrators spend more time on the superintendency than the principalship. Results also indicated a significant difference existed in the desired time allocation with dual-role administrators desiring to spend more time on the superintendency than teachers desired of their dual-role administrators.

The importance of building-level leadership is a well-established and accepted requirement for effective schools (Storey & Johnson, 2017). Various researchers for several decades have linked quality school leadership with positive school results (Cotton, 2003; Drake & Roe, 2002; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). The role of being a principal is reported to have become more challenging and more difficult to meet the expectations placed upon school leaders through the increased focus on instruction and on student achievement (Bellibas & Liu, 2018). Rousmaniere (2013) stated, “In American public schools, the principal is the most complex and contradictory figure in the pantheon of educational leadership” (p. 2). The principal role becomes even more complicated when one person is expected to serve as a dual-role administrator. Oftentimes, these dual-role administrators are charged with completing the work of both the superintendent and the building principal: “At its most basic level, creating a hybrid position requires the superintendent to ask a single individual to perform the work responsibilities previously held by two individuals” (Forner, Bierlein-Palmer, & Reeves, 2012, p. 9). The obligations and expectations of one individual fulfilling both roles may result in a position that is difficult to be successfully filled by one individual (Alvoid & Black, 2014; Canales, Tejada-Delgado, & Slate, 2010).

Contextual Framework

Data for this study were collected from a state that meets the definition of rural as defined by United States Department of Agriculture (2014). Rural is defined as a state that has a majority of its counties that are open countryside, rural towns, or urban areas with populations of fewer than 49,999 people (USDA, 2014). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2015), 18.6% of students in the United States attends a rural school. The NCES identifies a school as being rural if it is located outside of an urban area or outside an urban cluster. In the rural, Midwestern state in this study, 78.6% of the schools are designated as being located in a rural area. Nationally, 15 states have more than half of their schools designated as rural by the NCES. The designation of rural is important due to the decreasing population of rural areas that is very notable in the rural, Midwestern state in this study.

The population density of the rural, Midwestern state in this study is one of the lowest in the nation. Due to the density of the population of the state, the schools in this rural, Midwestern state are schools located in rural areas. Of the schools in this statewide study, 91.0% are located in towns and rural areas. Nationally, the average percentage of schools designated as rural is 33.0%. The rural, Midwestern state in this study leads the nation in percentage of schools identified as being rural at 78.6% (Strange et al., 2012). States with high percentages of rural schools are challenged by the distance created by sparse populations to have consolidated schools (Strange et al., 2012).

According to the American Association of School Administrators (2009), 14.0% (26 districts) of the districts in the rural, Midwestern state in this study experienced growing student enrollments of 10.0% or more, whereas 70.0% (127 districts) of the districts faced declining enrollments of 10.0% or more. Additionally, 25.0% of the districts (46 districts) were experiencing 20.0% or greater decline in their enrollments.

Principal Leadership

Principals face enormous pressure as they work to provide equity for every student while increasing student achievement (Doerksen & Wise, 2016). Another purpose of a principal is to provide day-to-day management functions to ensure orderly and safe schools while putting into practice educational policies. Serving as a middle manager between the central office and the classroom, the principal is charged with solving the immediate problems presented on a daily basis to ensure an orderly school atmosphere while at the same time implementing educational policy (Rousmaniere, 2013).

Additionally, principals are expected to communicate effectively with a wide variety of audiences and to carry out public relations. Principals must also focus on establishing and on maintaining both positive relationships and a positive organizational culture in the school building. At the same time, principals are charged with improving student achievement as measured by standardized test scores. To increase student achievement, principals must focus on improving the instructional capacity of their staff in order to affect overall student achievement (Bellibas & Liu, 2018). The significance of the school principal increased as the leadership of the school had specific, targeted expectations for student achievement with consequences for the principal if the students failed to meet those targets (Rousmaniere, 2013).

Through the accountability movement, student learning as measured by standardized tests became one of the main tasks of building-level administrators. Drake and Roe (2002) stated, “The major task of the principal is to provide educational leadership to improve learning” (p. 151). Yang (2014) reported that failing schools have inadequate leadership, which requires a transformational approach to school improvement. When accounting for student success, successful school leaders must draw on elements of instructional leadership and transformational leaders (Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016).

Superintendent Leadership

Kowalski (2013) identified that the superintendent position is one that involves a complex range of expectations and duties, which requires leadership skills, fiscal abilities, and managerial expertise. He identified that superintendents serve as the chief executive officer, providing guidance and recommendations to their boards, as well as leadership for the entire district. Effective superintendents have to be able to create and then manage a process, which causes commitment and action in the school: “For these superintendents, responsibility for student academic achievement cannot be delegated to another administrator” (Forner, Bierlein-Palmer, & Reeves, 2012, p. 2). In addition, Kowalski (2013) reported the need for superintendents to be involved in the legislative process at the state and federal levels.

Historically, superintendents were expected to be the managers for the district, serving as a record keeper, and creating financial reports for the district. The position evolved and changed into one with an increasing focus of being an educator as opposed to a record keeper. As schools became more complex, the role of superintendent evolved over time, away from that of being an educator, and into that of serving as the chief executive officer and advisor to the school board (Campbell, Cunningham, Nystrand, & Usdan, 1985).

Those individuals fulfilling the duties of being a superintendent must work directly with and carry out the directives of the school board. Tekniepe (2015) wrote, “When a superintendent views board members as having a sufficient amount of training and knowledge to effectively

perform their job functions, adversarial tension and mistrust between the two parties both wane” (p. 9). The superintendent is expected to work with multiple stakeholder groups, not only in the school district but also in the community in which a school district is located.

Leadership Challenges

Fiscal constraints and the realities of decreased funding have caused school boards to find ways to reduce their costs: “Superintendents in school districts in which low reserve balances in the general operating fund impact fiscal policy and budgeting decisions were more likely to experience a push-induced departure” (Tekniepe, 2015, p. 9). Due to budget constraints caused by decreased funding, school boards have been challenged to find methods to maximize the available budget dollars to maintain curricular offerings, to maintain facilities, to maintain competitive salaries, to fund increasing benefit costs, and to maintain long-term financial stability. School boards have been faced with having to decrease staff positions, increase class size, and reduce or eliminate funding for reform programs due to the decreased funding (Oliff, Mai, & Leachman, 2011).

As the recession of 2007 impacted state budgets, 35 states decreased the amount of funding for K-12 education. Those 35 states had varying levels of decreased funding, with decreasing funding over 13.0% from fiscal years 2008 to 2013 (Oliff et al., 2011). Additionally, many rural districts have been challenged with decreased student enrollments. Rural districts also faced burdens that were either nonexistent or less problematic in their non-rural counterparts, especially in regard to funding (Yettick, Baker, Wickersham, & Hupfeld, 2014, p. 12). With schools being funded on a per-pupil basis, declining enrollments add to the fiscal constraints faced by many rural districts.

An approach rural districts have utilized to meet the financial challenges has been to combine various administrative positions. A superintendent also serving as a building-level administrator is a common structure utilized in a variety of states across the nation such as California, Illinois, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Texas (Canales et al., 2010; Cronin, 2008; Heath & Vik, 1993). For example, in one Midwestern state a combination of serving as superintendent and as a building-level principal was being utilized in 38.4% (58 of 151) (South Dakota Department of Education, 2014). In some rural schools, two administrators might be assigned all of the administrative duties in a district. In some cases, one individual fulfills all the administrative duties for the entire district, serving as superintendent and the only principal (Cronin, 2008).

The expectation that one individual can perform the duties of both a school superintendent and a school principal results in a position where an individual is expected to fulfill school board and governance functions as superintendent while simultaneously handling the hectic tasks and daily schedule of being a school principal (Yates & De Jong, 2018). These management tasks are to be accomplished by one individual while simultaneously that individual is responsible for the accountability expectations of high-stakes testing and for the learning of each student (Doerksen & Wise, 2016).

Budget realities have forced school districts to make difficult choices concerning decreased funding, with some districts choosing dual-role administrators as an option. Dual-role administrative positions were identified as being less than ideal decades ago. Woll (1988) reported that individuals serving in dual roles are faced with multiple responsibilities of two positions, resulting in a prioritization of their time, which led to many important duties being unfulfilled. Doerksen and Wise (2016) reaffirmed the challenges of such positions, stating that the multiple

roles and responsibilities can interfere with the leadership ability and effectiveness of administrators who are attempting to fulfill the obligations of two positions. Additionally, Hakonson (1998) found that three-fourths of both dual-role administrators and school board presidents in Nebraska cited a lack of administrator time to perform all duties as the primary disadvantage of dual-role positions.

Dual-Role Administrators

Dual-role administrators are charged with completing the work of both the superintendent and the building principal. The expectations for both positions are different and the result may be a position, which is impossible to be successfully filled by one individual (Canales et al., 2010). While the districts utilizing such combined positions tend to be rural, the amount of work is not necessarily similarly decreased for reporting, management functions, school board, and community relations. Additionally, unlike their counterparts in larger districts, the dual-role administrators are not providing oversight and delegating the various duties to fellow staff members, but are charged with actually carrying out the duties (Doerksen & Wise, 2016).

Dual-role administrative positions are not a new creation, having been utilized for decades by various school districts in a variety of states (Anderson, 2007; Canales et al., 2010; Cronin, 2008; Heath & Vik, 1993). As school districts across the nation are facing decreases in school funding, dual-role positions will continue to be utilized as districts look for ways to function with decreasing tax dollars (Canales et al., 2010). Individuals serving in dual-role positions will continue to be charged with fulfilling both roles, i.e. of maintaining accountability of student achievement on standardized test scores, and of facing the challenges of fulfilling the time commitments and duties of both positions (Doerksen & Wise, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

This research study determined and compared the perceptions of dual-role administrators and the teachers in buildings with dual-role administrators in a rural, Midwestern state regarding the ranking of importance of administrative responsibilities, time allocation, advantages, and disadvantages of a district employing a dual-role administrator as both a superintendent and as a building principal.

Research Questions

This study addressed the following questions:

1. What are the differences in perceptions of teachers and dual-role administrators regarding the importance of the following responsibilities of the combined superintendency-principalship in a rural state?
 - a. Curriculum development
 - b. Instructional leadership
 - c. Teacher evaluation
 - d. Classroom walkthroughs
 - e. Student achievement and data analysis
 - f. Parent relations
 - g. School improvement planning

- h. Public relations
 - i. Staff development
 - j. School finance/budget
 - k. Student discipline and attendance
 - l. Student relations
 - m. Administrator/board relations
2. What are the differences in perceptions of teachers and dual-role administrators regarding the adequacy of administrator time commitment to fulfilling the following superintendency-principalship responsibilities in a rural state?
 - a. Curriculum development
 - b. Instructional leadership
 - c. Teacher evaluation
 - d. Classroom walkthroughs
 - e. Student achievement and data analysis
 - f. Parent relations
 - g. School improvement planning
 - h. Public relations
 - i. Staff development
 - j. School finance/budget
 - k. Student discipline and attendance
 - l. Student relations
 - m. Administrator/board relations
 3. What are the differences in perceptions of teachers and dual-role administrators regarding the percentage of time allocated to the superintendency and the principalship in a rural state?
 4. What are the differences in perceptions of teachers and dual-role administrators regarding the advantages and disadvantages of the combined superintendency-principalship in a rural state?
 5. What advice did dual-role administrators give to school districts that are considering combining the administrative positions?
 6. What advice did teachers who have a dual-role administrator as their building principal give to school districts who are considering combining administrative positions?
 7. What are the demographics of the dual-role administrators in a rural state?

Significance of this Study

With ongoing fiscal constraints due to the decreases in school funding and declining enrollment, school districts will continue to look for ways to balance budgets. Declining enrollment and declining rural populations continue to impact school districts with declining levels of funding, and school boards are faced with having to decrease school expenses. Combining administrative positions has been one method some school boards have chosen to reduce costs.

This study provides information to guide school boards and administrators about the potential impact of having one individual charged with carrying out the two administrative positions of being a superintendent and a building-level principal. A review of the literature revealed that there have been isolated studies on dual-role positions in Nebraska (Anderson, 2007; Hakonson, 1998) and North Dakota (Cronin, 2008).

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge concerning dual-role administrators by identifying the perceptions of teachers who teach in buildings with dual-role administrators. The perceptions of teachers help to further guide school boards and administrators in recommending and implementing alternative administrative structures.

The position of being a building principal has taken on new meaning under the accountability movement which features high-stakes testing. School buildings and the leadership of the school have specific outcomes their students are to achieve as measured by school-wide assessments. The importance of the building principal increased as the schools and the principal has specific consequences if achievement targets are not reached (Rousmaniere, 2013).

Building principals must continue to fulfill traditional role expectations to keep their schools functioning in an orderly and smooth manner, being responsive to their students, parents, and other stakeholders (Fullan, 2007). At the same time, current expectations are that school leaders are responsible for improving test results and positively impacting student achievement (Bellibas & Liu, 2018).

The primary purpose of this study was to compare the perceptions of dual-role administrators and teachers regarding the effectiveness of combining the Superintendent and Principal administrative positions. The results of this study were based on comparing the responses obtained from a survey of administrators in a rural, Midwestern state who were serving in dual roles as superintendent and also as a building principal in the same district and a survey of teachers who were teaching in a building served by a building principal who was also the superintendent in the same district.

Methodology

The population of this study consisted of 58 administrators in this rural, Midwestern state who were serving as both the superintendent and as a building principal in the same school district. For the teacher survey, a random sampling of the teachers, which had a building principal who was also the school superintendent, was utilized. The questionnaires that Hakonson (1998) utilized were adapted to answer the research questions posed in this study. Five school administrators in the rural, Midwestern state in this study critiqued the questionnaires. Responses to the research questions were analyzed using the *t*-test for independent samples, descriptive statistics, descriptive analysis, and frequency.

Population and Sample

The population for this study consisted of two groups. The 58 administrators in the rural, Midwestern state who are serving in dual roles as superintendent and also as a building level principal in the same district formed the administrator population. For the teacher survey, a sampling of approximately 350 teachers from the schools who are teaching in a building that is served by a building principal who is also the school superintendent was utilized.

Sampling Design

All of the superintendents who also served as building level principals in the rural, Midwestern state in this study were included in the sample. For the teachers, the principals were asked to identify the last names of the teachers under their supervision and then to identify the first three

and last three teachers on the alphabetized roster. A dual-role administrator forwarded the survey to the randomly selected teachers.

Instrumentation

The researchers in this study received permission to adapt the questionnaire that Hakonson (1998) utilized to study the perceptions of school board presidents and dual-role superintendents. Data was collected using two similar types of questionnaires, one for those individuals serving in dual-role administrative positions and one for teachers who were teaching in a building served by a dual-role administrator. The questionnaires consist of eight multiple-choice items, two Likert scale items, and three free-response items. A pilot study was conducted with the help of a select group of dual-role administrators from the rural, Midwestern state in this study, with the intent of critiquing the adapted questionnaire.

Data Collection

The Department of Education for the rural, Midwestern state in this study provided the researcher with a list of superintendents who were also serving as a building-level principal in the district. Dual-role administrators were emailed a letter of invitation containing a formal request to participate in this study and directions to participate in this study were provided. Also included in the email to dual-role administrators was a letter of invitation to teachers. The dual-role administrators were asked to distribute the survey by forwarding an email to teachers in their building.

Data Analysis

The *t*-test for independent samples was performed to compare the response of the means of the dual-role administrator's perceptions of superintendent-principal responsibilities to the perceptions of teachers in buildings served by dual-role administrators for research questions one and two. Research question three was analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine differences in perceptions related to time spent in the superintendent and principal roles. Using descriptive quantitative analysis, research questions four, five, and six were analyzed to determine the presence of similar and dissimilar themes related to dual-role administration. Research question seven was analyzed using descriptive quantitative analysis and frequency to determine demographic patterns from the demographic characteristics of the dual-role administrators. SPSS version 22 was utilized to conduct the statistical analysis of the collected data for all seven questions.

Results

The primary purpose of this study was to provide guidance to school districts combining the superintendent and principal administrative positions. The results of this study were based on comparing the responses obtained from a survey of administrators in the rural, Midwestern state in this study who were serving in the dual roles as superintendent and also as a building principal in the same district and a survey of teachers who were teaching in a building served by a building principal who was also the superintendent in the same district.

Response Rates

Of the 58 superintendents who were also serving as a building principal in the same district, 35 completed the survey for dual-role administrators. The response rate for the superintendents serving as dual-role administrators was 60.3%. With 35 superintendents agreeing to participate, a population of 210 teachers existed. Of those 210 teachers, 125 completed the survey for teachers who were teaching in buildings that had a principal who is also serving as the superintendent. The response rate for the teachers was 59.5%.

Demographic Data

The dual-role administrators' sample consisted of 13 (39.4%) administrators who were serving as the superintendent and the elementary principal, 12 (36.4%) who were serving as the superintendent and the high school principal, and 8 (24.2%) who were serving as the superintendent, elementary, and high school principal. The teacher sample consisted of 45 (41.7%) elementary teachers who had a principal who was also serving as the superintendent, 46 (42.6%) high school teachers who had a principal who was also serving as the superintendent, and 17 (15.7%) teachers who had a principal that was serving as the only principal in the district as well as being the superintendent.

The majority of both dual-role administrators ($n = 32$, 94.1%) and teachers whose principal also served as the superintendent ($n = 115$, 98.2%) reported a district size of 500 or fewer students K-12. Table 1 provides a summary of the district size by student enrollment.

Table 1
School District Size by K-12 Enrollment

	Dual Role Administrators	Dual Role Administrators	Teachers	Teachers
Student Enrollment	n	%	n	%
Between 1 and 250	15	44.1	72	61.5
Between 251 and 500	17	50.0	43	36.7
Between 501 and 750	2	5.9	2	1.7
Over 750 Students	0	0.0	0	0.0

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100.0 due to rounding

In addition to serving as both the superintendent and as a building principal in the same school district, the majority ($n = 26$, 78.7%) of dual-role administrators were serving additional roles. Respondents were asked to identify whether they were serving in one or more of the additional roles of athletic director, special education director, curriculum director, or technology director. The dual-role administrators reported that 10 (30.3%) were serving one additional role, 14 (42.4%) were serving two additional roles, and 2 (6.0%) were serving three additional roles.

Perceptions Regarding Administrative Responsibilities

Data regarding the dual-role administrators' perceptions and the teacher's perceptions of the importance of superintendent-principal responsibilities indicated that a significant difference existed in three of the responsibilities. Dual-role administrators identified school board relations as significantly more important than did the teachers, $t(79.261) = 2.44, p = .017$. Dual-role administrators also identified public relations as significantly more important than did the teachers, $t(89.118) = 2.02, p = .046$. Additionally, dual-role administrators identified school finance as significantly more important than did the teachers, $t(67.071) = 2.28, p = .026$. No other differences were significant at the .05 level.

Perceptions Regarding Sufficiency of Time Commitment

Data regarding the differences in the perceptions of dual-role administrators and teachers in terms of the sufficiency of time committed to administrative responsibilities indicated that a significant difference existed in nine of the responsibilities. The data indicated that dual-role administrators desired to spend significantly more time than teachers desired of their administrators on the responsibilities of involvement in curriculum development, implementation, and assessment $t(152) = 3.97, p = .000$, instructional leadership $t(152) = 5.52, p = .000$, analyzing and communicating student achievement data $t(151) = 3.29, p = .001$, staff development $t(54.219) = 4.95, p = .000$, school finance $t(43.360) = 4.36, p = .000$, teacher formal evaluations $t(150) = 2.69, p = .008$, school improvement planning $t(152) = 3.84, p = .000$, and classroom walkthroughs $t(151) = 3.06, p = .003$. Teachers desired that dual-role administrators spend significantly more time on student discipline and attendance $t(152) = -3.80, p = .000$ than dual-role administrators desired. No other differences were significant at the .05 level.

Perceptions Regarding Administrative Time Allotment

Sixty-one (52.1%) of the teachers perceived that dual-role administrators spent 75% or more of their time on superintendent responsibilities. In comparison, 12 (35.3%) of the dual-role administrators perceived that they spent 75% or more of their time on superintendent responsibilities.

Perceived Time Allocation to Administrative Positions

Results of the t -test for independent samples indicated a significance difference existed in the perceptions of time allocation between dual role administrators and teachers, $t(150) = 3.24, p = .001$.

Additional Allocation of Administrative Time

While a majority ($n = 21, 61.8\%$) of dual-role administrators desired to spend more time allocated to superintendent duties, 57 (49.6%) of the teachers desired no change in time allocation and 53 (46.1%) of the teachers desired more time allocated to being principal.

Desired Time Allocation to Administrative Positions

Results of the *t*-test for independent variables indicated a significant difference existed in the desired time allocation, $t(147) = -7.97, p = .000$.

Advantages and Disadvantages Regarding Combined Administrative Roles

Similar themes were reported by both the dual-role administrators and the teachers regarding the advantages of having the combined administrative structure of superintendent-principal. Both groups reported that having one person serve as both the superintendent and principal resulted in less bureaucracy as there was only one administrative layer. Of the 36 open-ended teacher responses, 15 (41.7%) centered on the theme of having one less administrative layer. The teachers reported that this allowed the superintendent to have closer relationships with the staff and students, increased awareness of the daily activities of the school, and a more visible presence than superintendents normally would have. Of the 22 individual administrator responses, the most common ($n = 12, 43.8\%$) responses revolved around the theme of the superintendent being more involved in the day-to-day aspects of the school. Several administrators and several teachers identified financial savings as an advantage of having a combined administrative position.

The disadvantages of a combined administrative position as reported by dual-role administrators cited a lack of time and energy to complete the various tasks of both the superintendent and the principal positions, diminished administrative collaboration or a lack of an administrative team, and a diminished level of administrators to deal with concerns and issues due to one person serving as both principal and superintendent. Of the 60 responses provided by dual-role administrators, 45 (75.0%) either directly cited a lack of time or cited an inability to complete an obligation or duty because of a lack of time due to serving both roles. Several cited that long hours are required to fulfill the obligations of both positions. Of the 30 responses provided by teachers, 19 (63.3%) cited that the dual-role administrator was unable to deal with the needs and concerns of staff and students and was unable to build relationships with staff and students, as their principal was also fulfilling the superintendent role in their district.

Is Combining the Superintendency and the Principalship a Good Idea?

The largest group of dual-role administrators ($n = 16, 45.7\%$) responded that combining the superintendency and principalship was not a good idea, with 11 (31.4%) responding that they were unsure whether the combination was a good idea. The largest group of teachers ($n = 44, 37.9\%$) responded they were unsure that the combination was a good idea and 35 (30.2%) of the teachers responded that the combination was not a good idea.

Results of the *t*-test for independent samples indicated a significant difference did not exist in the perceptions of dual-role administrators and teachers whether combining the positions of superintendency and principalship was a good idea, $t(149) = .161, p = .872$.

Reason for Combining the Superintendency and Principalship

A majority of both dual-role administrators ($n = 32, 91.4\%$) and teachers ($n = 68, 57.6\%$) responded that one of the reasons for combining the positions of superintendent and principal was a financial savings. Declining enrollment was cited as the second most frequent response (37.1%)

by dual-role administrators. The response “Unsure” was cited as the second most frequent response (37.9%) by teachers.

Advice to School Districts Considering Combining Administrative Positions

Many dual-role administrators advised that school districts not combine administrative positions. Several identified that the two positions had more responsibilities than one individual could fulfill. Others identified that districts should be selective in the individual they choose to fulfill a dual-role position. A theme of having a supportive staff, the support of fellow administrators or directors, and awareness by the district that some duties will be impacted existed in the responses of the dual-role administrators’ advice as to what would be necessary for a school district to consider utilizing a dual-role administrator. Many of the teachers also responded that school districts should not combine the positions. Several other teachers advised that combining positions was a viable situation concerning the financial savings. Several also indicated that a plan needed to be in place for when the dual-role administrator was attending meetings outside of the district. Other advice from the teachers revolved around the idea of carefully selecting the individual, having awareness of the stress experienced by individuals fulfilling dual roles, and that districts should ensure support from the teachers.

Based on descriptive and statistical analysis, the following research results emerged:

1. Dual-role administrators identified the superintendent-principal administrative responsibilities of school board relations, public relations, and school finance as being significantly more important in the combined superintendency-principalship than did teachers.
2. Dual-role administrators desired to spend significantly more time on the superintendent-principal administrative responsibilities of curriculum development, implementation, and assessment, instructional leadership, analyzing and communicating student achievement data, staff development, school finance, teacher formal evaluations, school improvement planning, and classroom walkthroughs than teachers desired of dual-role administrators.
3. Dual-role administrators desired to spend significantly less time on the superintendent-principal administrative responsibility of student discipline and attendance than teachers desired of dual-role administrators.
4. 45% of dual-role administrators responded that combining the superintendency and principalship was not a good idea, while a majority of teachers reported that they were unsure if the combining of the superintendency and principalship was a good idea. No significance difference existed in their perceptions.
5. Dual-role administrators and teachers most often cited financial savings as the reason for combining the positions of superintendent and principal. No significant difference existed in their perceptions.
6. A significant difference existed in the perceived time allocation of dual- role administrators, with teachers perceiving that a majority of the time of dual-role administrators was spent in the superintendent role. Dual-role administrators perceived that the administrators allocated their time either equally or spent more of their time on the role of principal.
7. A significant difference existed in the desired time allocation of dual- role administrators and teachers, with a majority of dual-role administrators desiring to spend more time on

the role of superintendent while a majority of teachers desired no change in the time allocation between the two positions.

8. A majority of dual-role administrators reported that more than 50% of their time was spent on principal duties. However, a majority of teachers reported that dual-role administrators were spending more than 50% of their time on superintendent duties.

Conclusions

The following conclusions are developed based on the findings and results of the analysis of the data collected for this study.

1. Dual-role administrators do not believe that combining the positions of superintendent and principal is a good idea.
2. Financial savings are the primary reason for combining the positions of superintendent and principal.
3. Dual-role administrators and teachers have similar perceptions regarding the importance of eleven of the fourteen selected administrative responsibilities.
4. Dual-role administrative structures are most often utilized in school districts with enrollment less than the median enrollment of districts throughout the state.
5. Teachers perceive that dual-role administrators are focusing a majority of their administrative time on the superintendent duties and role, while dual-role administrators perceive that they are spending half or less than half of their time on the superintendent duties and role.
6. While dual-role administrators prefer to spend more time on the role of being the superintendents, teachers prefer the administrators spend more time related to principal duties such as discipline and attendance.
7. The majority of dual-role administrators have additional responsibilities beyond those of being the superintendent and principal.
8. Teachers would prefer dual-role administrators spend more time on management responsibilities while dual-role administrators would prefer to spend more time on leadership and instructional responsibilities.
9. The dual-role position of superintendent and elementary principal was as common as the dual-role position of superintendent and secondary principal. Less common was the superintendent also fulfilling both the elementary principal and the secondary principal roles.

Discussion

Those individuals who were serving as dual-role administrators in the rural, Midwestern state shared that school districts should not utilize the dual-administrative structure of having one individual serving as both the superintendent and the principal. Those individuals reported in their responses to both the direct response question as well as the open-ended questions that the role of superintendent-principal was a difficult position to fulfill due to the expectations and obligations of trying to fulfill both roles. Previous research in South Dakota found similar advice, with Heath and Vik (1993) concluding in their research that combining superintendent and principal positions into one administrative position “is not an ideal arrangement, even for small schools” (p. 9).

The teachers were unsure whether the dual-role position should be utilized, which may be attributed to the fact that they have not attempted to fulfill the role themselves. Due to having not fulfilled the administrative roles themselves, the teachers are unlikely to have an understanding of the time demands and expectations placed upon dual-role administrators. This uncertainty may be compounded by the challenges of being an effective leader while fulfilling the multiple roles and responsibilities of a dual-role administrative position (Doerksen & Wise, 2016).

Both dual-role administrators and teachers cited financial savings most often as the reason for combining the positions of superintendent and principal. The rural, Midwestern state in this study has decreased school funding by 13.6% from 2008 to 2013 (Oliff et al., 2011). These ongoing fiscal challenges have caused school districts to look for ways to reduce their budgets. The elimination of an administrative position has been an option that increasing numbers of school districts have chosen. For example, Heath and Vik (1993) reported 29.6% (50 of 169) of school districts in South Dakota utilized dual-role administrators in 1992. By 2014, dual-role administrators increased to 38.4% (58 of 151) of school districts utilizing the position (South Dakota Department of Education, 2014).

As individuals try to fulfill the dual-role administrator position, a difference of perception exists as to whether those individuals serving as dual-role administrators are allotting more time to the role of the superintendent or the role of principal. Teachers report a perception that their dual-role administrator is spending more time on the role of superintendent. Teachers indicated by their responses a desire for school administrators to spend more time on administrative tasks, which are management-orientated tasks as opposed to instructional tasks. The administrators desired to spend more time on tasks, which are instructionally related as opposed to managerial tasks. The administrators clearly desired to spend more time as instructional leaders. The teachers were in disagreement with the administrators and the teachers desired a stronger focus by the administrators on the management role as opposed to the leadership role.

Dual-role administrators must attempt to fulfill the obligations of both the position of superintendent and the position of principal. The expectations for both positions are different and one person may find they are in an administrative position, which is impossible to successfully fill (Canales et al., 2010). Several of the open-ended responses from the teachers also noted that having a dual-role administrator is a concern when the administrator is out of the district for meetings or training, as a hierarchy of administration is not in place as there would be if two separate individuals were serving in the two different roles.

Individuals serving in the dual-role position face the challenge of being in a position as superintendent where they work directly for the school board and are required to fulfill the district-level obligations and to communicate regularly with the school board while at the same time, being readily available to fulfill the building-level obligations and communication needed to be the educational leader of a school. Role conflict and role ambiguity are a concern for these individuals (Bowling et al., 2017).

A vast majority of dual-role administrators in the rural, Midwestern state in this study serve in districts with total enrollments of 500 students or less. Other researchers in other states identified that dual-role administrators were typically found in districts, which had enrollments of fewer than 600 students (Anderson, 2007; Cronin, 2008).

While the districts utilizing dual-role administrators tend to have lower enrollment than the median enrollment in the state, the work expectations and requirements are not necessarily similarly decreased for reporting, management functions, school board, and community relations. Additionally, unlike their counterparts in larger districts, the dual-role administrators are having

to actually complete the administrative tasks as opposed to providing oversight and delegating the various duties (Doerksen & Wise, 2016).

Larger districts tend to have a team of administrators, which allows the delegation of administrative tasks, with different administrators focusing on a more defined set of tasks and duties with a more focused knowledge base. The dual-role administrator is faced with the challenge of being knowledgeable in all areas as little delegation can take place. As Canales, Tejeda-Delgado, and Slate (2010) reported, an administrator in a large district may have various support personnel, curriculum specialists, and fellow administrators to help advise, implement, and fulfill the various tasks and programs.

School districts who utilize the position of having a dual-administrator need to be aware that one person cannot fulfill all the obligations and responsibilities of two positions that are fulfilled by two separate individuals in many districts. The school board, staff, and community should determine what the expectations are for the individual serving in the dual-role position, realizing that the individual will need time for family and non-school activities. Combining the hectic, unpredictable schedule of a building principal with that of the school board relations and governance functions required of the superintendency results in an administrative role whose expectations and duties are unmatched by any other administrative position (Canales, Tejeda-Delgado, & Slate, 2010).

Recommendations for Practice

Based on the results of this study, school districts considering combining the positions of superintendent and principal into one dual-role administrative position should consider the following recommendations for practice:

1. If the college serves school leaders from a primarily rural state, then college courses, which fulfill the requirements of becoming certified as a superintendent, should incorporate strategies on how to fulfill the obligations and expectations of dual-role administrative positions.
2. School boards utilizing dual-administrators should collaborate with the individual fulfilling those roles and the school staff to establish reasonable expectations, duties, and obligations of the individual serving in the dual-role position.
3. School boards should be careful in the selection of administrators who will serve in a dual-role position in terms of the personality traits and skills required to successfully fulfill all of the administrative responsibilities.
4. School boards should carefully consider and examine any additional duties expected of the dual-role administrator.
5. School boards who elect to combine administrative positions should consider employing a lead teacher or other personnel to assist in the duties necessary of the dual-role administrator.
6. School districts should consider other multi-role administrative positions in addition to the combination of superintendent-principal when determining which administrative combinations to utilize.
7. School districts who utilize the superintendent-principal dual administrative structure need to plan and implement ongoing communication with their staff concerning the obligations and duties of the position so as to ensure that different perceptions do not develop between the staff and administrator in regard to time-allotment.

8. School boards should engage in a study of the literature, seek guidance from those who have studied dual-role administrative positions, and consult with practicing dual-role administrators if they are contemplating hiring a dual-role administrator.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the results of this study, the researchers recommend that further research is conducted on a qualitative level in order to obtain actual stories from dual-role administrators. Additional research should also compare workloads and stress levels between dual role administrators and non-dual role administrators.

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The Relationship Between School District Instructional Related Expenditures to State Exam Scores in Small, Mid-Size, and Large School Districts in Texas

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There has been much debate by and among federal and state education agencies, state legislatures, courts, and educators regarding the identification of school district expenditures that best facilitate effective and efficient schools. The issue of equitable funding is far from being resolved (Education Week, 2017). Contradictory studies associated with school district funding, expenditures, and student achievement have been used to substantiate varied opinions on the subject (Archibald, 2006; Gigliotti & Sorensen, 2017; Pan, Rudo, Schneider, and Smith-Hansen, 2003). While much of the existing research is focused on overall school revenue and/or expenditures, research is needed that provides information specific to instructional expenditures and student performance.

The purpose of this study was to test the relationship between instructional related expenditures and student performance on a state mandated exam in small, mid-size, and large school districts in Texas. This correlational study utilized secondary data analysis of Texas school district accountability data to test the relationship between various district-level instructional expenditures and school district student performance. A stratified random sample of school districts were used in the study: Small = 1,000 – 2,000 students $n = 120$, Mid-Size = 5,000 – 10,000 students $n = 59$, and Large = 25,000 or more students $n = 43$.

Based upon the findings of the partial correlations, two variables, per-pupil instructional expenditures as a percentage of operational expenditures and per-pupil expenditures for curriculum development had a statistically significant relationship with district performance on the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR).

School finance has been an ongoing source of often contentious debate in the United States; specifically, as it relates to student/school performance and accountability (Archibald, 2006; Gigliotti & Sorensen, 2017; Pan et al., 2003). Arguably, one reason for the contentiousness is because research on the relationships between school district funding, expenditures, and student achievement has been inconclusive and often contradictory (Archibald, 2006; Gigliotti & Sorensen, 2017; Pan et al., 2003). The lack of consensus in findings has allowed entities to espouse favorable findings to support their preferred initiatives in regard to school finance (e.g., calls for more school funding, revised school funding models, more accountability, less funding for public education, and the need for a voucher system).

It has been suggested that one of the potential factors for inconclusive and contradictory findings was because much of the existing research focused on overall school revenue and/or expenditures. Archibald (2006) suggested that expenditures per pupil must be disaggregated into more meaningful categories to discern the relationship between resources and expenditures to student achievement. In other words, identifying the relationship between instructional related expenditures to student performance was a method of creating more specificity to targeted relationships, eliminating potentially confounding expenditures that may be unrelated or marginally related to student achievement.

Funding for public schools in the U.S. is often influenced, either directly or indirectly, by district size. For example, in Texas much of the funding for daily operations is from a Maintenance and Operation tax (M&O) established by school districts (Texas Education Agency, 2018b). Although there are formulas and guidelines for determining the limits to the tax rate a school district can impose, the amount is also influenced by the size and wealth within a school district. Although researchers have questioned the relevance of school districts to student achievement (Whitehurst, Chingos, & Gallaher, 2013), the relationship of district size to funding amounts could influence the relationship.

As expectations rise for students and teachers to perform at higher levels and for schools to guarantee the success of all students, the question of how best to achieve these goals through effective resource allocation becomes even more critical (Pan et al., 2003). As such, the purpose of this study was to test the relationship between various budgetary expenses and student passing rates on a mandated standardized test for small, mid-sized, and large, public school districts in Texas.

Review of the Literature

Educational Expenditures

Jones & Slate (2010) studied compliance of Texas school districts with the 65% instructional expenditures ratio as related to student academic success on the previous state exam and found that districts spending 60 to 65% of operational expenditures on instruction associated costs scored higher than districts which spent less than 60%. School district expenditures are impacted by the amount of revenue available to school districts in each state. Texas ranks 41st out of 50 states in the amount of money spent on education per-pupil. New York, the state with the highest expenditure per-pupil on education, spends more than twice the amount of Texas in a per-pupil comparison (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). The sources of revenue for educational purposes in

Texas is approximately 52% locally generated by property taxes and other revenue, 38% is provided by the state, and 10% by the federal government. This is in contrast to revenue sources in other states where, on average, the state provides a larger percentage portion of the revenue compared to locally generated revenue (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016).

In the U.S. Supreme Court Case, *San Antonio School District v Rodriguez*, 1973, the court ruled that education is not among the rights afforded explicit protection under our Federal Constitution, but that no other state function is so uniformly recognized as an essential element of our society's well-being. This Supreme Court ruling places the burden of providing a free, public education system as a state responsibility (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2018).

How expenditures on education are reported, and what effect expenditures have on student performance, have been the subject of conflicting studies (Archibald, 2006; Gigliotti & Sorenson, 2017). Studies involving expenditures and student performance have also identified differing effects of expenditures on various student groups. In a National Bureau of Economic Research working paper reviewing increased spending by states following education reform, it was noted that students from low-income families benefitted from the additional expenditures while performance of students from higher-income families resulted in limited consequences (Yettick, 2014). There is also the issue of funding per-student or varied funding allotments based on individual need. Lindahl & Cain (2012) describe this concept as horizontal equity, similarly situated students being funded similarly, and vertical equity, differentiated funding based on individual student need.

A common limitation of studies that examine the relationship between expenditures and student performance is the amount of general expenditures that have little or nothing to do with student performance. Expenditures relevant to instructional outcomes, along with increased instructional time, increases in teacher salaries, reduced class sizes, and other factors have been identified as having a direct relationship to student performance (Jackson et al., 2015). Policymakers are divided in their views on the proper course to follow in school finance. While some do not believe in a relationship of expenditures to student performance, others feel that more money needs to be spent to reduce disparities between rich and poor school districts to the point where spending levels in the two types of school districts are equivalent. This suggests that revenue should be increased for poor school districts to compensate for inequalities that students in poor districts experience (Wenglinsky, 1997).

The relationship of school district expenditures to student performance on standardized achievement tests has been studied in addition to studies focusing on the relationship of expenditures to student performance on state exams. Studies have found a correlation between per-pupil expenditures and scores on standardized achievement tests, including the American College Test (ACT) and the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) Reasoning Test (Bolon, 2001).

Testing and Accountability

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act passed in 1965 was the first federal legislation to address widespread education requirements and was designed to support the Brown vs. Board of Education ruling in 1954. The bill advocated the use of testing to reduce the achievement gap between white and minority students (McKenzie & Kress, 2015). The legislation also included elements that addressed the need for schools located in disadvantaged areas to receive additional resources, emphasized the importance of measuring minority student progress, and included

information as to school district responsibility to policymakers and taxpayers (McKenzie & Kress, 2015).

No Child Left Behind was enacted by Congress to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. NCLB provided the guidelines which described financial support and school accountability expectations from the federal government to the states (Dee & Jacob, 2010). A provision of the legislation required each state to develop standards and placed emphasis on annual testing, academic progress, school accountability, and teacher qualifications (Dee & Jacob, 2010). Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was passed by Congress in 2015 to replace NCLB with the intended purpose of giving more flexibility to the states as to how they would accomplish the objectives outlined in NCLB and to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Mathis & Trujillo, 2016).

Both No Child Left Behind and Every Student Succeeds Act legislation incorporated requirements for states to utilize standardized testing in order to identify schools that were underperforming and guidelines for interventions for those schools. However, the use of standardized tests to measure student performance for the purpose of school accountability is inherently problematic (Wiliam, 2010). Wiliam reported that between-school differences account for less than ten percent of the variance in student scores, in part, because the progress of individuals is small compared to the spread of achievement within a specific grade level or cohort age group. This would indicate potential problems with current accountability systems because the school's impact on student achievement may not be representative to how performance is being treated in accountability system design. However, Dorn (2014) reported that advocates of test-based accountability in the United States and elsewhere argue that such accountability is required for human-capital development and to satisfy equity concerns.

Even though student test performance on standardized tests is used in all fifty states as part of school accountability systems, student achievement based upon standardized test scores, does not yield the same response from all states. Different responses by states include rewards, sanctions, and/or assistance. Many states in an effort to raise the performance for specified subgroups, including minority, low-income or economically disadvantaged, and limited English proficient students, require that data be disaggregated for reporting purposes (Kane & Staiger, 2002). Furthermore, they identified the problem associated with basing school accountability ratings on comparative student test results as between-school variance is only ten to fifteen percent of test score results. The difference in mean test performance between the best and worst-performing schools is not nearly as large as the differences between the best and worst-performing student in the typical school.

When volatility in test scores is combined with a relatively narrow distribution of school performance, it implies that the ninety-five percent confidence interval for the average fourth-grade reading or math score in a school with as many as sixty-nine students at that grade level would extend from approximately the twenty-fifth to the seventy-fifth percentile among schools of that size (Kane & Staiger, 2002). Although one could argue that states are placing too much credibility on student performance scores in identifying an accountability rating or score based on test results, it is currently the system being used. Other variables that complicate the relationship of test results to accountability ratings. Student socioeconomic status (SES) has a profound impact on high-stakes test results. It has been found that students with lower SES, sometimes called economically disadvantaged, do not perform as well on high-stakes tests as their more affluent peers (Amrein & Berliner, 2002; Ediger, 2000; Holman, 1995; Madaus & Clarke, 2001; Reeves & Grubb, 1997).

There are defensible reasons why standardized test scores should be used for comparison and accountability purposes even though it is widely accepted that these same tests measure a restricted range of knowledge do so in a limited range of performance formats, primarily multiple-choice responses (Ravitch, 2010). However, Ravitch found that because such exams allow for widespread comparability of scores and reduced inter-rater variability as compared to more authentic forms of evaluation, they have become the most-used measure for research studies and accountability comparisons.

School District Size

Previous studies were conducted to examine the relationship between school district size and student performance on state exams. In an earlier study, Leneer (2013) conducted a non-experimental, quantitative, causal-comparative research design for her doctoral dissertation. Leneer found that larger school districts (10,000 or more students), outscored moderate-size (1,600-9,999 students), and small school districts (100-1,599 students) on Texas state exams for school years 2007-2012. School district size is only one factor that influences student performance on standardized tests as evidenced in a study that reviewed student performance on state exams in Florida and North Carolina. In that study, other factors, such as teacher impact and size of school were seen as having influence (Chingos, Whitehurst, & Gallaher, 2013). This research also emphasized the importance of policy decisions made at the state and federal levels which affect funding and effort of school districts on reform strategies. Further, Hayes III (2018) indicated study findings that supported large school districts being more efficient and achieved better student performance on standardized tests.

Policy considerations focused on funding for public education is influenced by the size of school districts and the number of students served in each district. The trend in the United States has been to reduce the number of school districts at the same time that student enrollment continually increases (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). District number reduction with an increasing student enrollment is creating larger school districts and, therefore, larger school campuses. Some studies have concluded that larger schools are more efficient to operate based on per-pupil operation costs, however, a growing body of evidence challenges the way efficiency is determined in absence of important student outcomes (Stevenson, 2006). Graduation rates, drop-out rates, and participation in extra and co-curricular activities are seen as important outcomes that are seldom measured when determining efficiency.

Not all school districts are becoming bigger by virtue of student enrollment growth. Consolidation of school districts are contributing to the reduction of school district numbers and the size of school districts once consolidation of multiple school districts creates a single, larger school district. There are conflicting study findings regarding increased efficiency of consolidated school district. Advocates of school district consolidation believe that consolidating small, rural districts, is a means of creating efficiency and improving quality (Herzog & Pittman, 1995). Other studies have been conducted in which per pupil expenditures, after districts were consolidated, did not result in a significant reduction of per-pupil expenditures and did not result in improved student performance (Cooley & Floyd, 2013).

The debate on school size has been individualized to primary grades as well as public education in general. Gershenson & Langbein (2015) suggest that primary grade level students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged, as well as students who have learning disabilities, are

adversely influenced when grade sizes are larger. Other studies indicate that larger schools may offer more specialized instruction because of economies of scale.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

There were two primary purposes for conducting this study: (a) to determine whether student performance achievement on a specific standardized test might differ as a function of school district instructional expenditure amounts and ratios and (b) to determine whether the effect of school district instructional expenditure amounts and ratios on standardized test results differed among school districts of varying size. Based on the importance of school district leaders making budgeting decisions in an environment in which resources are limited, the relationship of expenditures associated with instruction and the effect on student performance is extremely important. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between size of school district, per-pupil instructional expenditures and student performance on the 2017 state exam for public school districts in Texas?
2. What is the relationship between size of school district, per-pupil instructional expenditures as a percentage of operational expenditures, and student performance on the 2017 state exam for public school districts in Texas?
3. What is the relationship between size of school district, per-pupil expenditures for curriculum development, and student performance on the 2017 state exam for public school districts in Texas?
4. What is the relationship between size of school district, per-pupil expenditures for curriculum development as a percentage of operational expenditures, and student performance on the 2017 state exam for public school districts in Texas?
5. What is the relationship between school district size and district performance on the 2017 state exam for public school districts in Texas?

Methods

For this study, secondary data analysis of Texas school district accountability data was used to test the relationship between various district-level expenditures and school district performance indicators. Sample size was determined *a priori* using a survey sampling frame method that would provide adequate power for correlational analysis with a significance level of .05 and a +/- margin of error for descriptive data *analysis*, thus allowing us to generalize back to the population of Texas school districts meeting the stratification criteria of school size. Data from the 2016-2017 Federal Report Card for Texas Public Schools (Texas Education Agency, 2018a) was obtained for a stratified random sample of Texas public school districts ($N=1,247$). Stratification was based upon school district size: *Small* = 1,000 – 2,000 students, *Mid-Size* = 5,000 – 10,000 students, and *Large* = 25,000 or more students. The sample included 120 small school districts, 59 mid-size school districts, and 43 large school districts. The data was acquired from the Texas Education Agency website (Federal Report Card Data and Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS). Table 1 shows the comparison of variable means and standard deviations for each school size on the variables of interest.

Table 1

Comparison of Variable Means and Standard Deviation for Small, Mid-Size, and Large School Districts

Variable	School Size		
	Small <i>M (SD)</i>	Mid-Size <i>M (SD)</i>	Large <i>M (SD)</i>
PPIE	4931.94 (754.87)	4727.05 (406.51)	5131.21 (310.09)
PPIE-POE	52.71 (4.03)	54.80 (3.18)	57.38 (3.18)
PPECD	81.98 (67.37)	117.56 (72.61)	151.95 (72.76)
PPECD-POE	.86 (.67)	1.36 (.84)	1.70 (.81)
STAAR	73.08 (7.85)	74.36 (10.11)	75.16 (7.67)

Note. For PPIE and PPECD, *M* and *SD* are dollar amounts; for PPIE-POE and PPECD-POE, *M* and *SD* are percentages; for STAAR, *M* and *SD* are percentage passing. Largest expenditures are in bold font.

For the correlational analysis, the predictor variables consisted of four different measures of district expenditures and the outcome variable was a district-level score for student performance on all levels of the state's mandated standardized assessment, the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) for the 2017 academic year. The four measures of district expenditures included are:

- Per-pupil instructional expenditures (PPIE) for each sample size.
- Per-pupil instructional expenditures as a percentage of operational expenditures (PPIE-POE) for each sample size.
- Per-pupil expenditures for curriculum development (PPECD) for each sample size.
- Per-pupil expenditures for curriculum development as a percentage of operational expenditures (PPECD-POE) for each sample size.

The outcome variable was district level performance for the *all levels* category of the state's mandated standardized assessment, the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) for the 2017 academic year.

Analysis and Findings

Prior to analysis, data was evaluated to assure all assumptions for inferential analysis were met. There were no issues with missing data because the data came from public information that public school districts are required to report to the State of Texas. For the correlational analysis, a one-tailed partial correlation controlling for school size was conducted using SPSS. All descriptive statistics were also calculated in SPSS.

Four of the research questions guiding this study were in regard to the relationship between various aspects of school district spending and student performance on the standardized state test, when controlling for school size. Based upon the findings of the partial correlations, only two variables, *per-pupil instructional expenditures as a percentage of operational expenditures* ($r(219) = .46, p < .001$) and *per-pupil expenditures for curriculum development* ($r(219) = -.13, p = .03$), had a statistically significant relationship with district performance on the STAAR. For *per-pupil instructional expenditures as a percentage of operational expenditures*, the relationship

was a direct relationship that predicted approximately 21% of the variation in the district measure of student performance on the STAAR. This suggests that on average, as the proportion of the operational budget dedicated to instructional expenditure increased, students performed better on the STAAR exam.

The *per-pupil expenditures for curriculum development* was a negligible, inverse relationship, which in many studies would be considered spurious at best. None the less, the results of the analysis suggested that, on average, increased spending on curriculum development did not always result in better STAAR performance. The *per-pupil expenditures for curriculum development* only predicted approximately 1.69% of the variation in STAAR performance, so it had negligible predictive validity for understanding STAAR performance for this sample. Table 2 provides the partial correlation matrix for all the variables.

Table 2

Partial Correlation Matrix for Spending Variables and Student Performance on STAAR Exam

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
1. PPIE	--					4916.09	622.22
2. PPIE-POE	.44	--				54.17	4.07
3. PPECD	.18	-.17	--			104.99	75.17
4. PPECD-POE	.02	-.17	.98	--		1.15	.82
5. STAAR	.01	.46	-.13	-.09	--	73.82	8.48

Note. Coefficients with a statistically significant relationship between the predictor variables and outcome variable are in BOLD.

Because the inverse relationship between *per-pupil expenditures for curriculum development* and STAAR performance were contrary to belief and practice, we conducted further analysis on the relationship between *per-pupil expenditures for curriculum development* and STAAR performance for each category of school size. Based upon this analysis, it appeared the small schools in the sample heavily influenced the inverse direction of the relationship, as a disproportionate number of small schools with above average spending had lower STAAR scores. Figures 1-3 show the scatterplots for each of the relationships.

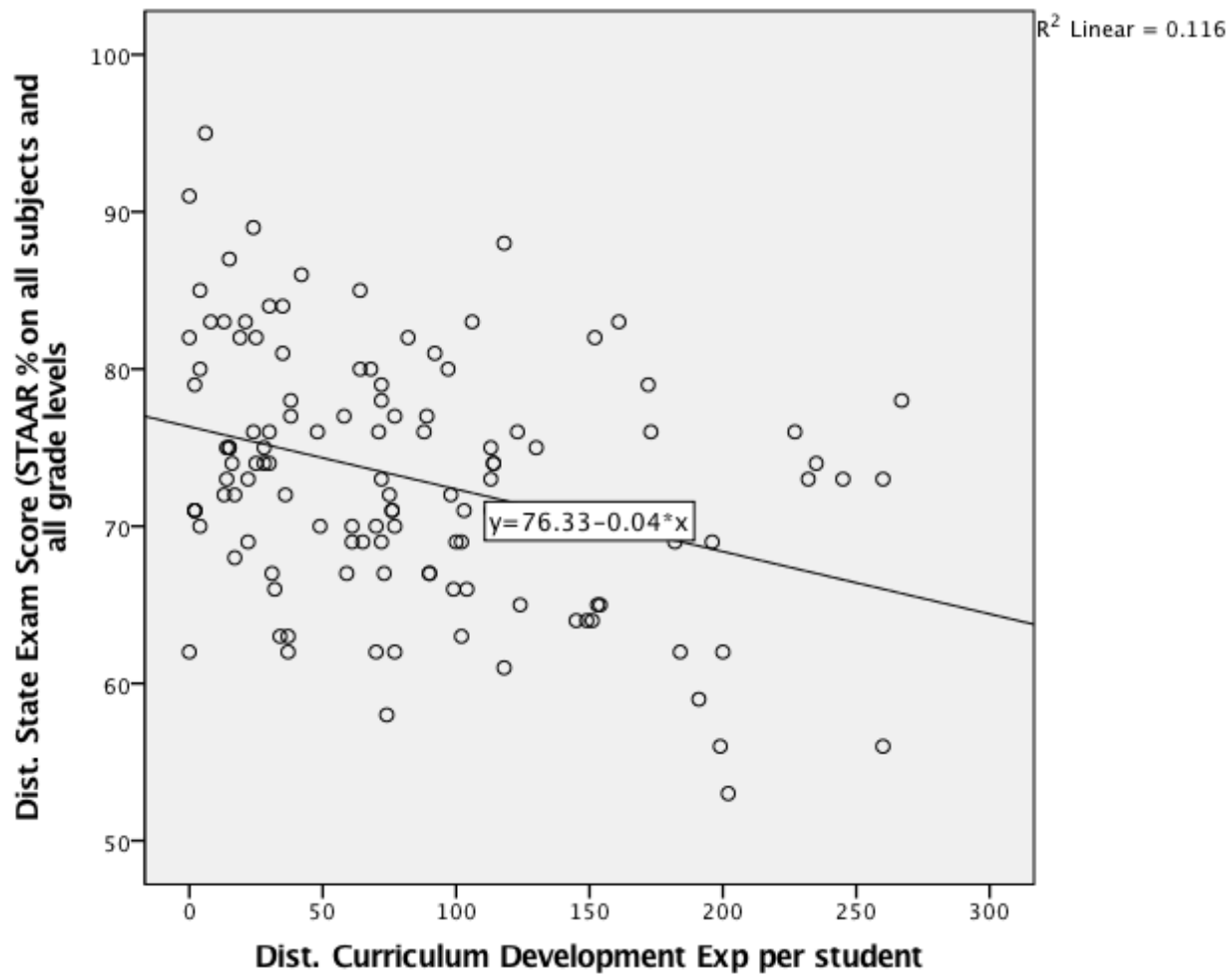


Figure 1. Regression line shows the inverse relationship between the district level curriculum development expenditure per student and STAAR performance for small schools.

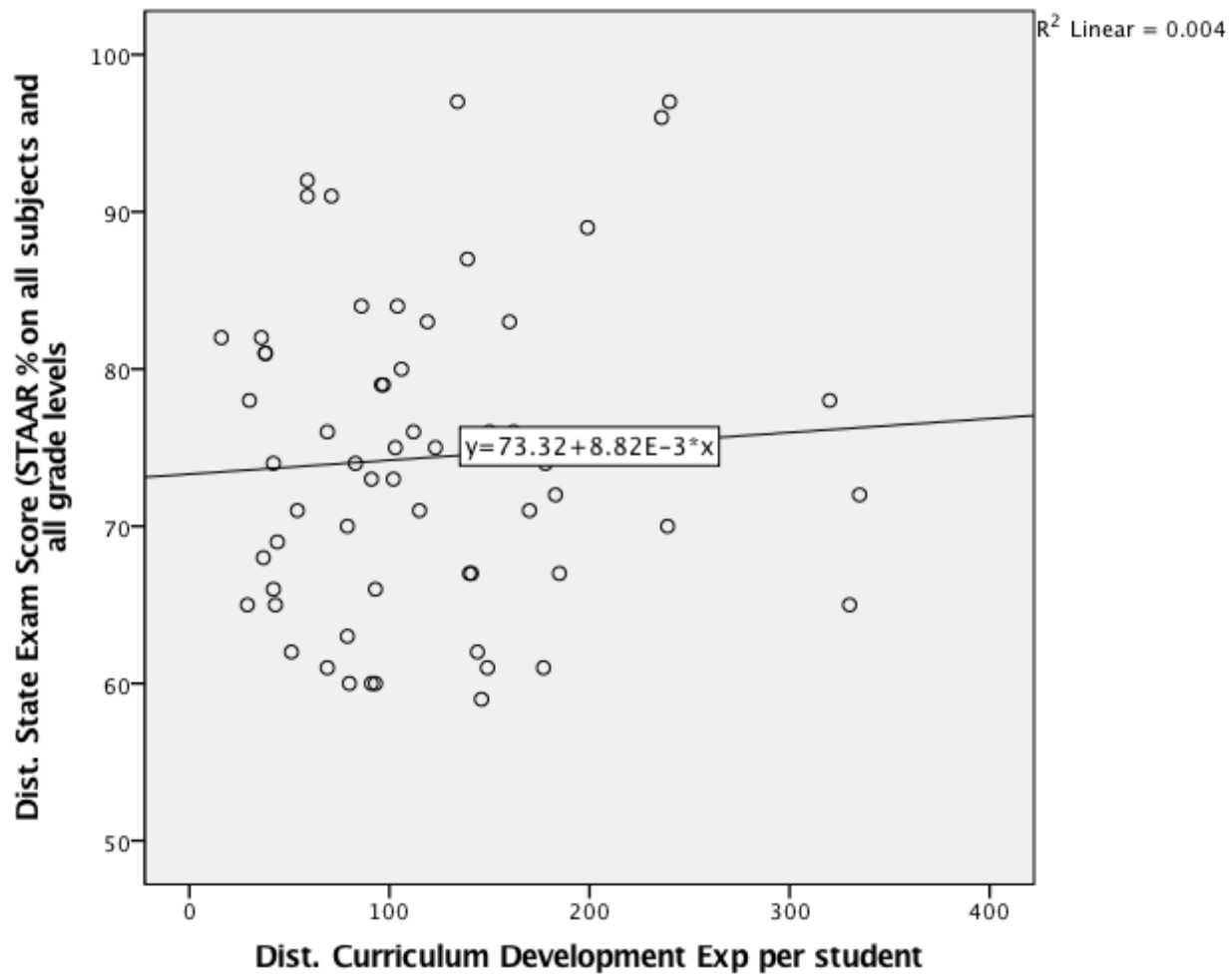


Figure 2. Regression line shows the positive relationship between the district level curriculum development expenditure per student and STAAR performance for mid-size schools.

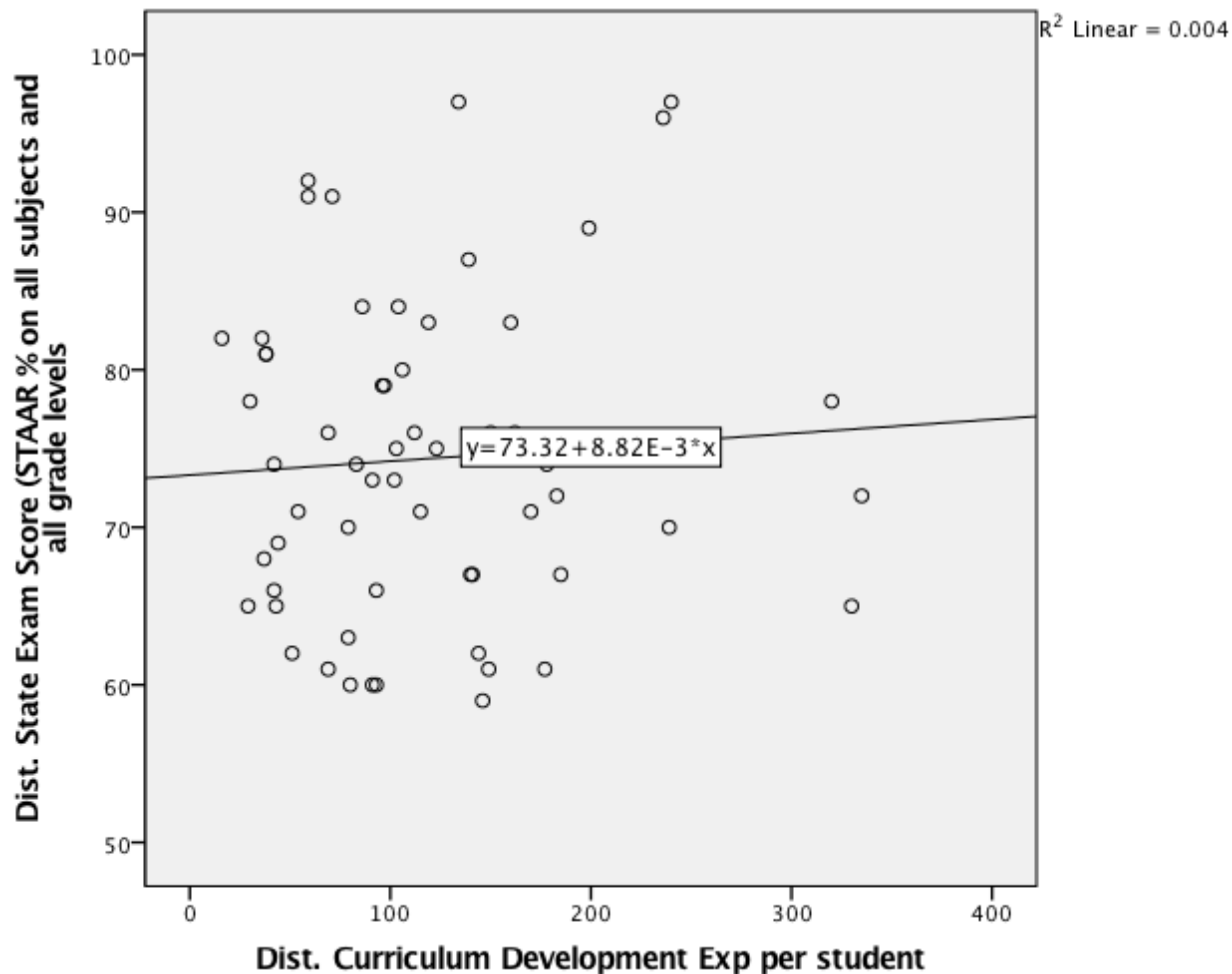


Figure 3. Regression line shows the positive relationship between the district level curriculum development expenditure per student and STAAR performance for large schools.

Based upon the scatterplots, the inverse relationship is best explained by the influence of the small school data, as they had more districts with above average spending and lower STAAR performance indices.

The fifth research question asked if there was a relationship between school size and performance on the STAAR. Based upon the findings from the Spearman ρ , there was not a meaningful relationship between school size and district performance on the STAAR, ($r(222) = .09, p = .09$).

Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Conclusions

As stated in the introduction, research on the relationship between public school funding, spending, and student achievement has varied in findings (Archibald, 2006; Gigliotti & Sorensen, 2017; Pan, et al., 2003) with a call for more research that investigates these relationships with disaggregated financial data. The current study sought to add to the literature by disaggregating spending data on a district level to determine if there was a relationship between various categories of expenditure and district performance on the STAAR. Based upon the findings from this study, the only category of district spending that had a meaningful relationship with the STAAR performance indicator, while controlling for differences in school size, was the percentage of total operating budget dedicated to instructional expenses. Although there was a statistically significant relationship between per pupil spending on curriculum development, the size of the relationship did not support that it was a meaningful relationship for understanding factors that best predicted STAAR performance.

Perhaps one reason the percentage of total operating budget dedicated to instructional expenses may have had a meaningful relationship with STAAR performance is that aligned instructional activities to objectives measured on the state exam may have had a positive effect on student learning that would be reflected by student pass rates. A review of sixty primary research studies of aggregated data found that a broad range of resources were positively related to student outcomes (Greenwald, Hedges, & Laine, 1996). The greatest difficulty for school leaders is identifying which resources and activities have the greatest impact on student achievement and this concept is explored in implications of the study.

Another reason that the per-pupil instructional expenditures as a percentage of operational expenditures might make a difference in student performance is the implied importance of instruction as more resources are committed to this function. Individuals within an organization tend to value and provide greater effort on activities that are considered important by the leadership team. This is much the same concept and results of the Hawthorne Studies conducted in a business sector in the 1920's and 1930's (Brannigan & Zwerman, 2001).

Although the large school districts had the most spending in each of the categories, as well as the higher STAAR performance. It should be noted that the average passing rates were not extremely different, but the differences could be considered important in terms of accountability standards. From a perspective of efficiency in spending, large schools proportioned 2.58% more per pupil instructional expense from their budget than mid-sized schools and 4.67% more than small schools, that yielded a 1-2% increase in percentage of students passing the STAAR.

Implications for School Districts

Contradicting studies has been conducted to identify the relationship of expenditures to student performance, school district funding, and student achievement to support differing opinions about the variables that impact each issue (Archibald, 2006; Gigliotti & Sorensen, 2017; Pan, et al., 2003). While this study will not resolve the issues of this debate, it has identified a variable that has a meaningful relationship to expenditures and student performance on the 2017 State of Texas Assessment for Academic Readiness (STAAR) exam. Per-pupil instructional expenditures as a percentage of operational expenditures had a meaningful relationship to district performance on

the STAAR exam. Currently 98% of Texas public school districts are at, or above, the maximum M & O tax rate (Texas Education Agency, 2018b) identified in law and decisions made at the district level in identifying budget priorities are important in order to make the most effective use of available funding. A review of per-pupil district instructional expenditures as a percentage of total operating expenditures is suggested for school districts working to improve student performance on standardized exams.

Per-pupil instructional expenditures were not found to be statistically significant, however, it is difficult to ignore study findings that the school district group which spent the most money on instruction, per-pupil, had the highest passing rate on the STAAR all tests taken – all grade levels. The school district grouping which spent the next highest amount per-pupil had the second highest pass rate, and the school district group that spent the least amount on instruction per-pupil had the lowest pass rate of the three groups. It is recommended that a review of individual school district expenditures committed to instruction should be reviewed by every school district as well as per-pupil expenditures as a percentage of total per-pupil operational costs. In addition, individual school case studies in small, medium, or large schools would be helpful in identifying more clearly the relationship between per-pupil instructional expenditures and standardized test results.

Recommendations for Future Research

There were several limitations to the current study. First, the level of observation for the archival data limited the types and depth of analyses that could be conducted. Future investigations into the relationship between spending and student performance should consider collecting primary data that includes the measurement of other variables known to influence student outcomes. This would not only address issues in measurement, but also provide a fuller model for understanding the relationships between spending and student performance. Likewise, more complex designs and analysis should be considered to address the nested nature of many of the factors known to influence student performance.

Another limitation was in regard to the data being from a single state. Due to the potential differences in educational funding, future studies should not only consider including data from other states, but also testing for differences in state funding processes as part of the research design. This would potentially allow for a better understanding of various funding models and their influence on the relationships between district-level spending and student outcomes.

A third limitation would be the manner in which the size of schools in the current study were operationalized. During the design phase, the sizes were determined based upon research knowledge of school sizes and sought to create a system that would yield the most balance and coverage of school districts in the state of Texas, while maintaining a close approximation to size designations used by the state of Texas. It is recommended that a replication of the current study be conducted utilizing the current Texas University Interscholastic League (UIL) school district size designations and see if the more complex breakdown of school sizes had an effect on the results.

In addition to addressing the limitations in the current design, future research should focus on understanding specific aspects of spending within the broader categories of instructional and curricular expenditures that were most strongly related to student performance. Various quantitative models could be developed to assist school districts to be more efficient in spending. Likewise, it would also be beneficial to disaggregate the secondary data by specific student groups to investigate the relationships between spending and student performance. Finally, qualitative

investigations could be conducted to understand how perceptions of the relationship between spending and student performance actually influenced specific expenditures by district administrators, as well as public perception.

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Using Interactive, Problem-based Simulations in a Mentoring Program for Novice School Leaders

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Leading American schools is a multi-faceted and complex role as states have adopted requirements for the mentoring of new principals. Interactive problem-based simulations can offer novice principals opportunities to practice solving job-embedded issues. This study explored practicing administrators interacting with simulations embedded into an existing mentoring program. The perceptions of participants reveal that simulations could be used widely in a school district for professional development, personalized to the needs of the district. The same simulations could also be used during internship component of principal preparation programs. Future school leaders could explore current problem based scenarios in a risk free environment.

Keywords: teacher and leadership preparation, educational leadership, mentoring in education, staff development, professional development and mentoring, simulations, novice school leaders, school management and leadership

Principals navigate between implementing central office and state requirements, and at the same time, manage the school facility, the employees, and the community stakeholders that influence the school. The wide range of responsibilities faced by school principals requires a deep knowledge of instructional leadership and management practices as well as the skills used to implement these practices. Leading American schools is a multi-faceted and complex role. “The harsh truth is that the new school leader faces a dizzying array of tasks associated with managing a highly complex organization: from budgeting and busing to discipline, personnel and union matters and public relations,” (Wallace Foundation, 2007, p. 6). More importantly, the principal sets the tone for the school culture and the academic expectations for students (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).

The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, formerly known as ISLLC standards, have been identified by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) and are intended to guide program development for college and university principal preparation programs (NPBEA, 2015). They are aligned to the leadership and management practices needed for today’s principals. State departments of education also fall in line with similar outcomes as measures of principal effectiveness. While principal preparation programs provide the theoretical knowledge needed by principals, they still fall short when providing practical, hands-on applications (Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe & Orr, 2010) of the job related skills. Internships and mentoring programs have been designed to support novices in the development of these decision-making and problem solving skills.

States have adopted requirements for the mentoring of new principals. In many cases however, the existing state and district level programs result in “buddy systems” or checklist exercises that do not do nearly enough to help prepare principals to become knowledgeable and courageous leaders (Wallace Foundation, 2007). Interactive problem-based simulations can offer novice principals opportunities to practice solving job-embedded issues. The experience of the simulation provides participants opportunities for reflection and feedback of the decisions made during the simulation, thus developing new understandings of the situation and potential solutions. The development of a mental model (Daggett, 2014, Senge, et al, 2012) in the simulation exercise can be carried forward to future actions in similar situations as a school leader. Imagine a student with special needs who has just been kicked out of the classroom and sent to the principal’s office for mixing together all of the glazes in art class. The art teacher is well-liked in the community and she is known for her inability to work with students who do not tow the line. Another scenario may ask participants to deal with the media and parents of a star athlete who is found ineligible for the playoff football game Friday night. The teacher did not let the principal know the athlete was academically in trouble. And, the high school football team has a long tradition of reaching the state championships every year. The names and players will change in real life and the circumstances will be different, but with the experience of the simulations, the principal will have familiarity with the nature of the situation.

The interactive nature of simulations can provide a stimulating and useful frame for mentoring programs for novice principals and assistant principals. “The divergent perceptions and interpretations from individuals and groups allows the construction of their situation that makes sense to them all— a joint construction” (Stringer, 2013, p. 75). The extent to which simulations in a mentoring program set the stage for exploring school-based problems and facilitate the development of solutions is the focus of this case study.

Research Question

What are the perceptions of participants to using interactive, problem-based simulations as a framework in a yearlong mentoring program for novice principals and assistant principals?

Review of Literature

Coaching and mentoring of school leaders can significantly shape the skills, dispositions, and career of the individual. If principals are to act as reform agents in schools, then their ability to define school scenarios and solutions more broadly is important to this task. Heifetz (2009) indicates that in order for adaptive solutions to occur, the leader should be able to consider the situation or problem in an adaptive frame versus a more technical frame. Technical problems are those situations in which a leader uses past models to satisfy next steps in addressing the issue. The ability to use a different lens to view the problem accesses a new set of solutions that fit the adaptive model, offering the potential for reform. The ability to think outside the box for solutions is a skill that can be developed and facilitated by mentors who view problems in much the same way.

Recommendations for novice principal support in the form of mentoring and/or coaching can enculturate new principals into open frames of solving problems as well as assist them to develop proficiency with the varied roles of the job (Darling-Hammond, et.al, 2010). Mentoring and coaching of school leaders provide two very different perspectives. Coaching models focus on the development of specific skills. Once the skill is developed, the coaching is complete. Mentoring is based on a long-term relationship between mentor and mentee. It is the reciprocal relationship between the two that allows for an exchange of ideas (Crow, 2012). While the mentor may have more experience dealing with specific situations, the mentor and mentee have the opportunity to co-construct meaning. In both cases, mentoring and coaching are used to transfer the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of an accepted set of skills for the particular job.

In 2007, the Wallace Foundation identified at least 22 U.S. states that required mentoring programs for new school leaders. In many of these cases, the mentoring programs were nothing more than checklists or “buddy systems” “that don’t do nearly enough to help prepare principals to become knowledgeable and courageous leaders of better teaching and learning in their schools” (Wallace Foundation, 2007). Effective programs for training and supporting new principals must have thoughtful structures, a clear focus, and strong elements to build a culture of support (Wallace Foundation, 2007, p. 4). School cultures are rich with everyday situations that can be isolated and dissected in order to understand the dynamics at work. Of course, no situation is exactly the same, but over time, principals learn to recognize and understand these dynamics in order to meet the challenge of the situation more fully.

Time, place, and general social dynamics influence how a leader responds to the problem. At play is the moral framework that informs the intended action. School leaders act within a professional community with a moral vision that has set boundaries of what is acceptable and what is not. The leader’s moral framework is influenced by the moral architecture of the school and at the same time, he influences the same moral structure. Moral architecture encompasses the values, beliefs, and behaviors of the organization. Decisions leaders make inform the professional community of the acceptable moral architecture of the school. “Leaders committed to working with stakeholders further develop the moral architecture, creating and strengthening bonds between other leaders, staff, and students” (Wagner & Simpson, 2009, p. 5). Moral leadership is

distinct from and does not replace decision-making protocols, rather it is the hand that guides the pen.

Denning discussed that “if stories that mentors and protégés tell can be used as instruments for critical reflection and inquiry, they can be channeled as powerful tools that awaken, prod, expose, and create new ways of thinking about the roles and impact of leaders” (as cited in Crow, 2012, p. 238). Problem-based models provide a structure for mentoring exercises that inform and guide the mentor and mentee in situational conversation. Thinking through issues using a guided process enhances the mentoring experience by expanding the contextual factors. In a variety of instructional settings, simulations have been found to engage and motivate learners (Ebner & Druckman, 2012).

Theoretical concepts are linked with practical applications in a given simulation by using common themes or problems. Participants then role-play steps to resolve this real life situation, making meaningful connections along the way. Ebner and Druckman (2012) found that students using simulations experienced enhanced, short-term concept learning, deeper understanding of the concepts presented, long-term retention of the concepts, and higher degrees of motivation and engagement among participants. Graduate students in a leadership preparation program indicated that they too, experienced satisfaction and enhanced learning when using online, problem-solving simulations (Staub & Bravender, 2014a).

Simulation Tool

The web-based capabilities of a simulation tool offer a way to provide a specific environment that places the user in a scenario requiring decisions and consequences. It allows users to work from home or in a small group setting. These environments can be created to fit any situation such as a school setting. This chosen simulation software provide templates that are easy to manipulate and allow the designers to scaffold problem-based content. The simulations used in this study were text-based, meaning that no audio or video was used, as seen in figure 1.

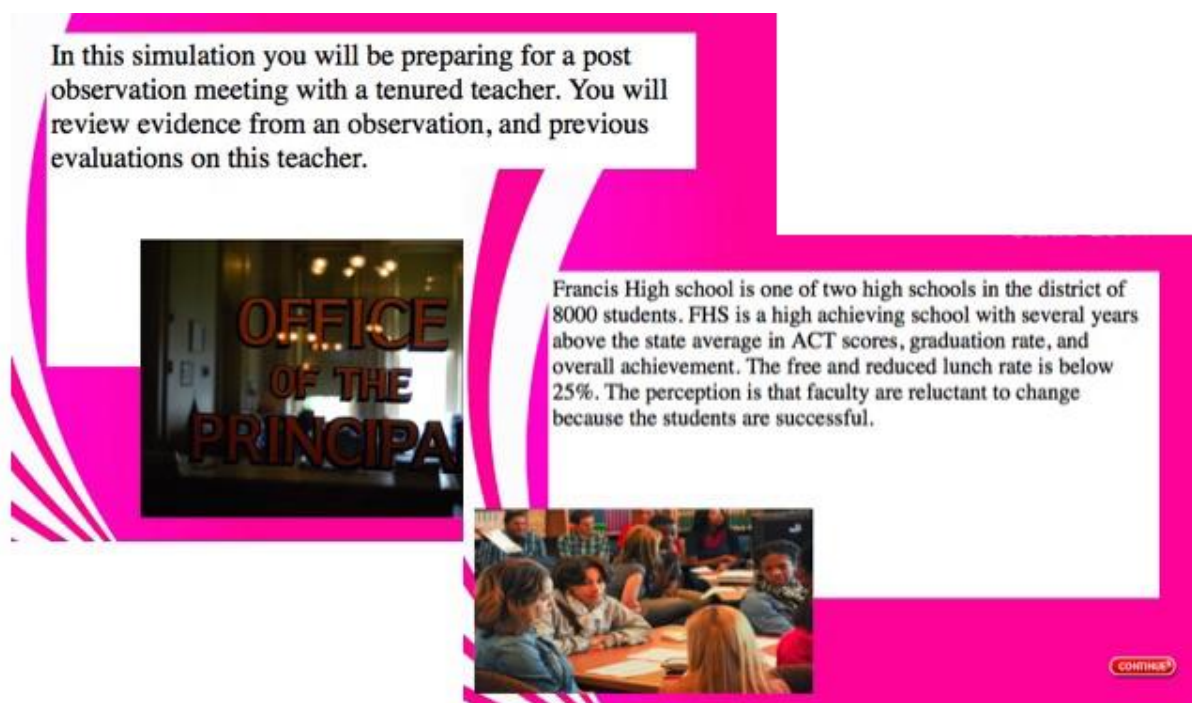


Figure 1. Example: scenario background information

In these simulations, the user must first read the background, context, and dialogue. The designers wrote and displayed scenarios, housed resource documents, provided pathways to decision points, and listed outcome options. Then figure 2 shows how the participant was presented with a dilemma within the context of the school and scenario described in the previous slides.

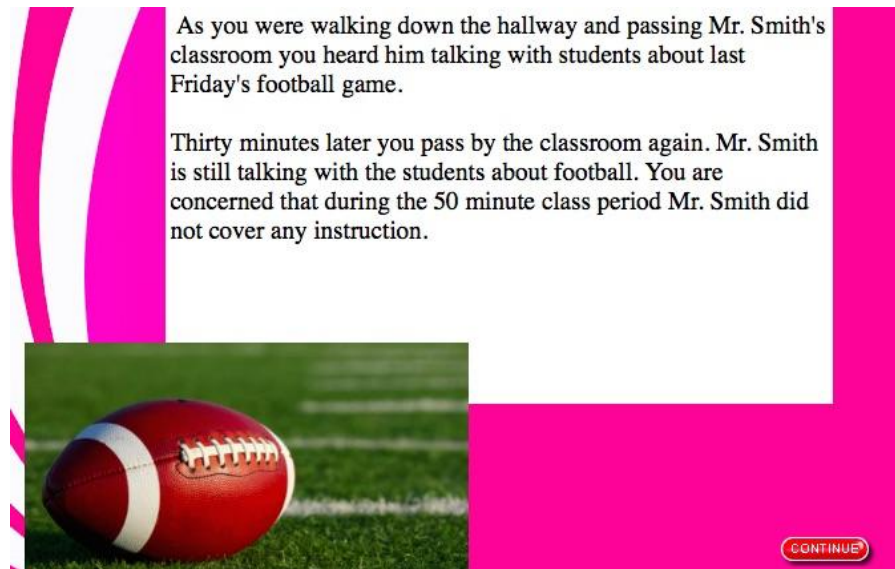


Figure 2. Example: simulation dilemma in context

Each dilemma consists of four decision options as seen in figure 3. The participant must choose one of the decision options to respond to the dilemma. Anytime a user selects a decision option, it leads to feedback that identifies the choice as good, mediocre, or poor with an action or reaction that might occur as a result of this decision. The consequences in the scenarios, created from these actions and reactions, then require users to make further decisions by again selecting from another set of choices until the scenario comes to its conclusion. Each time participants chose a decision option, the option is scored with a numerical rating associated with the decision: good- three points, mediocre-two points, and poor- one point.

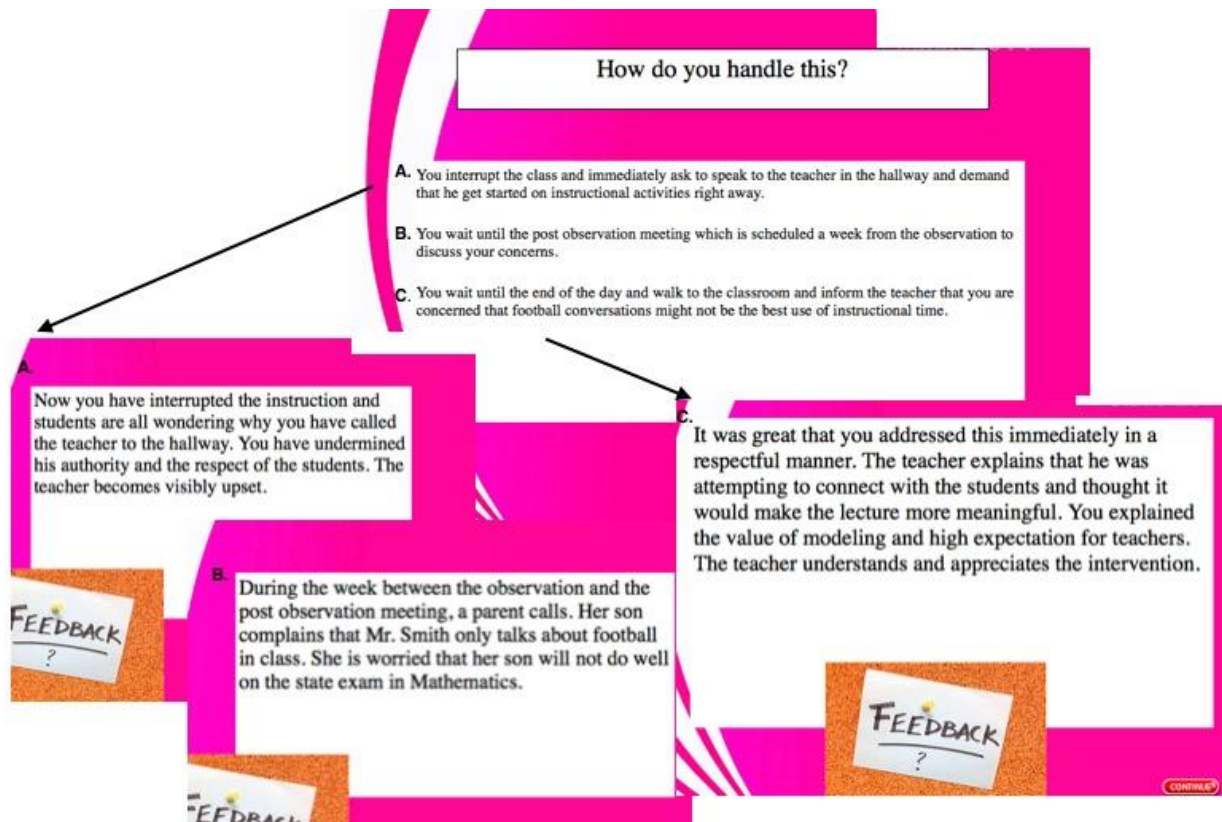


Figure 3. Example: decision options and corresponding feedback

Methodology

The links to web-based, interactive simulations were provided to the coordinator overseeing the novice principal mentorship program in a Midwestern school district. The district itself has 10 schools with more than 8,000 students, reporting that just over 50% of those students would be considered economically disadvantaged. The simulations were embedded into an existing mentoring program. Given the configuration of the mentoring program that included 15 participants and a coordinator, a multilevel research model was utilized. The multilevel research model allowed for collecting data from two different groups simultaneously (Creswell, 2009). A quantitative approach would provide an analysis of the overall experience by the participants but the same survey would not be able to address the perspectives of the coordinator facilitating the mentoring sessions. Case study methodology would allow the coordinator to be interviewed providing comparison data to the results of the survey data from the principals and assistant principals. Thus, a mixed method approach was implemented.

Participants

The coordinator of the mentorship program for novice principals and assistants was a veteran principal and teacher of 12 years. She had been given the responsibility of designing a program to support new school leaders in the district. Over the course of her leadership for three years, the program evolved from an informal series of meetings with principals to discuss pertinent issues to

a more structured program identifying specific topics to be covered each month during the school year. In the process of creating a more formalized approach to the mentorship program, the coordinator attended a workshop on the principal simulations. Based on her review of the simulations at the workshop, she requested access to them so that they could be integrated into the district's principal mentorship program.

There were 15 active principals or assistants enrolled during the time of this study. Each novice came to the administrative role having been a classroom teacher. Eleven members of this group possessed more than four years of teaching experience. Five of the 15 participants were employed as assistant principals.

The Process

The veteran principal coordinator had been facilitating a year-long mentorship program for novice principals in her district. They met once a month for mentoring and coaching pertaining to district policies, issues, and professional development. Each meeting was three hours long with a new topic introduced each time.

At the beginning of year three of the program, the veteran principal coordinator requested use of the problem-based simulations. It was arranged that she would receive one or more simulations created by the research team every month. The facilitator would review each simulation on her own before presenting it to the group. Principals were given time to work through the simulation on their own and receive feedback on their decisions that was built into the simulation. The principals then discussed the simulation and their decisions as a group facilitated by the coordinator. Over the course of the year 11 different simulations were analyzed. An important component to the analysis of the simulation was the connection the participants made to their own district policies and/or school cultures. Novice principals were encouraged to share their personal experiences and explore possible avenues to resolve past or present conflicts.

At the end of the eight month process, an online survey was emailed to the coordinator who then sent it out to the 15 participants. There were additional areas for participants to add comments and subjective responses. The facilitator of the mentorship program participated in a phone interview with the research team.

Limitations

In this study limitations stem from the bias of the researchers, design of the simulation, small sample size, bias of the interviewee, and multilevel methodology. The bias of the researchers from the outset of the study is important so that the reader understands the position of the researchers and any biases or assumptions that impact the inquiry (Merriam, 1988). In this clarification, the researchers' comment on past simulation use, experiences, biases, prejudices, and orientations that have likely shaped the interpretation and approach to the study.

Limitations can be attributed to design and use of any simulation. It is impossible to include every possible decision option in a text-based simulation. The possibility exists that some logically correct responses were not included in the decision points provide in the simulation. Simulation is not exact, but is intended to provide a set of the responses to different conditions. Simulation is not always able to replicate real-life situations in the exact nature in which they play out. It is not possible to completely reproduce complex educational leadership and ethical issues with the exact context.

User engagement is another limitation. Without real consequences for mistakes, students may not take the simulation process as seriously as intended, underperform, or lack engagement in the training (Gray, 2002). In addition, the results and feedback given to a user are only as effective as the actual training provided prior to the simulation and in follow up after the feedback has been provided.

Another limitation posed by this study is the small sample size. It is a study of one principal preparation program and the facilitator using simulations. The sample might not be a true representation of the population of novice leaders within different types of school districts.

A limitation of multilevel research methodology is the disproportionate weight of the two types of data collected. The survey of participants included perspectives of 15 principals while the interview of the veteran principal is only one person. The online nature of the survey did not allow the researchers to clarify the statements and questions that were provided to participants which is not the situation in case study interviewing. The two methods are unequal in their priority and this approach could result in unequal evidence within a study causing issue when interpreting the final results.

Findings

Participant Survey

A survey was used as a direct measure of the attitudes of participants and their experience using the simulations. At the end of the school year, the novice principals and assistants were emailed a request to participate in the survey about their mentoring program experience. The 13 questions were grouped into four key areas: 1. Relevancy of the simulation topics to the realities of the job, 2. Value of the simulations to the development of learners, 3. Frequency of Simulation Use, 4. Identification of issues for future simulations. For each item, participants were given a three point rating scale such as negative, neutral, or positive; ie. not helpful, somewhat helpful, helpful; once, more than once, frequently. A section for comments was provided after each question to allow the participants to provide more detail to their responses and/or suggestions to the researchers. Of the 15 participants in the mentoring program, 80% or 12 people responded to the survey.

Relevancy of the simulation topics to the realities of the job

The participants worked through simulations regarding the relevancy of the simulation topics to the daily life of a principal and the issues that land on a principal's desk. Over 90% or 11 of the 12 respondents reported that the simulation topics frequently connected to issues which occurred in their current role. The participants responses in the comment section for each of the items within this category illuminated two particular findings. The first finding was the recognition that four of the simulations were more instructive than the other seven simulations. The simulations titled Teacher with Student Lacking Engagement, Teacher Observation, Athlete with Poor Grades, and Crisis Management, provided the participants with information they previously did not know. The second finding from participants was the recommendation that specific follow up discussion questions be added to each simulation topic.

Value of the Simulations to the Development of Learners

All 12 of the respondents reported that the use of simulations was somewhat or very helpful for novice principals. When asked how helpful the simulations might be for graduate students in a

principal preparation program learning how to respond to school related issues, 100% of the of respondents noted them as helpful. In the comment section for the two questions in this category, respondents identified three other groups that could benefit from the use of simulations: regular education classroom teachers, special education teachers, and special education administrators.

Frequency of Simulation Use

The participants primarily worked through the simulations in the mentorship meetings. However, 33% of the respondents reported that they walked through the simulations again at a time different than the mentorship meeting. Additionally, 91.7% of the respondents indicated that they participated in follow-up discussions about a specific topic from the simulations at a later date. The follow up conversations were described as occurring with another member of the mentorship program, the facilitator, a veteran principal, the district superintendent, or another colleague. The simulations with the highest participation rates were Teacher with Student Lacking Engagement, Teacher Observation, Athlete with Poor Grades, IEP Concerns, and Crisis Management.

Identification of Issues for Future Simulations

At the end of the survey, participants were asked to recommend simulation topics that would be useful for future decision-making simulations. The most reported topic pertained to managing parent concerns and the subsequent communication with those parents. Other suggestions reported (three or more times) were dealing with student discipline and parents, grade conflicts and parents, parent complaints about a teacher not communicating frequently enough with them, mitigating issues at staff meetings, involving staff in creating authentic professional development, and discussion techniques when having difficult conversations.

Feedback from Facilitator

The veteran principal leading the mentorship program was asked to reflect on her experience with the novice principals through a phone interview with the research team. When asked about the design of the mentorship program, the mentor principal indicated that the current program had developed organically. There was a need several years ago to provide support in the school district to novice principals. Overtime, this veteran shaped the program into a more formal monthly structure with specific topics to be covered each time they met. The novice principals were given a topic to discuss as a group. This was followed by dinner together and an opportunity for more informal discussion. In the year the simulations were presented, the veteran administrator indicated that the design of the mentorship program was to use a simulation to begin each meeting followed by another set of discussion topics that she prepared. However, the simulation topics seemed to develop a life of their own. Once the simulation was introduced and the participants had walked through the online portion, the discussion of the simulation topic did not end. Each simulation topic had implications to procedures and policies that the novice principals and assistants wanted to explore. These discussions, she reported, lasted through dinner.

The mentor elaborated on the most memorable dinner conversations. She mentioned the dress code conversation was something almost everyone had a personal story which they could reference. Many noted that the simulation surrounding how to address a school board or individual board members identified their personal feelings of uncertainty when it came to dealing with the

school board of education. She explained that the simulations regarding Teacher Observation and the Teacher with Student Lacking Engagement were discussed at length. These two particular simulations hit close to home since they were similar to the evaluation process the novice principals and assistants experienced as classroom teachers with their own principals. The simulation sparked a discussion that provided multiple approaches to handling these situations and conversations with teachers

The coordinator was asked to describe what she observed during the use of the simulations and her perceptions of what participants enjoyed or did not enjoy in the process. She noted that everything related to the simulations in the mentorship sessions was positive. Participants appeared to like receiving immediate feedback when they selected an option that responded to a scenario/issue. Each time they selected a decision option they received an explanation telling them how their choice could be considered good, mediocre, or poor and why. Reading an explanation of a consequence to their decision was preferable to saying the participant was right or wrong.

Each time participants chose a decision option, the option was scored with a numerical rating associated with the decision. The mentor indicated that the scoring mechanism of the simulations was ignored by participants. The participants appeared more focused on how the simulation content connected to their specific school and district policies rather than on a passing score on each decision option.

The researchers inquired as to which questions the participants asked the coordinator regarding the topics posed in the simulations. The coordinator noted that rather than asking questions, the participants would share thoughts and experiences with each other. If they did have questions about a specific policy in the district, the mentor had the participants look for the information in their own district policy document. Her plan was to show them that the policies existed and how to locate the material if needed. Regarding the format of the simulations, the coordinator suggested that it would be helpful to have more information provided in the directions of what to expect on the slides as well as including tips on how to best use the feedback slides.

Case studies have been used in educational leadership preparation programs to teach problem-based learning. The coordinator was asked to compare her experience using case studies to the use of these online simulations.

I preferred the simulations because case studies tend to guide or lead the student. Simulations were more "real" because being a principal you don't have the whole picture when making a decision. You have to start making decisions on how to get the whole picture. Where case studies give you all the facts and force you to make a decision (High School Principal, personal communication, 2015).

The coordinator further explained that simulations allowed participants to construct knowledge as they moved through the simulation making this a more formative process of learning.

Given the coordinator's decade of experience as a principal, she was asked if there were differences in the discussions she listened to between the less experienced novice principals and those with some experience in an administrative role. She indicated that the novices with some administrative experience appeared to ask more questions. They wanted to know the background or the "why" of an issue more frequently.

That sort of thinking was key to the course and what new administrators needed to hear. Those with a little bit of experience were more willing to challenge a [decision option] and then explain why they might have chosen something else (High School Principal, personal communication, 2015).

The coordinator went on to discuss the value she saw in the simulations for general professional development opportunities. She said that she originally sought to have the simulations at all district meetings, but that did not work out. They were only used in the mentorship program. However, the novice leaders attending the mentorship sessions would talk so much about the simulations, that the leaders in central office were considering using simulations at all leadership meetings.

The mentor was asked her overall impressions about the use of the online simulations in the mentorship program.

This activity was the most effective piece that has been implemented into the mentoring [program] so far. Assistant principals were able to have free flowing conversation with building principals to strengthen bonds, create community, as well as learn more in depth about the buildings within the district and community stakeholders (High School Principal, personal communication, 2015).

Feedback from the facilitator sets the stage for an expansion of simulation topics and situations and increased use of simulations as professional development for novice principals.

Implications

The perceptions of participants when using interactive, problem-based simulations as a framework for a yearlong mentoring program for novice principals and assistant principals reveal a number of implications. The positive feedback from the participants and their recommendations for future simulations suggest simulations to be an effective tool used for mentoring programs. The simulations are accessible and user friendly allowing group facilitators ease of use. The online capability of the simulations extends their use to individuals in an anywhere environment. Mentors and mentees can meet one-on-one and use simulations as a guide or starting point for discussion about school issues and practices addressing the different issues. The dynamic experienced in the simulation discussions can reveal cultural aspects to resolving problems within their specific district.

Professional Development

Web-based simulations can be embedded into professional development. Since they allow for customization, districts can tailor the simulations to specific district protocols to ensure novice principals and assistant principals have practice exploring district specific policies and procedures. For example, how a school leader handles the media following a school crisis is often determined by the superintendent; the school principal could follow the protocol set by the superintendent for talking with the media in this type of event. A different possibility is to design the crisis situation with options that guide the professional toward the steps prescribed by the district for handling a crisis. The district's culture and the local community become part of the simulation. The use of the simulation in this context is not limited to school leaders but could be designed to engage counselors and teachers as well.

The structure of professional learning communities (PLC) is yet another setting that can be enhanced by the use of simulations. Research suggests that high-quality preparation for new principals continues after a degree is conferred by way of careful on-the-job coaching or mentoring (Sutcher, L., Podolsky, A., & Espinoza, D., 2017, p. 10). Simulations spark conversation and learning that results from rich dialogue. The PLC for example, could participate in a series of

problem-based simulations that use the lens of long standing district policies to determine whether the policy should be revised to be more in line with state and federal guidelines or societal trends.

Leadership preparation

Use of simulations in leader preparation courses provides a safe space for future leaders to practice decision making. Simulations can provide the practical application of the theoretical concepts taught in the class and the relevance to the principal's job that will reinforce the learning and course objectives. Students can tackle the complexity of decision making required of school leaders invested in educational change but doing so in a risk free environment. As Fullan (2002) points out, "Only principals who are equipped to handle a complex, rapidly changing environment can implement the reforms that lead to sustained improvement in student achievement" (p. 16). Problem based scenarios create discussion of the plethora of issues and external forces that go into making decisions that affect staff, students, and parents. It is a good time for candidates to reflect on the personal values and beliefs that shape one's thinking and how their own ethical code is influenced by the morale architecture of the profession. Students may also want to design their own simulations based on current experiences in schools thus, allowing them to think through the problem and related issues. Of particular note may be the development of simulations around issues with parents--a topic recommended by the participants in the mentoring program presented in this study.

Internships

The principal internship in leadership preparation programs could also be enhanced with the use of problem based simulations. Simulations could be provided to students in the order in which a principal might realistically encounter them in a school year for a realistic approach to topics of conversation. "Given the time constraints of full-time teachers to participate in on-the-job training, simulations can be used as some or all of the internship experiences" (Staub & Bravender, 2014b, p. 183). Linking the simulations to leadership preparation standards aligns the experiences with the requirements of accreditation programs.

Interns work with cooperating administrators in the field for an on-the-job experience intended to give students responsibilities for leading, facilitating, and making decisions typical of an educational leader (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010). Problem based simulations can set the stage for specific conversations that may not have come up during the time frame of the internship. As a mentoring tool the simulation can leverage the experience and knowledge of the coordinating administrator. Students can work through the simulations and develop a series of questions to ask the coordinating administrator. Alternatively, the coordinating administrator and the intern could work through a simulation together. This allows for reflection about the many decisions an educational leader makes, why certain choices might be preferred over others, and issues that may be not be immediately evident or below the surface on different types of problems. Rich dialogue can lead to discussions about how principals operationalize the school's vision in short and long term goals reinforcing concepts presented in the leadership program. The opportunity exists for differences to be pointed out with regard to urban and rural schools or the district's policies supporting the various topics. Given the realistic nature of the simulations and the ensued discussion, the leadership preparation program might consider the inclusion of these experiences toward the required clock hours of the internship.

Conclusion

This study explored the perceptions of participants when using interactive, problem-based simulations as a framework for a yearlong mentoring program for novice principals and assistant principals. The experience provided opportunities for reflection and feedback of the decisions made during the simulation, thus developing new understandings of the situation and potential solutions. It is clear that future school leaders could explore current problem based scenarios in a risk free environment with the use of simulations. The perceptions of participants reveal that simulations could be used widely in a school district for professional development, personalized to the needs of the district. The potential to redesign professional development models through online access only makes them that much more appealing. Leading American schools is a multi-faceted and complex role. This online model can allow principals to stay in the school during the day where they are most needed.

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Establishing Partnership Spaces: Reflections of Educational Leaders on Founding Professional Development Schools

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This qualitative study used in-depth interviews to investigate the perceptions of school leaders about developing and maintaining school-university partnerships with a local regional university in rural school districts. The professional development school (PDS) model provides meaningful learning experiences for teacher candidates by providing sustained and embedded field experiences in an authentic teaching environment. Participants were current and/or former administrators in the local/regional school-university partnership. All participants were former teachers who later became principals, superintendents, and/or district directors who were well prepared to inform the research questions. Data collected were categorically aggregated and analyzed using coding that resulted five themes: 1) development and value of early partnerships, 2) rural context, 3) school-community culture, 4) teacher perception and participation, and 5) important considerations of initiating the partnership.

Keywords: hybrid spaces, professional development schools, rural schools, school leadership, school-university partnerships

Professional development schools (PDS) create a unique partnership between local PK-12 schools and the university community (NAPDS, 2008). According to Carpenter and Sherretz (2012), “A professional development school is a learning organization focused on the learning of school students, novice and veteran teachers and university faculty” (p. 91). Such school-university partnerships involve local/regional school leaders, university faculty and administrators, and educator candidates. In many ways, these partnerships find grounding in the philosophy that professional development schools “are real public schools selected and joined in partnership with the university for their innovative spirit and serious intent to improve the quality of learning for educators and students” (Holmes Group, 1995, p. 3). Zeichner, Payne, and Bayko (2015) conceptualized this as a hybrid space and “advocate for the creation of new hybrid spaces in university teacher education where academic, school-based, and community-based knowledge come together in less hierarchical and haphazard ways to support teacher learning” (p. 124).

This study examines the experiences of six school leaders involved in establishing partnership as *hybrid spaces* in cooperation with a regional college of education in a rural Appalachian region of a Midwest state. First developed in the mid-1980s, these initial partnerships have continued until the present. Collaborations have been developed and sustained through the university’s center for Professional Development School partnerships, and include licensure programs in Early Childhood, Middle Childhood, Adolescent-to-Young Adult, and Intervention Specialist programs.

Founding leaders in the university and local schools did not follow a single model, neither in structure nor in the framework of mission/purpose. Rather, structures and frameworks have evolved in line with the interests and preferences of university faculty and school-based educator leaders. As Nettleton and Barnett (2016) noted, “Each partnership reflects the social-historical context of the university and community” (p. 21). Participants in this study provided insights and shared their perceptions of the PDS model in the context of the spaces that emerged from those original collaborations.

Rationale

The PDS model is founded on a belief in strong collaborative relationships between school and university partners (NAPDS, 2008). By examining the perceptions of leaders in the development of the spaces where such early partnerships were created, researchers and curriculum designers can potentially gain an understanding of how these constructs evolve and improve over time. Findings from this study aim to improve the PDS model in the future development of school-university partnerships. Likewise, this study seeks to emphasize the work of school leaders and their involvement to better inform newly established partnerships. Additionally, this study provides insights that augment the existing literature on school-university collaborations and sheds light on the impact these programs have on teacher preparation and practice. This is relevant for a variety of educational stakeholders and across many settings.

The National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS) (2008) lists nine essential components of a PDS. Of these nine, this study addresses six essentials. These are:

- (1) A school–university culture committed to the preparation of future educators that

- embraces their active engagement in the school community;
 - (2) Ongoing and reciprocal professional development for all participants guided by need;
 - (3) A shared commitment to innovative and reflective practice by all participants;
 - (4) A structure that allows all participants a forum for ongoing governance, reflection, and collaboration;
 - (5) Work by college/university faculty and P–12 faculty in formal roles across institutional settings; and
 - (6) Dedicated and shared resources and formal rewards and recognition structures.
- (NAPDS, 2008)

This study examines the relationship of these essentials and the perspectives of founding school leaders through analyzing the reflections of those leaders on the early stages of the establishment of partnerships. Uniquely, the partnerships investigated in this study were established prior to 2008 and the development of the 9 Essentials (NAPDS, 2008). Therefore, we attempt to frame the perspectives of early school leaders regarding the development of these partnerships without the guidance of the nine essentials.

Context of the Study

Ohio Department of Education classifies school districts into eight typological categories. The partnership schools in this study are representative of Appalachian districts that are classified as “Rural – High Poverty & Small Student Populations,” “Rural - Average Student Poverty & Very Small Student Population,” and “Suburban - Low Student Poverty & Average Student Population Size” (See Figure 1.0). According to Ohio’s definition, suburban is indicative of a town’s “sub-urban” population and not its proximity to urban settings.

2013 School Districts Typology

2013 Typology Code	Major Grouping	Full Descriptor	Districts Within Typology	Students Within Typology
1	Rural	Rural - High Student Poverty & Small Student Population	124	170,000
2	Rural	Rural - Average Student Poverty & Very Small Student Population	107	110,000
3	Small Town	Small Town - Low Student Poverty & Small Student Population	111	185,000
4	Small Town	Small Town - High Student Poverty & Average Student Population Size	89	200,000
5	Suburban	Suburban - Low Student Poverty & Average Student Population Size	77	320,000
6	Suburban	Suburban - Very Low Student Poverty & Large Student Population	46	240,000
7	Urban	Urban - High Student Poverty & Average Student Population	47	210,000
8	Urban	Urban - Very High Student Poverty & Very Large Student Population	8	200,000

Amended January 2015

Figure 1. Typology of Ohio School Districts by ODE 2013 Code (Ohio Department of Education, 2017)

Although the context of the study was within a rural location, the focus of the study was on the perceptions of founding members of the partnership and not the context. However, the participants in this study brought to light the relevance of the rural context and is discussed in the findings.

Literature Review

The PDS Model

Professional development school partnerships provide authentic early-entry, learning experiences for teacher candidates by integrating them into a real-world teaching environment (Goodlad, 1994; Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, & Goodlad, 2004; Henning, Gut, & Beam, 2018). Zeichner et al. (2015) stated,

The rapidly expanding “early-entry” programs place teacher candidates in schools with very little preservice preparation and emphasize, even sometimes uncritically

glorify, practice and practitioner knowledge, while minimizing the importance of professional education coursework that is not seen as directly connected to daily teaching practice. (p. 123)

The PDS model attempts to ameliorate this problem (Ikpeze, Broikou, Hildenbrand, & Gladstone-Brown, 2012). Ikpeze et al. (2012) proposed that such models can “transform teacher preparation through carefully structured, mentored, and coordinated field experiences, characterized by a culture of inquiry, reflection, and effective collaboration among all stakeholders” (p. 276). Teacher candidates learn from experienced teachers how to prepare class materials, mentor students, and mitigate challenging situations (Pellett & Pellett, 2009). Sustained field experiences, an understanding of school-community culture, and combined resources through school-university partnerships prepare teacher candidates to be *well-started beginners* and quality practicing teachers (Zeichner et al., 2015). Such models foster what Goodlad et al. (2004) referred to as a simultaneous renewal, creating a space in which everyone is rejuvenated by the reflective, renewing, and reciprocal practice that partnership brings.

Role of School Leadership

Kamler et al. (2009) illuminated three effective leadership strategies for school-university partnerships: (a) collaboration, (b) negotiations, and (c) decision making. Nettleton and Barnett (2016) found that active educational leaders in school-university partnerships provide support in four areas: (a) communication networks, (b) professional boundaries, (c) model partnership dispositions, and (d) nurture relationships. Scholars posited that leadership is a crucial component in creating a professional community through democratic school-university partnerships (Firestone & Fisler, 2002; Goodlad, et al., 2004; Hess, Johnson, & Reynolds, 2014; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach 1999). Leithwood et al. (1999) purported that transformational leadership provides sustaining support for the school-university partnership. Transformational leaders often encourage followers to relinquish personal interest and invest in hybrid solutions in preparing teachers (Zeichner et al., 2015). However, as Clark (1999) posited, although a single, charismatic leader may have a significant impact on partnerships, the important requisite to leadership is that individuals understand the various roles in higher education and their schools that make these partnerships possible.

Rural Schools

Rural schools can experience unique challenges that include recruitment of teachers, retention concerns, and opportunities for professional development. Under-resourced schools located in rural areas face challenges to maintain professional development opportunities and recruit teachers (Barrett, Cowen, & Toma, 2015; Moeller, Moeller, & Schmidt, 2016; Monk, 2007). Some rural schools experience issues of student achievement gaps and can face concerns with the recruitment and retention of qualified teachers (Dadisman, Gravelle, Farmer, & Petrin, 2010; DeYoung, 1991; Monk, 2007; Ulferts, 2016).

While the literature reveals chronic challenges for rural schools, many studies speak to the advantages of education in rural spaces, including close community connections, access to natural spaces, and strong commitment to schools (Hartman, 2017; Howley &

Howley, 2004; Lee, 2001; Preston & Barnes, 2017). Rural schoolteachers understand the local culture and aspire to work within the rural context to ameliorate challenges that rural schools face in providing education based within the local community (Casapulla & Hess, 2016; Howley & Howley, 2004; Waller & Barrentine, 2015).

Methodology

The research study was guided by the following questions: (1) What are the perceptions of partnership school leaders in establishing spaces of collaborative professional growth opportunities for leaders, faculty, teachers, and pre-service educators?; (2) What were the benefits and challenges associated with establishing, implementing, and sustaining a PDS partnership?; (3) What were the cultural and contextual factors that impacted the establishment of an early PDS partnership?; and (4) What can be learned from leadership perspectives of early founding professional development schools that can inform new school-university partnerships?

Participants

Participants were affiliated with local/regional professional development schools. Individuals were current and/or former in the local/regional school-university partnership. All participants were former teachers who later became principals, superintendents, and/or district directors who were well prepared to inform the research questions. Participants were identified through referral of key informants from the university's center for Professional Development Schools. They represent two initial partnerships from the mid-1980s and four leaders from six partnerships that developed in the early 1990s. While this institution now has multiple partnerships across licensure areas, these participants were the earliest available adopters of the original partnerships. In accordance with Institutional Review Board approval informed consent was obtained and participation was voluntary.

The six participants included current and former school leaders (principals and/or superintendents) at PDS schools partnering with the university. Pseudonyms are used to refer to the participants. Three of the participants were leaders at the district level: a retired superintendent, who now is employed at the partnering university; a practicing superintendent; and a director of curriculum. The remaining three were building principals. Two of the principals are practicing school administrators. The third representative of the principals' voice is a former elementary school leader, now retired.

Table 1

Participants

Name	Identifies As	PDS Role	School Typology
Hillary Sanford	White/Female/ University Faculty /Retired Principal/ Superintendent	Founding Partner	Rural - High Student Poverty & Small Student Population
Susan Clever			

	White/Female/ District Director of Curriculum	Continuing Partner	Rural - Average Student Poverty & Very Small Student Population
Steve Crisp	White/Male/ Superintendent	Founding & Continuing Partner	Rural - High Student Poverty & Small Student Population
Donald Barber	White/Male/Retired Principal	Founding Partner	Suburban - Low Student Poverty & Average Student Population Size
Connie Short	White/Female/ Retired Principal	Founding Partner	Suburban - Low Student Poverty & Average Student Population Size
Gary Reed	White/Male/ Principal	Founding & Continuing Partner	Rural - High Student Poverty & Small Student Population

Data Collection and Analysis

This qualitative study utilized in-depth interviews with six participants from early PDS partnerships in Southeast Ohio. As semi-structured in-depth interviews, some flexibility was employed for purposes of clarification and follow-up questioning based on participants' responses (Patton, 2014; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Rationale for using this method was to ensure comprehensive responses and yet maintain a degree of consistency with three to four researchers in the field collecting data. All interviews were transcribed immediately after each individual interview was conducted. The participants were interviewed once and interviews lasted between 1.5-2.5 hours. All interviews were transcribed verbatim by a professional transcription service. The data was initially coded using a priori, emergent, and in vivo coding. These initial codes were categorically aggregated into several code families that were combined into five final thematic units: 1) development and value of early partnerships, 2) rural context, 3) school-community culture, 4) teacher perception and participation, and 5) important considerations of initiating the partnership.

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of qualitative research is determined in large part by credibility (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Patton, 2014). Patton (2014) posited that the background qualifications and knowledge of the investigators are factors contributing to the credibility of a study, citing that the researcher credibility depends on training and experience. In this

study, researchers were experienced in qualitative research, teacher education, and school leadership conducted the collection and analysis of data. To ensure credibility further, trustworthiness techniques included inter-rater reliability, rich description of phenomenon under investigation, and reflective commentary (Patton, 2014). Finally, we additionally used peer-debriefing as a strategy (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Findings

The findings for this study represent a qualitative synthesis of the themes that emerged from participant responses. After coding responses from transcribed interviews, the data were aggregated into thematic units (Patton, 2015). The five themes included partnership development and early value, rural context, school community culture, teacher perception and participation, and important considerations. These themes related to the manner in which partnerships developed and the value the stakeholders placed on that partnership, reflections of the context of rurality in which the partnership was established, school-community relations regarding the partnership, and the way in which teachers perceived the partnership and framed their participation. Finally, the important considerations of the benefits and challenges that emerged in the early partnership. As such, they served to organize the findings and answer the research questions (see Table 2).

Table 2

Research Questions' Relationship to Themes

Research Question	Themes
(1) What are the perceptions of partnership school leaders in establishing spaces of collaborative professional growth opportunities for leaders, faculty, teachers, and pre-service educators?	Partnership Development and Early Value Teacher Perception and Participation
(2) What were the benefits and challenges associated with establishing, implementing, and sustaining a PDS partnership?	Rural Context Teacher Perception and Participation Important Considerations
(3) What were the cultural and contextual factors that impacted the establishment of an early PDS partnership?	Rural Context School-Community Culture Teacher Perception and Participation
(4) What can be learned from leadership perspectives of early founding professional development schools that can inform new	Partnership Development and Early Value School-Community Culture Teacher Perception and Participation

Partnership Development and Early Value

Participants communicated their perceptions of early partnerships, including their early involvement, rationale for involvement, their feelings about the involvement, and their values of the partnership and why they work to sustain it. Finally, the participants expressed the model's impact on them professionally as a school leader.

Participants spoke to the value of the partnership in connecting to students as well as the value of the impact on professional educators. As one participant, Steve Crisp, stated,

[W]hen I think about value [of the partnership], I think from 2 perspectives. One, the value to the student. Two, the value to the district. . . . You have more people working with trained professionals which benefits them and you can utilize that person in a variety of ways depending on which phase of the partnership they're in.

Steve went on to express that it not only had an impact on the interns and the classroom teachers but impacted him as a leader. He emphasized the way in which the partnership fostered his desire to be visible and connected to instruction. Steve stated, "[I]f I look at the overall picture of the educational advantage, I was very pleased. I thought it really added lot of value." While the partnership brought with it a degree of increased supervisory responsibility, Steve stated, "It made more work, which I welcome. I wouldn't have traded it."

Likewise, Connie Short noted some similar values of initiating the partnership that she viewed as integral—specifically, teacher buy in and collaboration. In her words,

With cooperation from other people in town, other school people who thought it was not just that we had such a decrepit building, got the levy passed and were able to design the school of our choice. I was a collaborative kind of leader. We had teachers who helped on that design . . . We could have teacher discussions and collaborations. We could have university personnel and/or students there where we would have a space to begin to collaborate on our teaching.

Connie recognized the values of reflective practice as a means of making decisions relating to curriculum and instruction. This included the idea of engaging in action research. She stated,

How can we allow teachers to be in our school and never look into their own practices? Never make any decisions about what they're doing? That needs to be an ongoing thing where you always have that. You need to do research that looks into what it is you care about. Either before or after you do your action research and then follow up. How do I get myself to do that? How do I look at my practice? You have to be reflective on it and that is what we wanted for our school.

As early adopters in these partnerships, the participants asserted that these were not laissez-faire enterprises. Stakeholders in the schools and the universities were actively engaged and consciously aware of their responsibilities. Connie offered,

We also invited the university professors and they invited us to different conferences and seminars. When we went into our reading methods, into cooperative learning, collaboration, sight based management we included them. We included their input

and we always welcomed them to come. They in turn would invite us to go to some of the PDS conferences.

As this quote hints, the engagement included a scholar-practitioner mindset, creating spaces to consider the “theory to practice” work of education. To a great extent, Connie valued this in that it created an additional space in which the school and the university could collaborate:

We wanted professors who were there in our school and they did it for a while. We wanted students there. *We wanted them.* We wanted not only our teachers and the professors, but we wanted these junior level students to start to reflect on their practices.

Hillary Sanford also spoke to the value of the connection between theory and practice. She stated, “[H]ow could we impact [teacher candidates’] learning? Not only by just coming into the building, but also by providing them skills and theory and information that they would need to be effective teachers?” For Hillary, theory implied a balanced need with practical application in an innovative space that the partnership provided. She asserted,

I felt we were giving them a much more realistic [view of the classroom], but I think at that period in time, the content that university students got was pretty much theoretically based, and there wasn’t a lot of hands-on, active, really seeing what happens in schools.

The values that these school leaders placed on the development of the early partnerships reflect facilitating factors that connect in many ways with the subsequent themes. The rural context, the culture surrounding school-community relations, the perceived benefits of the partnership, and the early challenges can each be framed by the values that the leaders expressed in their interviews.

Rural Context

The rural context speaks to the impact on the work of the principal concerning the professional development schools model. Findings are impacted by concerns common in rural settings, including professional isolation, funding and resources, teacher retention and recruitment, and community involvement (Hartman, 2017; Moeller et al., 2016; Monk, 2007).

Participants offered an important understanding of the dynamics that exist for rural schools engaging in PDS work, including the initially tenuous perceptions that exist between public K-12 educators their communities and perceptions of the “university.” As a school leader, Hillary Sanford had to manage the negative experiences her staff had regarding university faculty. Specifically, she noted,

There is a belief by some university professors that teachers in rural schools aren’t good teachers, so they [professors] don’t want to give their university students experiences with people [local teachers] who aren’t strong. And I think that’s just a lack of knowledge [about our rural schools and rural teachers] and a lack of understanding of the world we live in.”

The importance of initial relationship building between the university and K-12 educators can both elevate these negative perceptions and help all players in the partnership gain a sense connectedness that allows the PDS partnership to fully engage the school and surrounding community. Donald Barber explained that the PDS partnership experience,

helped me keep a relationship with the university. You get to know the faculty and

you get the university students in. Parents like having more small group instruction. The kids are performing well on tests, our kids, so you're seeing a result. We're also giving them an avenue for the [university] students to deliver best practices and that's one thing [as a building leader] you want to see more of."

Connie Short argued that the PDS partnership helped her rural students in two ways: it improved the overall classroom instruction and helped them develop a new and deeper understanding of the university and people associated with the university. Specifically, she shared that the students in her school "... got better instruction, and also I think [they understood that] the university and university students were real people and that this is something that they and their parents might aspire to and be comfortable with."

Several participants discussed their initial involvement in the PDS partnership in the context of increased resources available to them as leaders working in under-funded, under-resourced and often under-staffed rural schools. In a pragmatic tone Steve Crisp factually stated,

It meant more bodies, more people to help. I don't mean to put that in a cold way, like anybody will do, but it meant more trained people helping teach the kids ... My first year as a principal, we were instructed by our superintendent and interim superintendent ... and properly so, he said, "You have to cut 11 staff members." This was out of 65.

Gary Reed noted that the PDS partnership helped his rural school better recruit teachers,

When we have teacher vacancies the number one [question] is, "Have we had any good student teachers?" The big thing is, "Are they local?" ... When we know they're from somewhere close by that they're planning on sticking around. They're sometimes one of our first contacts [we make].

He also stressed the issue specific professional development provided to teacher candidates as they worked in his high poverty and under resourced rural schools. He firmly believed that it was

... impactful for the [student teachers] to come in here [rural school] when they may have been from one of the large suburban schools where they do not see a lot of [the poverty related issues]. And being exposed to that in a student teaching setting and then determining okay, I fit here or I fit here, you know where the students are coming from."

These early partnerships provided mutually beneficial opportunity for educational leaders, teachers, university faculty, and all students (K-12 and university) in the rural school settings. The Professional Development School Partnerships in this study offered all stakeholders the spaces in which to better serve rural students and communities.

School-Community Culture

This theme relates to the way in which the PDS model impacts the culture and climate of the school building, as well as the school community perceptions of the people affiliated with the partnership, for example university staff and educator candidates. School-community culture represents the confluence of efforts and the spectrum of stakeholders that make partnerships work.

Specifically, participants touched on parental perceptions of partnerships and the way in which partnerships and student teachers/candidates were initially integrated into

the school culture. Donald Barber, a retired elementary principal, spoke extensively to these aspects, stating,

When [new parents] coming in one of their questions is how does the university impact, in this case, the elementary level? And so we ask them what grade is your child in? We [explain that] we have here an early childhood and a middle child partnership program, and the student [candidates] come in usually twice a week. The [candidates] spend a lot of time in not only the classroom observing and getting lessons planned but they'll do small instruction. We try to have partnership students get involved with the school community culture [through these] after school programs [dinner theater, school carnival, soup night, game night, etc.].

Likewise, participant, Gary Reed, noted that students would immerse themselves into the school and community culture. He reminisced about the way the teachers worked to involve the candidates in everything they did. As well, he recalled advising student teachers,

Don't come in at 7:30 and start teaching and I leave at 2:30, you know be involved in everything else. The duties before school, the duties after school, the afterschool activities, come to a basketball game and try to immerse yourself in everything so you get the full feel of what the culture is.

Furthermore, Steve Crisp, a practicing superintendent, reflected on how the partnership provided continuity between the school community and university campus in regards to culture. He stated that the partnership provided "knowledge of the culture, the background. I mean, even little things. Who's the mascot? What are school colors? Things that the children would expect that you would know."

Unanimously, participants acknowledged the important role that culture played in the development of school-university partnerships. In many ways, this theme related to the undercurrent of mentoring required on the part of practicing educators and educational leaders to induct candidates into the culture of the school and community.

Teacher Perception and Participation

The theme of teacher perception and participation included teacher buy in, innovative ideas, and serial reciprocity of knowledge and skills of teachers working within the PDS model. As well, this involved perceptions of the contribution to mentoring teacher's professional development through participating in the partnership.

Connie Short elaborated on the early perceptions of teachers participating in the partnership. Her reflections highlighted the perceived potential of the school-university collaboration to provide research-based efforts and best practices. As she detailed, "The vision was this wonderful, utopic school where university professors and classroom teachers have time to collaborate and to grow." Specifically, she discussed the different perceptions of university professors and classroom teachers on the potential of the partnerships to navigate misconceptions on behalf of both. She continued, "Our research is looked at and appreciated. We're not jealous and envious. We're not nitpicking. We have students [K-12 and university] that learn from our methods. We wanted to do better. We wanted all students to learn." Teachers and teacher candidates were being exposed to actual best practices and instructional strategies and not being expected to simply "love teaching."

Overall, leaders framed the perceptions of teachers of partnerships as positive, noting that typically classroom teachers were supportive of the work required to engage in these

partnerships. However, what may be more important was the way in which teachers selected candidates and then worked with that student in their practice. The relationship that developed would reveal an underlying aspect that may have had a great impact on how teachers perceived the partnership. One participant, Susan Clever, a district level curriculum director, stated,

I was very thankful that we had that partnership because the [classroom] teachers talked a lot about how it was so helpful for them in the classroom. And really, what I came to learn is that there was kind of a picking and choosing. Like students [i.e. teacher candidates] would come [and I'd] do observations and then students that fit into the culture of the building or exhibited the skills that teachers were looking for were then picked for the next step.

Finding a good *fit* between classroom teachers and student candidates could likely help increase teacher buy-in as well.

Along this same thought, Donald Barber indicated, "This type of model helped with teacher buy in. As a principal, I had to listen to what their needs were." Barber explained that one concern that classroom teachers often noted a desire to make the most of their investment of time in candidates. He asserted that classroom teachers wanted to bring candidates into their classroom in order to get to know them and to develop mentor relationships. In his words, "You're not going to do me any good if I see you a semester [in my class] and then you take off [to another placement], I already had that [in earlier student teaching models]." Being able to nurture student candidates and see them develop through co-teaching opportunities established trust and a sense of commitment on the part of teachers. As Barber reflected, teachers would say, "I've already spent how much time nurturing and working with you; I want you here for the whole semester or the whole year if you can."

In addition to building trust, principal Gary Reed also recognized that teacher participation in the partnership would lead to developing leadership capacity. Reed stated, "What I've seen is the building of leadership capacity [in teachers] . . . and I think especially having a student teacher in their classroom. I think that instills leadership in [the teachers]. I think it builds a lot of trust and it builds leadership skills within that teacher because a lot of times teachers, okay, they're leaders of the kids but also building them up as teacher leaders within other staff. And I think that's where it's definitely beneficial to where they've got another teacher working with them in that mentoring capacity."

These leaders addressed the professional skills and competencies that teachers develop and their perceived efficacy that comes with mentoring and guiding teacher candidates within the spaces created by the partnerships. The positive impact that partnership collaborations have on the teacher as well as the influence on the educational space in which they practice has a broad reaching influence on the candidate and their own ability to develop as an educator.

Important Considerations

Important considerations covers perceived benefits and challenges that leaders of early partnerships noted in their qualitative interviews. Challenges were expressed as issues concerning time commitment, barriers to innovation, teacher evaluation concerns, lack of

resource support, and teacher management of potential burnout.

Participants noted the effort needed to maintain innovative programs such as the PDS model. They recognized that these endeavors are often perceived as things that take more time away from teacher's already busy schedule. Connie Short shared, "Keeping any kind of innovation going, that takes more time from people's busy lives." Likewise, leaders recalled challenges to effecting any change or new innovation in their respective buildings and districts. These obstacles created concerns for leaders as they worked to improve and initiate new programs in their educational spaces. In general, some teachers were resistant to change. As Connie Short mentioned, "The number of people who don't want change, who like their routines and don't want to have their current routines interrupted. These people don't want to change their own perceptions. Those perceptions can be so stuck in the mud." This demanded important consideration for leaders in implementing new PDS partnerships.

Hillary Sanford shared that a number of teachers held initial concerns about being evaluated on the performance of others, in this case the performance of the student candidates. In her exact words, teachers' sentiments were,

I don't want to be evaluated on something that a university student does in my classroom . . . So I want to have control of student learning, so if I'm going to be evaluated on student learning, it's truly my impact that's being evaluated and not that of a university student.

Sanford noted that now as many classroom teachers in these partnerships are products of that same partnership this perception has been diminished.

Donald Barber shared that early on there were some concerns with resources to support the partnership, citing parking at the university as an issue for collaborating teachers as well as compensation. Barber stated,

The question came up regarding money that the university could provide to teachers for reimbursement. That was an underlying issue that you'd hear because they weren't giving us any credit. It was reimbursement and I forget how much depending how many students you would take on. And that's where you had to watch so that the classroom didn't have too many students because then it would be over inundated with university students so we tried to get a balance.

According to Barber, as the partnerships increased and improved, the university began awarding schools and districts credits for working with students that could then be used to further continued learning and professional development for teachers.

Hillary Sanford reported that some of the teachers working with her initially viewed taking on students as "one more thing" that they had to do. However, this reflected more on the state of expectations placed on teachers overall and not only the addition of the partnership. As Sanford informed,

Teachers sometimes would get burdened down with all the new expectations that are put on them with testing and evaluation, all these kind of things that they have to deal with every day. Sometimes they can see university students coming into their classrooms as one more thing they need to do . . . [Occasionally] a teacher would say, "You know, I don't want a student teacher this semester."

While a realistic consideration of new endeavors will likely include challenges such as those noted above, the school leaders interviewed had the vision to recognize the advantages to implementing and sustaining these partnerships. Among these benefits were research-based learning and improved learning and instructional time with smaller student-

teacher ratios. Additionally participants cited the advantages of building strong relationships between teachers and teacher candidates as well as teacher candidates and classroom students.

Connie Short stated the partnership provided a beneficial opportunity “to link scholarly research with real practice and to instill the mindset of reflection among teachers. Whether you’re a professor; whether you are a classroom teacher—reflecting on your teaching, asking questions about it means you’re doing research on it.” By creating this space in which to engage in reflective practice lead to cultivating an appreciation for action research. She purported,

We did action research . . . We had more personnel to work with our students, so I think the feeling of fulfillment that you had a real role with adults [classroom teachers and teacher candidates] and children was important. Our teachers and candidates got graduate degrees. At that point you didn’t have to have a Master’s, but we found a way for them to get Master’s Degree. They had a way to share their knowledge in a classroom situation.

By moving from a schedule based on a university semester to one dependent on a public school year, teacher candidates could then have the benefit of prolonged placements in schools. Donald Barber noted,

With the partnership model they start from beginning to end, and so as teacher candidates they got to know the kids’ names, they got to work with them in a meaningful manner, and sometimes they had the opportunity to participate in parent teacher conferences, to talk or listen to what’s going on. Students look forward to the time they’re coming to their classroom and that’s a pretty good compliment.

A final benefit noted among participants was the improvement to smaller student-teacher ratios. This provided an innovative space for added teaching time and small-group instruction. Steve Crisp noted,

There’ll be another adult there. I can differentiate. I can do a small group. They can supervise a computer usage. I think knowing well ahead of time how I may and may not use them could make it more likely that I have the positive reaction.

Donald Barber further acknowledged the importance of smaller instructional groupings in his school, stating,

If the teacher has about 22-25 kids, certain lessons are difficult to deliver if you want to do an overview and then you want to be able to break it down. For some teachers, they say, “I have kids who are on the borderline, I have kids who are way too low, so where do I put my time?” So as a teacher I could spend more time bringing these kids up if I had a university teacher candidate. This would allow me to bring them up quicker and then you go from remedial work hopefully to advanced work.

These considerations reveal nuances of the issues faced and advantages encountered in the establishment of early partnerships. Reflecting on the nature of these benefits and challenges can provide leaders seeking to begin new collaborations markers in their progress in implementing the school-university partnership.

Discussion

Early partnership school leaders perceived their work as one of establishing hybrid school-university spaces, collaborative environments for professional growth opportunities for

faculty, teachers, pre-service teacher candidates, and for the leaders themselves. The values that they originally fixed to the establishment of the partnerships conveyed a sense of significance that extended beyond any single domain—the valuation to which they spoke was one that took into consideration professional development on several levels. Benefits reached to the students in the classroom, the classroom teachers, the university faculty, the teacher candidates as developing educators, and the community at large. The hybrid spaces were places of scholarly practice and lifelong learning, spaces that fostered a type of change agency and building of leadership capacity for all involved (Firestone & Fisler, 2002; Zeichner et al., 2015). Thoughtful planning and collaborative leadership result in democratic spaces of positive and transformative simultaneous renewal (Goodlad et al., 2004). Noting traditional partnership arrangements, Zeichner (2018) warns, “For the most part these partnerships have been very university-centric and have replicated the power-knowledge relationships that have existed in traditional forms of university teacher education” (p. 271). While the study’s participants noted some of these concerns, sustained efforts to develop strong collaborative structures helped to mitigate them.

Cultural and contextual factors had a noted impact on these early PDS partnerships. These included factors such as poverty and a lack of resources or support (Howley & Howley, 2004; Lee, 2001). As well, one can see that leaders faced concerns with the perceptions of early adopters relating to time management and teacher workloads. Nevertheless, while these were likely contributing factors to the trends and traditions that developed within the school-university partnership spaces, these were not debilitating factors. The partnerships flourished, facing challenges and change, adapting to stakeholder needs, growing in practice and philosophy at each site.

As with most new endeavors the partnerships brought with them perceived challenges. However, the school leaders represented here viewed the benefits associated with instituting, implementing, and sustaining a PDS partnership as a positive initiative that outweighed any negatives. These school leaders took active roles in the establishment of these collaborative projects, emphasizing networking with others, providing nurturing relationships, and modeling professional dispositions within each respective context (Hess et al., 2014; Nettleton & Barnett, 2016).

According to the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) Clinical Practice Commission (2018), school university collaborations offer vibrant opportunities for the enhancement of professional development and research (p. 37). Partnerships provide critical spaces of practice where school districts and institutions of higher education can identify needs for teacher and leadership preparation. For this reason, it is important to note that findings implicate school leadership as a critical component of both establishing and sustaining partnerships. Therefore, licensure programs charged with preparing leaders must better understand the development and direction of spaces for school-university partnerships and the role of these partnerships in teacher preparation and practice. We recommend future research on (1) leadership understanding of the importance and implications of school-university partnerships, (2) the relationship of the clinical model of teacher preparation within the framework of professional development schools, and (3) the relationships needed to build trust in the various spaces where partnerships exist or are established.

Conclusion

According to Zeichner et al. (2015), successful, reflective, and democratic partnership models require that “classroom teachers are active participants in the planning, instruction, and evaluation activities related to a course, thereby creating more authentic, acceptable, and accessible possibilities for inclusion of teachers’ expertise” (p. 127). Results obtained from the analysis of participants’ perceptions and understandings of the PDS model offer important insights that could inform teacher education and preparation. While the National Association of Professional Development Schools’ (2008) “9 Essentials” were not published at the time of the development of the partnerships represented in this study, the participants provide insights into the early understanding of the philosophy and practices underscored by the essentials.

Notwithstanding, there are a number of relevant takeaways that newly established partnerships or potential collaborators can learn from the leadership of early founding of PDS partnerships. In particular, the themes explored in this study reveal that mutual trust between partner stakeholders should be both a foundational goal for development and ongoing commitment. These partnerships represent unique spaces in which the best opportunity for educational innovation as well as personal satisfaction and professional growth can occur.

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The Influence of Emotional Intelligence on the Overall Success of Campus Leaders as Perceived by Veteran Teachers in a Rural mid-sized East Texas Public School District

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Twelve veteran teachers in Texas were interviewed for this qualitative study, to explore their perception of the influence of emotional intelligence on the success of campus leaders in a mid-sized, rural school district in East Texas. Five research questions framed in the context of Daniel Goleman's theory of emotional intelligence, guided this study. This theory includes aspects of emotional intelligence such as: Self-awareness, Self-regulation, Motivation, Empathy, and Social-skill. All data were collected through face-to-face interviews. Findings suggest that: teachers perceive principals to be more successful when they display and utilize a high degree of emotional intelligence, and less successful when they failed or neglected to utilize a high degree of emotional intelligence. Findings were further interpreted through the detailed accounts of each participant.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, educational leadership, aspiring school leaders, leadership development, rural schools, public schools

In today's global society, many leaders rely upon their emotional intelligence (EI), which is being rapidly shaped by social media (Finkelhor, 2014). Given the imminent evolution of school leadership, campus principals must now exercise a high degree of EI in order to increase the likelihood of being successful (Tomlinson, 2003). Baesu and Bejinaru (2015) argued that leaders and executives maintain specific and distinctive foundations and authority that makes the manner in which they lead unique. Each leader must also possess certain fundamental skills in order to be viewed as a successful leader. This has sparked scholarly debates, which have sought to identify exactly what those common elements are, and which are necessary for the success of leaders. Setting the premise for emotional intelligence, in 1920, Thorndike posited the notion of social intelligence. The researcher suggested that social intelligence is the ability to understand and manage men and women and to act wisely on human relations (Dabke, 2016), a concept that was also supported by Salovey and Mayer (1990). The researchers argued that emotional intelligence was a mental process in which thinking and feeling work tangentially, and found there to be a point in which emotions can be mentally managed (Brown, 2014).

Teachers play a major role in the success of a school. Waruwu (2015) suggested that for campus leaders to increase teacher productivity and lower apathy, a high degree of emotional intelligence is required. He added that leaders might accomplish this by being more cognizant of their emotions as well as the emotions of others. Goleman (1998) posited that emotional intelligence can be honed and developed by training leaders to better understand themselves, others, and the repercussions there within. Olcer, Florescu, and Nastase (2014) pointed out that there is also data that shows that managers with significant levels of emotional intelligence have remarkably positive effects on their workers.

There is limited published research that indicates the extent of success that can be attributed to a leader's emotional intelligence (Dabke, 2016; Gray, 2009; Mayer & Cobb, 2000). Furthermore, few studies exist that analyze an educational leaders' social and emotional skills and the role these skills play in their job performance and success (Sanchez-Nunez, Patti, & Holzer, 2015). Most researchers concur, however, that a principal's emotional intelligence skills are vital to their efforts to improve student achievement in addition to the well being of a school as a learning community (Gray, 2009). According to Bloom (2004), most new principals are comfortable working with parents and teachers, however, they must learn how to navigate the often unforgiving cultural and emotional landscapes of custodians, bus drivers, superintendents, as well as diversity among parent and community groups. Each new situation requires a new response from the leader.

Theoretical Framework: Emotional Intelligence

Potter (2011) posited that as a result of the works of scholars such as Goleman (1995) and Nelson and Low (2007), the concept of emotional intelligence is now providing a useful and practical model for utilization within educational administration and leadership. Specifically, Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Theory states that those qualities such as intelligence, toughness, determination, and vision are a requirement for success, but do not stand alone. Leaders who prove to be effective on a long-term basis distinguish themselves by also having a high degree of emotional intelligence, which includes: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. However, it is important to note that Goleman's attempt to further explain this phenomena is not intended to devalue cognitive intelligence, but to illuminate the importance of a person's internal characteristics and organizational success (Bardach, 2008). For Goleman (1998), emotionally intelligent managers are

enthusiastic, optimistic, honest, energetic, hopeful and persistent, and they exude empathy, composure and self-assurance which has been perceived as an Americanized portrait of positive mental attitude (Fineman, 2004).

Self-Awareness

Goleman (1998) identified self-awareness as the first component of emotional intelligence. He argued that those with a clear understanding of their inner emotions are neither overly critical nor unrealistic when it comes to hopes and expectations. Moreover, he stated, that they recognize not only how their own feelings affect themselves, but also how they affect others and their ultimate job performance. Self-awareness, he added, is an extension of a person's understanding of his/her own goals and values. A person who is aware of his own values is able to grasp where his/her future lies and why. Self-aware leaders are comfortable with acknowledging their own personal strengths and weaknesses. They do not perceive a threat from someone who offers constructive criticism. In fact, they crave gathering information that will help them grow in their skills and position.

Self-regulation

Goleman (1998) added that self-regulation is the second component of emotional intelligence. He suggested that leaders who are able to self-regulate their emotions are able to control and channel them in useful ways. Like most people, emotionally intelligent leaders have good days and bad days. However, instead of acting on those emotions, emotionally intelligent leaders are able to control their impulses when an employee makes a mistake and handle it in a fair, trusting, and reasonable manner.

Motivation

The third component of emotional intelligence is motivation. Goleman (1998) posited that emotionally intelligent leaders are driven to achieve success that is beyond normal expectations. That includes their own expectations as well as the expectations of others. Specifically, he claimed that emotionally intelligent leaders have a passion for the work itself rather than the external rewards associated with a job well done. Goleman (1998) asserted that leaders with this passion tend to build their work environment with employees with similar traits, which include love for the job or company and a commitment to excel in whatever it is that they do.

Empathy

The fourth component associated with emotional intelligence is empathy (Goleman, 1998). Goleman postulated that empathy does not imply to take on another person's feelings as one of your own or to try to please everyone; rather, for a leader it means thoughtfully considering your employees' feelings as well as other things when making intelligent decisions for the organization. The rise in globalization in today's society, according to Goleman (1998), has enhanced the need for empathy in leaders more than ever before. Specifically, leaders need to be able to have a deep understanding of both the existence and the importance of cultural differences. As a result, leaders are then

able to use their understanding and knowledge to improve their organizations in subtle yet significant ways.

Social Skills

Goleman (1998), attested that the fifth component of emotional intelligence is social skills, or the ability to manage relationships with others. Social skills encompass more than just being friendly with others; it is being friendly with a purpose and being able to move people or employees in whatever direction a leader wants. Goleman (1998) added that socially skilled leaders do not limit their relationship building to small groups but instead cast a wide net in the prospect of building bonds with someone that may be needed to help or assert influence in the distant future. This aspect of emotional intelligence operates under the premise that the bonds built today act more as an investment that may be called upon at a later time.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the influence of emotional intelligence on the overall success of campus leaders as perceived by veteran teachers in a rural mid-sized East Texas public school district. Adopting Huberman's (1988) definition, a veteran teacher for this study is a teacher with six or more years teaching in a classroom of students. Furthermore, the researchers utilized Daniel Goleman's Emotional Intelligent Development Theory to guide this study. This framework includes the following attributes: (a) self-awareness; (b) self-regulation; (c) motivation; (d) empathy; and (e) social-skill. Therefore, the following questions guided the research:

1. How do veteran teachers perceive the influence of self-awareness on the overall success of a campus leader?
2. How do veteran teachers perceive the influence of self-regulation on the overall success of a campus leader?
3. How do veteran teachers perceive the influence of motivation on the overall success of a campus leader?
4. How do veteran teachers perceive the influence of empathy on the overall success of a campus leader?
5. How do veteran teachers perceive the influence of social skill on the overall success of a campus leader?

Literature Review

Since Darwin's time in the late 1800s to early 1900s there has been much speculation among anthropologists and cross-cultural psychologists, as to whether and to what extent human expressions of emotion are universal (Morand, 2001). Thorndike identified and defined social intelligence in 1920 as an ability to understand and manage men and women and to act wisely on human relations (Dabke, 2016). Matthews, Zeidner, and Roberts (2004) demonstrated that after Thorndike's identification and subsequent definition, the concept of social intelligence in regards to leadership proved slow to gain footing in scholarly research and studies. Specifically, they determined, that while some researchers correlated social intelligence as necessary and important to leadership in the decades after Thorndike's definition, many scholars classified emotional intelligence more as a myth than as accurate science.

Salovey and Mayer (1990) were the first to introduce emotional intelligence as social intelligence in scholarly research. They posited that a person's skill at reflecting and understanding his own feelings and emotions as well as those of others had a positive correlation to one's capacity to mold thoughts and actions (Brown, 2014). After his research in 1995, Goleman's work gave rise to numerous scholars who researched emotional intelligence as it related to business leaders. He argued that an individual's emotional quotient (EQ) was often identified as a deciding factor in whether or not a leader proved to be successful in contrast to that person's degree of intelligence quotient (IQ) (Brinia et al., 2014). Leaders with high emotional intelligence display patience, perseverance, adaptability, impulse control, optimism, hope, and a jovial and family-like professional and academic mantra (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002).

School Leadership and Emotional Intelligence

Potter (2011) posited that in the last several years, there has been a transition in thought as to what a leader is, and what skill a leader needs in order to be successful. He further added that these transitions in thought are founded upon research-based data that show a positive correlation between successful educational leaders and the utilization of a high degree of emotional intelligence. Waruwu (2015) espoused that relationships, friendships, and personal treatment from superiors to subordinates only occur if the principal has good emotional intelligence. In line with this, Gray (2009) added Emotional intelligence remains the cornerstone of every decision a campus principal makes in which solving problems and making judgments are part of an educational leader's system of values and beliefs. There is a critical distinction that exists between expressing emotion versus perceiving it in others. One set of leadership skills may be more expressive in nature, entailing the demonstration of consideration, camaraderie, friendship, and consultation while another important set of components in leadership entail listening, understanding, empathy, and correctly perceiving others' emotional states (Morand, 2001).

The Role of Emotional Intelligence in a Campus Leader's Ability to Build Enthusiasm

Tatlah and Aslam (2012) demonstrated that educational leaders at the campus level that display a high degree of emotional intelligence concentrate their energy on creating excitement within their team by the infusion of positive synergy that allows them to continue moving toward successful goals. Jahanian, Zolfaghari, and Bagherpour (2012) in a quantitative study of emotional intelligence and principal efficacy, suggested that emotional intelligence is one of the main factors that affects a person's effectiveness, and that there is also an important correlation between it and an educational leader's success in transformational leadership. When leaders utilized a significant level of emotional intelligence, the scholars argued, campus leaders had a greater degree of accomplishment in working with teachers and students, building meaningful and lasting relationships with parents, improving testing proficiency in students, and were generally much more successful in managing the school overall. In support of this, Tatlah and Aslam (2012) asserted that principals with a high degree of emotional intelligence direct their energies on building excitement within their team and imparting in them an abundant energy to motivate them to move forward. Learning, after all, is a cultural and emotional process just as leading people who participate in that process is (Mazurkiewicz, 2011).

Emotional Intelligence Role on Campus Leaders Nurturing Relationships

Brinia et al. (2014) analyzed the influence a campus leader's emotional intelligence holds in a primary school's leadership setting. The researchers noted that it is evident that a strong connection exists between culture and human capital and that the principal facilitates growth and a nurturing environment. The best leaders today attribute this success to the talent and skill of building relationships. Mazurkiewicz (2011) reinforced this thought and proposed that when discussing educational leaders in conjunction with the role of teachers both must maintain a profound consciousness of their own attitudes and limitations in order to determine their own functionalities, and must also have a willingness to serve others in the process of maturing and developing. In other words, they must have intellectual sensitivity.

In another view of emotional intelligence and its impact on educational leaders, Waruwu (2015) approached the subject through a teacher's lens as he noted the correlation between teachers' perceptions about their principal's emotional intelligence and the overall organizational climate and job satisfaction of their school. Specifically, he determined that educators who perceived campus leaders as having a high degree of emotional intelligence had higher morale among faculty, experienced increased student success, and the overall campus operated more effectively in comparison to schools in which faculty perceived principals as having a lesser degree of emotional intelligence reflected in their leadership style. Jahanian et al. (2012) concurred with this view when they pointed out that the emotional intelligence of a campus principal has a positive effect on teachers' commitment and self-satisfaction.

IQ Versus EQ

One topic that has divided philosophers and religious leaders over the years has been the debate of which is the better part of the human self, the head or its heart (Shaffer & Shaffer, 2005). While there are different perspectives regarding the characteristics that make a leader successful, there is a continuous need to have a clear picture of the phenomena involved in professional leadership (Florina, Simona, Rita-Monica, & Michaela, 2012). Murphy (2006) suggested that there is quite a bit of hope and promise regarding emotional intelligence and leadership, but while there are reasons for such optimism, there is still a lot of research that needs to be completed before the concept will come close to living up to all of the hype that is currently present in scholarly work.

Some researchers have argued that research on leadership traits have emphasized the importance of cognitive ability over emotions and implied that feelings are obstacles to rational behavior and logical decision-making (Gray, 2009). A criticism in response to emotional intelligence research is the scholarly disagreement of the general idea of emotional intelligence as anything beyond the realm of current research in IQ as well as personality research (Daus & Ashkanasy, 2003). Locke (2005) asserted that emotional intelligence has too broad of a definition and the concept is constantly changing; whereas, emotional intelligence is not truly a form of intelligence even though it can be applied to many aspects of life including emotions.

Fullan (2002) stated that leaders who are typically identified as being charismatic and well liked are actually a liability for sustained improvement because they are not able to sustain long-term relational gains; instead, those leaders who build enduring greatness are able to do so because they know that sustainability depends on many leaders and thus the qualities of leadership must be attainable by many rather

than one. Scholars have argued that emotional intelligence offers a broader spectrum in recognizing why problems exist (Gray, 2009). Van Genderen (2012) acknowledged that researchers still considered the idea that IQ was more important to a leader's success as late as the 1990s. Goleman (2005) declared that emotional intelligence trumps IQ primarily in those soft domains where intellect is relatively less relevant for success—where, for example, emotional self-regulation and empathy may be more salient skills than purely cognitive ability.

Emotional intelligence is approximately 85% of what supports a leader's success, while intellectual intelligence accounts for approximately 15% of this mixture (Rada-Florina et al., 2012). Baesu and Bejinaru (2015) added that the emotional intelligence level in leaders helps them to think positive in their attitude, which makes them comfortable building work relationships and plays a significant role in their leadership practices. IQ suffers from range restriction in many applied settings, and thus is even more limited in its ability to predict performance and career success; even in entry-level positions, IQ cannot reliably distinguish average and star performers (Emmerling & Goleman, 2005). Singh (2006) poised the assertion that while IQ helps to get a person hired, EQ is what ultimately gets him/her promoted. It is emotional intelligence that differentiates star performers from average ones and is actually four times more important than IQ in determining professional success (Subhashini, 2008).

Methodology

The design of this study was a qualitative design using a phenomenological approach, in an attempt to better understand the influence of emotional intelligence on successful campus leaders. According to Creswell (2012) a qualitative research study is an inquiry approach useful for exploring and understanding a central phenomenon. The research questions in this study were open-ended, general questions that allowed the researchers to delve into the perspectives of each participant. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews. The use of a phenomenological approach allows the researcher to study a problem if the inquiry explores a phenomenon in terms of a single concept or idea with a group of participants who have all experienced the phenomenon by stressing that only those who have experienced the phenomena can communicate them to the outside world (Roberts, 2013.) Doing so enabled the researchers to examine patterns that participants expressed in relation to their perceptions of experiences with successful educational leaders.

The researchers purposefully selected a mid-sized rural East Texas school district that consisted of three separate campuses. The student population at the time of the research consisted of 1,150 students, which included 559 at the elementary campus, 268 at the junior high campus, and 323 at the high school campus. The district was chosen because it represents an average sized school in the middle of East Texas. It is a large 3A district, which is in the middle of the state's classification system for public schools (1A being the smallest and 6A being the largest). According to reports from the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the district identified for this study has never failed to meet academic standards according to the state's online database of Academic Performance Reports. This agency establishes performance criteria for school districts each year, for the purpose of rating both schools and districts.

Participants for this study included 12 veteran teachers with at least six years experience who have worked with the same principal for at least three years. In order to equally represent each of the individual campuses within the district, the researcher selected four teachers from each of respective campuses. Thus the population of this study was

purposeful. All participation was on a voluntary basis and no minors were involved. Responses were transcribed, reviewed, classified and interpreted by multiple authors. All notes were reconciled to recorded interviews. All names were recoded to pseudo names to conceal the identity of participants.

Discussion of Findings

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the influence of emotional intelligence on the overall success of campus leaders as perceived by veteran teachers in a rural mid-sized East Texas public school district. The researchers reported the major findings of this study, which include common themes that emerged from the lived experiences of the participants. The findings of the study are detailed according to each research question, and a summary of the major findings follows.

Research Question 1

The first research question was used to investigate participant group responses regarding self-awareness skills veteran teachers perceive that principals need in order to effectively lead their perspective campuses. The researchers reviewed the responses of all participants for emerging patterns and themes. The emerging themes, which are described below included: acknowledging weaknesses builds synergy with staff and transparency in admitting mistakes builds trust with staff.

Acknowledging weaknesses builds synergy with staff. More than half of the study participants responded by saying that they liked when their principals acknowledged to their weaknesses in front of staff. By acknowledging their weaknesses, the majority of participants felt the principal created a sense of synergy and team building, and often leaned upon staff to compensate for their weaknesses. This made them feel like a more valued part of the campus. Furthermore, some participants acknowledged school is a stressful place and principals have an extremely challenging job. They felt more aligned with principals who knew and acknowledged their weaknesses. For example, Rachel Cook pointed out:

I don't think you can be a leader if you can't be real with your staff. My principal is an example of that to me. She's not up here saying, "I'm better than you down there." I don't feel like she's casting judgment on me. When a leader does that, it adds a sense of positive energy with the employees.

Mary Peters added:

I think that when a principal has the ability to be aware of who they are and correctly compensate for their weaknesses, it brings a refreshing vibe or synergy to the school community. We feel that we all need growth, and when our principal tells us to grow and we see her working to grow in her weak areas also, everyone feels good about trying to better themselves.

Participants noted that principals who fail to acknowledge them as meaningful contributors to the campus vision, were not perceived as effective leaders of their campus. Lewis Clark, remarked, "I think the principal I had who knew her own strengths and weaknesses, the most, was good at finding people to help her in her weaknesses and had the right staff and right professionals to help her." Gloria Gibson stated:

My current principal will be the first to tell you that she loves to learn. She absolutely loves it. She reads all of the time, but she says that she's also scatterbrained too. She knows her strengths and weaknesses, and I think that if they know their strengths and

weaknesses they can help other people come up to their level. I think that a principal who understands themselves and allows the staff to know that they are cognizant of their weaknesses and make adjustments accordingly are much better leaders, and the staff feels good about having them lead their school.

Transparency in admitting mistakes builds trust with staff. Seven participants in this study noted that they tended to believe that campus principals were more successful when they admitted to their staffs when they made a mistake because it builds trust among staff members. With the many decisions principals make on a daily basis, participants articulated that they felt as though principals who admitted to their mistakes were more genuinely relatable and successful as campus leaders. Mary Peters, a veteran teacher of over 20 years, added that her favorite principal is aware of her weaknesses, and she:

acknowledges when she is wrong or when she has made a mistake. This tells me that she cares about what I think, and it demonstrates that she knows that her actions affect others. I want that in a principal. I need that in a principal.

Rick Roberts, a veteran teacher of 24 years, has worked with 11 principals throughout his teaching career. He stated there are not too many principals that he felt were aware of his or her own emotions or how that awareness affected their respective staffs. He pointed out that one of the principals whom he thought did one of the best jobs leading their campuses was a principal who would say in staff meetings from time to time that she felt that she was “too open at times concerning her weaknesses and mistakes.” Mr. Roberts also stated that as he reflected on that statement, he felt:

To myself, I didn’t feel as though her being too open was a detriment to her leadership. I felt like it was honesty. I felt like it was open. It made me think that I can follow someone like this; I can follow someone who owns up to their own mistakes.

Other participants pointed out that it is within reason for a principal to have weaknesses, but that successful leaders that they have encountered are not only aware of those weaknesses, they also acknowledge them and compensate for them. In doing so, they apologize for their mistakes and work collaboratively with their staffs to ensure that those mistakes do not happen again. They also felt that this acknowledgement of weaknesses and mistakes garnered respect for such campus leaders. Overall, the veteran teachers interviewed felt that this made principals more successful as educational leaders.

Research Question 2

The second research question was used to investigate participant group responses regarding self-regulation skills veteran teachers perceive that principals need in order to effectively lead their perspective campuses. The researchers reviewed the responses of all participants for emerging patterns and themes. The emerging themes, which are described below included: Negative behavior and moods alienate staff and maintaining poise, positive professionalism in stressful situations builds a sense of reliability with staff, and failing to think before reacting loses staff confidence.

Negative behavior and moods alienate staff. Eleven of the 12 participants interviewed noted that campus leaders who displayed negative behavior or negative moods were among the worst principals that they worked for. The bad moods or negative behaviors tended to alienate staff members who sought to isolate themselves from their employer rather than work cohesively as a team. In most cases, participants stated that they were glad to see principals replaced who were moody on a regular basis in that this significantly impacted their ability to successfully lead.

Pam Parker, a veteran teacher of 20-years, has worked for nine different principals. She pointed out that she got along with all of her principals, but that there was one in particular who was much moodier than the others and one of her least favorites as well. She stated:

When I think about the principal whom I think did the worse job, I think about one principal in particular. We knew as a staff the minute that he started walking down the hall what kind of mood he was in. He would start doing something that we would call puffing. He had his chest out and shoulders back, and he was strutting down the hall. You knew the moment you saw him do that that you didn't want to have any interactions with him. The sad thing was that he was puffing more times than he wasn't. Nobody wants to work for someone who is always in a bad mood. What ends up resulting is everyone doing their own thing instead of following the leader. This makes for poor leadership. Hank Hess, a veteran teacher who claims to have worked with more than 15 different principals throughout his educational career, added he has had principals who were always in good moods, and he has had principals who were always in bad moods. He shared, "A principal's mood is contagious and it has a huge effect on the teaching staff. Those that are not friendly, sociable, and always in a bad mood have staffs with poor morale who don't want to follow them."

Debbie Poe, a veteran teacher in her twenty-third year of teaching, has worked for seven principals. Of those with whom she has worked for, she also noted that there were some principals who were in good moods most of the time, and then there were some who were constantly in bad moods. She posited that the ones who were in good moods most of the time, were those who she felt were more successful in leading the staff. They were approachable. They made her feel accepted and valued her concerns. Those who were constantly in a bad mood were the ones that the staff avoided, and so the school was polarized with the staff doing one thing and the principal doing something else. There was no cohesion, and the staff felt alienated. Poe stated:

Nobody wants to take all of their problems to the principal all of the time. Teachers with any sense of reason know that you have to solve a great deal of your own problems by yourself inside of the classroom. But, there are times when you need guidance from the principal. They are the disciplinarians of the school. They are the instructional leaders of the school. They are the ones that are supposed to be the experts, and they are supposed help you when you need it.

Positive professionalism in stressful situations builds sense of reliability with staff. Rick Roberts, a 24-year veteran teacher who has worked with 11 principals throughout his teaching career, stated that the principal whom he felt did the best job and whom he identified as his favorite principal always had a smile on his face no matter what he was facing. He stated:

Jeff Hasting always had a smile on his face. He was a great guy and did the best job of any principal that I have ever worked with. You know he had a difficult job. Heck, we were an extremely high needs school with more problems than most schools around. I know that life wasn't always joyful in his office, but he always smiled when we saw him. I think that everyone that he came across felt the same way. He lightened the mood for everyone for sure. Certainly, there were times when some people might think that he should have been a little tougher in this situation or a little more lenient in that situation, but every principal is going to have that. When you're the person that's making decisions and you never let that affect your mood and attitude toward your staff or other students, people can rely on you and depend on your leadership more. His jovial mood drew people to him, and I think it helped his teachers work a little bit harder for him. And, I think that it really did improve the overall aspect of

the school as a whole.

Rachel Cook, a 41-year-old veteran teacher who has been teaching for 11 years, identified that her current principal's positive attitude in spite of constant stressful situations is one of the reasons her campus has been so successful over the last several years. She stated:

My current principal is the best principal that I have ever had. The mood of the campus is reflective of her mood. She is upbeat, and so is the school as a whole. Despite all of the troubles and things that go wrong on a daily basis, we know we can count on her. You as a teacher that we might have a bad day and that everything around us may be falling apart, but Mrs. ___ holds things together. She kind of keeps everything in check even if she is screaming on the inside side. She maintains that steadiness about her, and we all know that she is going to stay steady and dependable. That's what keeps us going, and that helps to feed the positive working atmosphere that we all share. We have a good school, and we all think that our Mrs. ___ is a major reason why.

Failing to think before reacting loses staff confidence. Of the study's 12 participants, seven noted that a campus leader who failed to think before reacting to various situations tended to lose the confidence of the staff. Five of the seven acknowledged that there were times in which a decision needed to be made immediately because of the seriousness of a situation, but all seven wanted to see their principals take the time to think out the problem to see the entire picture rather than making a rash decision if there was time enough to do so. Gloria Gains, a seven-year teacher who has worked for three different campus principals, declared the frustrations felt with a principal who failed to think before reacting. She stated:

One time, I had a little girl out in the hall who was having a meltdown. I was trying to calm her down and was making progress and about to get her back into class when my principal walked-up on the situation. She just walked right up without even knowing what was going on or without even asking me. She came up to the little girl and told her that she wasn't going to act that way and that the girl was supposed to go with her. I didn't need that. I almost had her calmed down and under control to the point that I could get her back into the class so she wouldn't miss anymore instruction. And, just like that, the principal escalated everything back to the starting point. That wasn't the first time the principal did that, and each and every time that she did, I lost a little bit more confidence in her.

Heather Wiggins, a 62-year-old teacher with 24 years of teaching experience also noted this loss of confidence that the staff had for a campus leader who reacted without thinking. She stated:

I think that it's always better for a principal to think before he reacts to a situation. I've had some that did, and some that didn't. The ones who didn't usually didn't see the entire picture and made a wrong decision that they ended up having to correct a little later. Teachers rarely wanted to listen to those principals who didn't think things out first because that generally meant that the teachers would have to do something all over again whenever the principal finally realized that they gave out wrong information.

Research Question Three

The third research question was used to investigate participant group responses regarding motivational skills veteran teachers perceive that principals need in order to effectively lead their perspective campuses. The researchers reviewed the responses of all participants for

emerging patterns and themes. The emerging theme described below is: use of positive praise and encouragement builds confidence in staff.

Use of positive praise and encouragement builds confidence in staff. All 12 participants acknowledged that motivational skills are essential for a leader to be successful. Each participant had a different story of what motivational strategies their best principals used, but all agreed that those who used the motivational strategies of positive praise and encouragement were much more successful than those educational leaders who did not. For those leaders who enveloped words of praise and encouragement to their staff, they also infused a sense of confidence among them that let them know that their principal thought that the things that they were doing was being noticed and liked.

Heather Wiggins noted that a good leader does many things to make the staff want to do a better job. She mentioned that her favorite principal used to go around the campus in the mornings before the students entered the building and offer all of the staff members chocolates or candy. She stated:

What I liked the most about my favorite principal was that aside from all of the little things that let us know that he was thinking about us, he would always tell us when he thought we were doing a good job. He would always tell us how proud he was of us when we did something good or something that stood out. I think that it's that type of motivation that helps make a principal lead a school better. I know that to hear those positive things makes people feel good about themselves. It makes people feel like they are doing a good job. When your boss tells you that he is proud of you. You want to continue to do things to make him proud. I know that is how other staff members feel because that's how it makes me feel, and I see it in others even if we don't talk about it. The assurance that you are doing a good job makes you feel sure about yourself and your school.

Hank Hess recognized in his interview that his current principal does not do much to motivate staff, and he feels that this is a detriment to her ability to lead effectively. As he listed all of the principals that he has worked for throughout his career from least successful to most successful, he placed her as one of the ones at the bottom of the list. He stated:

My current principal doesn't really motivate the staff. I have had several that went out of their way to make sure you knew that they approved of the job that you did. I have had some that would do things for the staff to let them know. They might cook food for everyone. They might come by and visit with you from time to time. They might bring you something special for you on your birthday. The best thing that I thought that the good ones did, though, was to give you positive notes about something specific that you did good. One of the best principals that I ever had used to give us a hand written note in our box of something that we did that was above and beyond. I think that a staff that is motivated has a principal that cares for them. We are confident in one another. They will take care of us, and we as a staff will work hard to take care of them.

Weldon Wilcox acknowledged much of the same sentiments as the other participants did in his interview. He added that motivating staff and students was one of the most important things that a campus leader has to do if he is going to be successful at leading a school. He posited:

All of the good campus leaders that I have ever had always took the time to acknowledge the good things that their staff members did. Teachers are usually intrinsically motivated to do a good job already. They want to please their boss, and that acknowledgement and encouragement of a job well done does more for their

confidence and morale than the measly raise that we all get with our teacher pay step going into the next year. The best principal I ever had took the time to send encouraging emails or to stop by my class and tell me he was proud or excited to see something good that I was doing. One time, he mentioned something that I was doing in my class in front of the entire staff at a faculty meeting. It made me feel like I was an expert teacher even if I wasn't any better than the other teachers in the building.

Research Question 4

The fourth research question was used to investigate participant group responses regarding empathy skills veteran teachers perceive that principals need in order to effectively lead their perspective campuses. The researchers reviewed the responses of all participants for emerging patterns and themes. The emerging themes, which are described below included: displays of compassion build family atmosphere with staff and empathetic equilibrium is valued by staff.

Displays of compassion build family atmosphere. All participants interviewed acknowledged that they felt that being an empathetic leader was an important trait for principals to display in order for them to be successful as leaders of a campus. When principals are empathetic, the participants noted, the school feels more like a family atmosphere. Those that failed to show empathy to staff, were mentioned as some of the least successful principals that the participants worked for.

Forty-one-year-old veteran teacher, Rachel Cook, added that a principal who is ultimately empathetic towards their staff is usually one that is more successful. She stated that it was a positive thing for a principal to think about the staff as though they were the head of the family looking out of the best interest of everyone. Cook said:

When I was not having success in my classroom on a particular lesson, I knew that the principals that I had who were empathetic towards me wanted to give me guidance and support to help me be more successful. They were pulling for me, and I could tell that. They would give me pointers and tips and build me up so that I had a chance to be successful the next time I taught a similar lesson. Because most new teachers are young when they enter the teaching profession, they look toward the principal almost as a parent figure. Every teacher wants a principal to care for them in spite of their weaknesses. On the other hand, I remember having a principal who I did not like, and I don't think anyone else in the school liked them either. When I did not do well on a lesson and that principal saw it, it was like he wanted to get rid of us right away. I didn't feel as though he cared about me or my feelings. I think he just expected perfection and got rid of teachers when he didn't find that in them. And since nobody is perfect, he was constantly in conflict because of it. If you don't have a campus leader who is leading the school as though they are leading a family with all of the hurts and heartaches that go with that, then teachers and other employees won't respect them.

Mary Peters concurred with this train of thought as she noted that just like a family may have a bad home life because of the actions of the head of the family so too might a school have a bad school life because of the actions of the head of the school. She further demonstrated that nobody benefits when the campus principal is not able to lead their school with care and compassion for those under their care. She claims that she has had both good and bad campus leaders throughout her career, but the ones that she thought were more successful than the others showed empathy to the students, parents,

and staff members that they interacted with. She concluded:

My current principal cares deeply about her job, but what's more important than that is that she cares deeply for us. That is not something that you can hide or fake. We all know as a faculty that she cares about us. When we hurt, we know that she hurts too. When one of our students has something happen to them at school or at home, we know that she is truly troubled by it. When a parent comes to her office with a legitimate issue, we know that she tries to see things from the parent's point of view. We care about her that much more because we know that she cares about her school family, us.

Empathetic equilibrium. While all participants noted that they felt that campus principals cannot be successful unless they were also empathetic, five of them went a step further and argued that empathy has an appropriate level that a leader has to find. In other words, these five participants noticed that some of the principals that they had were too empathetic at times. While they liked having empathetic leaders, they also liked when a leader knew when to set feelings aside in order to make decisions that were in the best interest of the campus. Those that were constantly too worried about what the staff felt or how they would be perceived if they did not make decisions were considered by these five participants as being just as ineffective or sometimes even more ineffective than those who did not show empathy at all.

Weldon Wilcox realized this as he analyzed that being an empathetic leader definitely helps a principal be more successful as a leader, but it can also hurt them. He said:

I think that at times principals can be much too empathetic. [Laughs] And that hurts them in the long run. They can't do this because they are scared it will hurt someone's feelings. They can't do that because they are scared that will hurt someone's feelings too. So instead of doing something, they do nothing. Or, I have seen a principal let his staff run all over him because he was a nice guy and couldn't say no to someone when they raised an issue with him. When he was asked why he did that, he would say things like we don't understand what that teacher is going through or that the teacher must be going through a tough time right now and we need to help out. Of course we need to take people's feelings into consideration, but sometimes we also need to make tough decisions that are in the best interest of the school. I think that a successful principal is able to be empathetic and understand where that line is not to cross.

Hank Hess added to this sentiment as he stated that it is important for a principal to be empathetic, but that there is a fine line on how empathetic to be. He went on to say that he has known some good principals who were very successful at leading their schools because they knew where that line was. Others, he added, did not know where that line was and they went to the extreme in regards to empathy. He stated:

I've known one principal that didn't want to make anybody mad, and I think that is way too much empathy. As a principal, you've got to make some people upset when you are constantly dealing with tough decisions. You've got to be able to walk that fine line in order to move your campus forward. The principal who didn't want to make anyone mad, ended up frustrating everyone instead. No, they didn't get mad at him because they felt like he had a good heart, but they were frustrated that he couldn't see past the issue and consider the entire school's situation over one teacher getting her feelings hurt. The principal ended up getting reassigned at the end of that year, so I don't think the people in the district office thought he was successful either.

Research Question 5

The fifth research question was used to investigate participant group responses regarding social skills veteran teachers perceive that principals need in order to effectively lead their perspective campuses. The researchers reviewed the responses of all participants for emerging patterns and themes. The emerging themes, which are described below included: building positive relationships with students are relevant and building relationships with staff are relevant.

Relationships with students are relevant. Of the 12 participants interviewed, seven acknowledged that building relationships with students was an integral part of being a principal and necessary for success. The veteran teachers noted that when principals take time to build relationships with students, they bring about a cohesiveness to the climate of the student body, and ultimately the school. Tiffany Lamb noted this in her interview:

My best principal always mingled with the students, especially in the cafeteria. She would sit around the cafeteria with them talking to them and asking them questions. She got to know them, and they got to know her. I think that by doing this she let them know that she wasn't this cold, removed, authority figure. Paying them attention and getting to know them as people let the students know that she cared about them. She always had incentives for the kids to work for, and she always pushed them individually and in groups to reach their goals. I mean, our school is about getting kids excited about learning, and the leader of the school should be someone they respect and who they know actually cares about learning. It brings us all closer together.

Rick Roberts also discussed the feeling of cohesion in the school as he mentioned that his most successful principal did a good job at the social skill of building relationships with students. He referred to his most successful principal as a father figure that made sure that he made time to spend with the students while guiding them and listening to their conversations about their daily lives. He felt that if they were comfortable talking to him, he could steer them out of trouble if it ever arose. Roberts stated:

One of the very best principals that I ever worked for was at a low socioeconomic school district. The principal was a super good guy to the kids, and they listened to him as they might listen to their father. In fact, many of the students that gravitated toward him did not have fathers in their lives, and so I think they looked up to the principal to fill that need. He would always cook out for the kids. He had a huge grill and would talk with the as he cooked. He stayed after school and watched them practice in whatever events that they were in. He traveled with the team sometimes so that he could encourage them before their games, or congratulate them after their games, or sometimes even console them. The students looked up to him. They loved him, and they worked hard for him. He made the school feel like a family unit that was held together by his passion for the students whom he served.

Relationships with staff are relevant. Of the twelve participants, all stated they felt that when a principal builds relationships with staff, a stronger bond develops between them. This bond led to support from the teachers toward the principal and from the principal toward the teachers. Each of the principals that the participants discussed building positive relationships with their staffs were the some of the very same principals with whom they considered most successful.

Participant Gloria Gains mentioned in her interview that her principal went out of the

way to make sure that not only she built relationships with her staff but that they also built relationships with each other. She claimed that it made the school a strong family unit that was led by a successful principal who each and every staff member knew that she loved them. Gains stated:

We have teacher team cook-offs that our principal puts together. She organizes the teams, and we have so much fun working together as our principal mingles among us making sure things are going well. We also have family nights where we do things as a school family a few times throughout the school year. None of the other schools that I know do this, but we feel like a family when we do. Like, one night we may all vote on a movie to go to and then we all load up and take over a movie theater to watch the movie together. Or we may all decide that we are going to go antique shopping, so we caravan and take over the antique stores. Once we decided to all go out to dinner together, and made reservations for thirty at a Mexican-food restaurant. We always have a blast. If one of us has an idea for something for everyone to do as a team, she is always up to trying to make sure it happens. She does all of these things I think because she has very high expectations for us, and this allows us to blow off some steam. Our school is much stronger as a team, and we are more successful as a staff because of it.

Mary Peters pointed out that the most successful principal that she ever had not only cared about her professional life, she also took the time out of her busy schedule to care about her personal life as well. In doing so, she created a bond that has remained intact the entire time she's been associated with the campus. Mrs. Peters indicated:

I know of one instance in my life when things were going horribly wrong. I went straight to her and said that this is what is going on in my life right now. She didn't tell me that I needed to leave my personal baggage away from the job as I have seen other principals do with staff sometimes. No, she took the time to listen to me, give me advice on what she thought that I should do, and then checked on me often afterwards to make sure that I was ok. I always remember that, and the very few times I hear someone say something negative about her, I make sure to correct them and let them know how lucky they are that we have her. I'm not the only one who feels this way about her; in fact, really, just about the entire staff feels the same way I do. Almost all of us have a bond with her and it makes our school stronger.

Conclusions and Implications

An overall conclusion of the findings revealed that veteran teachers perceive that principals are more successful when they display emotional intelligent traits as outlined in Daniel Goleman's (2017) Emotional Intelligence Theoretical framework. These traits included Self-awareness, Self-regulation, Empathy, Motivation, and Social Skills. Incorporation of these traits among principals in addition to cognitive intelligence, led veteran teachers to perceive that those principals were more successful than those who did not incorporate these traits. Mehdinezhad and Mansouri (2016) posit that the guidance and perceptions of teachers about principals' leadership behaviors on the overall efficacy of teachers has a positive impact on individual teachers.

The findings of this study support Goleman's (2017) first component of emotionally intelligent framework for leaders in which he posited that self-aware people know and are

comfortable talking about their limitations and strengths. They often demonstrate a need for constructive criticism. Those without self-awareness, he argued, interpret the message that they need to improve as a sign of failure. Paren (2015) noted that one of the things that inspirational leaders do is to selectively show their weaknesses; doing so reveals their approachability and humanity. Thus a conclusion in this study is that principals who were comfortable talking about their strengths and weaknesses and who were also comfortable in admitting when they made mistakes were perceived by veteran teachers to have built synergy and trust with their employees.

The findings of this study also support Goleman's (2017) second component of emotionally intelligent framework for leaders in which he stated that people who are in charge of their feelings and impulses are able to create an environment of trust and fairness. Many of the bad things that happen in companies and organizations, he further added, are the result of impulsiveness. Self-regulation, then, is a propensity for reflection and thoughtfulness and instills comfort and integrity with ambiguity and change. In this research study, findings suggest the conclusion that veteran teachers perceived that those principals who maintain a high degree of professionalism and poise in stressful situations build a sense of reliability of their actions among staff whereas those principals with negative behaviors and those who failed to think before they acted, lost trust in their staffs and alienated them.

The findings of this study further support Goleman's (2017) third component of emotionally intelligent framework for leaders in which he argued that leaders who keep setting the performance standards high for themselves, also do the same for the organization when they are in a position to do so. In other words, a drive to surpass goals and an interest in keeping score is contagious. Goleman argued that when people love their jobs for the work itself, they often feel committed to the organizations that make that work possible. This suggests the conclusion that veteran teachers perceive that principals who use positive praise and encouragement build confidence in their staff.

The findings of this study support Goleman's (2017) fourth component of emotionally intelligent framework for leaders in which he identified that leaders who thoughtfully consider employees' feelings as well as other factors when making decisions know how to give effective feedback. Furthermore, they know when to push for better performance and when to hold back. This study demonstrates the conclusion that veteran teachers who found that their principals used empathetic equilibrium with staff were able to build a family-like atmosphere and were valued by the staff overall.

Finally, the findings of this study support Goleman's (2017) fifth component of emotionally intelligent framework for leaders in which he indicated that social skills involve friendliness with the purpose of moving people in the direction you want them to go. Having social skills does not mean that you socialize constantly; rather, it means working according to the assumption that nothing gets done alone. Goleman summarized that social skill is the ability to find common ground and build rapport with others. In this study, social skills involve principals finding common ground and building rapport with students, staff, and community members in an effort to move them in a positive direction that benefits them and the school campus. Thus a suggested conclusion is that veteran principals perceive that those principals who can do this were more successful than those who cannot.

Implications for Practice

Mathew and Gupta (2015) asserted, "The role of emotional intelligence in forecasting effective leaders is an area of research that is gaining energy and popularity in industrial/organizational psychology (p. 76). Gray (2009) pointed out that current research on

leadership traits emphasizes the importance of cognitive abilities over emotions and implies that feelings are obstacles to rational behavior and logical decision-making. He argued, however, that for a principal, emotional intelligence is the cornerstone of every decision that he makes; solving problems and making judgments are a part of a leader's system of values and beliefs. The findings from this qualitative research study indicate that veteran teachers perceive that a high degree of emotional intelligence is necessary for an educational leader to possess in order to successfully lead their campus. Based on these findings, the following implications are recommended for educational leaders:

- Reflect and recognize emotional intelligence. Service and Fekula (2008) asserted that effective leaders must recognize their emotional blind spots because they will ultimately determine success.
- Hone emotional intelligence skills. Chamorro-Premuzic (2013) posited that emotional intelligence can increase with deliberate practice and training.
- Develop leadership programs that highlight emotional intelligence skills and the overall importance and usability for campus leaders. Dabke (2016) stated that those in charge of educational institutions would benefit from the insights from training and leadership development activities that sensitizes them to subordinate needs.
- Pay attention to teacher job satisfaction. While it is important for an educational leader to self-reflect on his or her own strength and weaknesses and how they affect employees, it is just as important to gather information that demonstrates staff perceptions about a leader's success or lack thereof. Waruwu (2015) added that policies need to be implemented that look at teachers' job satisfaction by educational leaders.
- Focus on each component of Goleman's Emotional Intelligence framework. Sadri (2012) suggested that organizations focus on each one of the emotional intelligence competencies as discrete skills and assist leaders in developing each skill independently.
- Provide on-going professional development in schools as well as in university programs that focuses on EI.

This study highlighted the inherent influence that emotional intelligence can have on a principal's success, as perceived by veteran teachers. Given this, the practical value of this research is grounded in the fact that it delves into the lived experiences of teachers, which are arguably the employee most impacted by a principal's leadership. It was found that veteran teachers perceive principals as more successful when they display emotional intelligent traits as outlined in Daniel Goleman's (2017) Emotional Intelligence Theoretical framework. In today's world, only educational leaders who are equipped to manage their own emotions as well as that of their team will have greatest chance for success (Gage & Smith, 2016).

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Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants, Digital Learners: An International Empirical Integrative Review of the Literature

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The author, preparing for a new position as a doctoral research faculty at the American College of Education (ACE), conducted an extensive integrated literature review of “digital natives” and related terms. Focus of the review was directed specifically around digital learners defined as those born between 1980 and 1994. The results clearly revealed a variety of definitions for “digital natives” and “digital immigrants” with no specific clarification or research-based rationale. In addition, strong evidence points toward little connection between a student’s age and digital skills and increased learning. Much of the research suggests that students’ digital competence may be much lower than their “digital professors.”

The term **Digital Native** seems to have first appeared in the literature in the late 1990s and is mostly accredited to Prensky (2001a, 2001b) and Tapscott (1998, 2009). Students (called digital natives) are those born roughly between 1980 and 1994, and represent the first generation to grow up with new technology and have been characterized by their familiarity with and confidence in, with respect to Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). They have spent most of their lives surrounded with digital communication technology (Gallardo-Echenique, Marques-Molas, Bullen, & Strijbos, 2015).

Modern day students in kindergarten through college have spent their lives surrounded by computers, video games, cell phones, and other digital products. Today's average college grads have spent 5,000 hours of their lives reading, but over 10,000 hours with cell phones, email, Internet, and instant messaging (Prensky, 2001).

If modern day students are called "digital natives," what does that make the rest of us? Prensky (2001a) defines those of us who were not born into the digital world but have, later in our lives, adapted to and began to use this new technology, **Digital Immigrants**. Prensky continues by stating:

The importance of the distinction is this: As Digital Immigrants learn – like all immigrants, some better than others – to adapt to their environment, they always retain, to some degree, their "accent," that is, their foot in the past. The "digital immigrant accent" can be seen in such things as turning to the Internet for information second rather than first, or in reading the manual for a program rather than assuming that the program itself will teach us to use it. Today's older folk were "socialized" differently from their kids, and are now in the process of learning a new language (2001a; p. 2).

New Terms

Much of the international research reviewed indicated that although considerable attention is given to "digital natives" and "digital immigrants," few studies have carefully investigated the characteristics of these two groups. Many of the studies that supported the concept of "digital natives" and/or "digital immigrants" were based solely on anecdotal data and opinions. Many studies revealed a dislike and distaste for the terms "digital native" and "digital immigrant", based on a lack of any empirical evidence or substantive characteristics. Many authors including Gallardo-Echenique, et al. (2015); Bennett, Maton, & Kervin, (2008) found a more unifying concept and description to be "**Digital Learner.**"

A major study from the University of Barcelona (Gros, Garcia, & Escofet, 2012) posits that the "digital native" label does not really exist, due to the term's absence of evidence of a better use of technology to support learning. The debate has to go beyond the characteristics of the new generation and focus on the implications of being a learner in a digitalized world (p.1, Abstract). The paper further is based on the premise that the use of technology to support learning is not related to whether a student belongs to the Net generation, but that technology use is mainly influenced by the teaching model. It depends rather, on the pedagogical and teaching models of the institution (p. 2, Introduction).

The Gros, et al. (2012) study highlighted differences between students at a face-to-face university compared to an online university. Their results have several implications including:

- Teachers in face-to-face universities have to focus first on online materials, but more importantly need to also focus on how the use of ICT can support learning,

- Online learning is not only part of the experience of students at a distance, but is an important aspect of campus-based experiences, and
- The results of the study led the researchers to suggest the need to consider that technology-rich learning environments foster students' digital competencies (and not the other way around (p.11).

Gallardo-Echenique et al. (2015) reported that:

Despite the widespread acceptance of the concept of the “Digital Native,” the key claims of this discourse are not based on empirical research. In fact, in the paper “Digital natives, digital immigrants” in which Prensky (2001a, 2001b) proposes these terms, he did not cite any systematic and methodologically sound empirical research to support his ideas. Instead, the key claims are based on popular and quasi-academic literature and tend to be informed by anecdotal information and proprietary research funded by and conducted by private business (p. 6).

In the Gallard-Echenique, et al. Conclusions and Recommendations, they state two findings significant to the term “digital natives.” *One*, there is no commonly-accepted definition of digital natives as it varies among individuals, society, regions and nations, and also over time. *Two*, there are a number of variables other than age which may help in understanding the nature of students' use of digital technologies.

According to Rapetti (2012, p. 39), the expression “Digital Learners” is meant to refer generically (and synthetically) to all of those labels (Digital Natives, Generation Y, Net Generation, etc.), and even those supposedly classified as Digital Immigrants (this author included). Rapetti prefers and coined the term, “**Learners of Digital Era**” (LoDE) and suggests the LoDE perspective consists of the following four facets (Rapetti & Cantoni, 2010b, p. 5):

- The focus is on persons, so the first word refers to them (i.e., Learners);
- The perspective is anthropological-pedagogical, so the chosen word is “learning”;
- Not only young people learn through ICTs in the Knowledge Society; and
- The lesson learned from the “Digital Natives” label: the pervasion of digital technologies in everyday life has a great impact on learning experiences, but we should refuse to apply the “digital” adjective to people and imply generational divides.

Similarly, Gallardo-Echenique et al. (2015), who do not think there is much difference between Rapetti's **LoDE** and their **Digital Learner** designation, present their Digital Learner proposal as follows:

- Focuses on “learners” rather than persons, who should realize the possibilities and potentials of digital technologies in their environment and recognize the value of technology and the opportunity it presents the learner in his/her daily life,
- Argues that learners are not merely users or consumers of technology,
- Highlights the complexities of learner's technology experiences,
- Rejects the generational boundary and any chronological generations that exclude other types of actors who share similar practices (except all learners),
- Does not assume any pre-defined learner characteristics, and

- Adopts a socio-cultural, anthropological, communicational and pedagogical approach from the learners' perspective.

Method

The purpose of this *integrative literature review* was to research the strengths and/or weaknesses of the existing scientific evidence, identify existing gaps in the current research, and identify the need for future research of this phenomenon of digital learning classifications. Another purpose was to scientifically describe potential implications for online leadership preparation programs preparing our nation's future school leaders. A further purpose was to present a unifying concept to higher education faculty and students enrolled in educational leadership programs identified as "digital learners."

Empirical studies reviewed were from several countries and universities: United Kingdom, United States, Switzerland, Iran, Spain, Canada, and Belgium.

To accomplish this stated purpose, the author utilized an *integrative literature review* that "reviews, critiques, and synthesizes representative literature of a topic in an integrated way such as new frameworks and perspectives on the topic are generated" (Russell, 2005; Torraco, 2005).

Findings

1. *Evidence Exists to Suggest Generation is Not the Issue.*

Generation or age groupings are frequently used to explain and rationalize the use of communication technologies in higher education. Several studies and a comprehensive review of the literature, and one in particular provides evidence that this is not the case. Bullen, Morgan, and Qayyum (2011) conducted an empirical study at one postsecondary institution in Canada finding no generational differences in how learners say they used a limited set of information and community technologies (ICTs) in higher education. In addition, their study suggests there are no meaningful differences between net generation and non-net generation students (at this institution) in terms of their use of technology. In addition, the results indicated the students' use of technology was driven by (a) Familiarity, e.g., well-known to students (b) Cost, e.g., mobile phone plans, and (c) Immediacy, e.g., instant messaging.

Other researchers found similar findings – there is no empirical-sound basis for most of the claims about the net generation's digital learning related to generation (Bennett, Maton, & Kervin, 2008; Guo, Dobson, & Petrina, 2008; Jones & Cross, 2009; Kennedy, Dalgarnot, Gray, Judd, Waycott, Bennett, Maton, Krause, Bishop, Chang, & Churchward 2007, 2009; Kvavik, 2005; Margaryan & Litteljohn, 2008; Pedro, 2009; Selwyn, 2009). Several studies reported that the students' use of technology is related to other factors that were reported by Bullen, et al., (2011), such as accessibility, cost, and immediacy.

2. *Generation Is Not the Issue, Context Is*

Bullen, et al., (2011) contend that rather than a focus on generation, context is more important and significant. They explained that this position "is not an argument for maintaining the status quo at post-secondary institutions" (p. 17). Instead, the meaning is that we ought to resist the temptation to base our decisions on generational stereotypes but to investigate deeper factors of how students are using technology and what role it plays in

learning and teaching in higher education (Kennedy, Judd, Dalgarnot, & Waycott, 2010). Bullen, et al., (2011) further defined context as providing faculty with information communication technologies that are specific to content and context. Some examples include technology tools that are collaborative (such as discussion forums, e-portfolios, and communities of practice) to develop communication, meta-cognition, and interpersonal skills (p. 18). Author note – this is the structure and intent found in the American College of Education (ACE) masters and doctoral programs/curriculum and use of their Learning Management System (LMS), Canvas Network.

Bullen, et al., (2011) concluded their research studies by stating that they did not find any evidence to support claims that digital literacy, connectedness, a need for immediacy, or a preference for experiential learning were characteristics of a particular generation of learners (p. 18). Further, their findings are consistent with the conclusions of other researchers (Bennett et al., 2008; Guo et al., 2008; Jones & Cross, 2009; Kennedy et al., 2007, 2009; Kvavik, 2005; Margaryan & Littlejohn, 2008; Pedro, 2009; Selwyn, 2009).

Most important is the position that due to the diversity of programs at post-secondary institutions, decisions regarding the selection and use of information and communication technologies may not be appropriate for all programs – thus, decisions regarding the implementation and specific use of ICT should be made at the program level, with caution of making institutional-wide implementations. The position also relates to the notion that often teaching and learning needs may vary widely across institutions, so making ITC decisions may make better sense to be made at the individual department levels (Bullam et al., 2011).

3. Most Studies Researched, Point toward a More Unifying Concept of the 21st Century Student

Since the research reveals much disagreement and dissatisfaction with the terms *digital native* and *digital immigrant*, there is general agreement for a new “unifying term” that is more based on the international empirical studies that focus on the learner. It appears that many of our international researchers posit we need a unifying term that focuses on the learner without bias toward age or generation.

Several of the researchers presented in this paper, reject terms that are based on age or generation (e.g., digital native, digital immigrant). Rapetti and Cantoni (reported above) suggest a term, **Learners of Digital Era** (LoDE) and Gallardo-Echenique, et al. prefer **Digital Learners**, a term they believe to be a unifying term that offers a more global vision of the 21st century student.

Observing the dates of the existing and in progress research studies on digital learning (beginning around 2001) one can posit that the research around learners in the digital era is just beginning, and growing at a rather robust speed. One theme stands out throughout the literature reviewed – there appears to be general agreement that we need to move beyond the superficial dichotomy of *natives* and *immigrants* and focus on the implications of being a learner in a digital era, and “try to develop a comprehensive understanding of the issues that take into account the diversity of cultural and institutional contexts” (Bullen & Morgan, 2011, p. 63 and Gallardo-Echenique, et al., 2015).

4. Students’ Digital Competence May Be Much Lower than Their “Digital Teachers”

Throughout this *integrative review of the literature*, a common theme emerged that “may suggest” that we are incorrectly defining a student’s *frequent use* of technology as his

/her competency in using technology for increased learning. The research rather reports that students of the “digital native” designation use computers, mobile phones, and the Internet for rapid communication and convenient access to services and information (Gros, et al., 2012, p. 10).

This position is also taken by Kennedy et al. (2008), who first points to the problem and confusion with Prensky’s “digital natives” label.

Prensky (2001a) not only pointed to the supposed natural technological affinity and literacy of the Digital Natives; he also expresses concern at an apparent lack of technological literacy among educators. He labeled lecturers in higher education as ‘Digital Immigrants’; foreigners in the digital lands of the Net Generation; and regarded the disparity between the Natives and Immigrants as the “biggest single problem facing education today” (p. 2). The preferences and skills that characterize the Digital Natives were said to be incompatible with the current teaching practices of the Immigrants. Prensky and other commentators (Frاند, 2000, Oblinger, 2003) suggest that because of this disparity, educators need to adjust their pedagogical models to suit the new kind of learner they are encountering in this new generation of students. Not surprisingly, this argument has gained widespread attention in higher education circles (e.g., Doherty, 2005; Rodley, 2005).

Kennedy, et al., (2009) conducted a major study of incoming students at the Griffith University of Melbourne, and found that while some came in with technology and tools of the ‘Net Generation,’ it was not the universal student experience. They further found that moving beyond entrenched technology and tools (email, phone computer), the pattern of access to a range of other technologies showed considerable variation (p. 117). To consider widespread revision of curricula to accommodate the so-called Digital Natives is not warranted, “since they so obviously speak a variety of tongues.” (p. 117).

Clearly, the Kennedy, et al. (2009) study provided evidence that core technology based skills do not necessarily indicate possessing more sophisticated skills across a wide range of applications or general information literacy. And further, being a member of the ‘Net Generation’ does not translate to knowing how to use the more advanced technology-based tools used to increase student interaction and knowledge at the university levels.

Implications for Teaching and Learning Practices in Educational Leadership Programs

This *Integrative Review of the Literature* reveals that several researchers, through their empirical studies, looked directly at the variety of terms, but specifically (a) “digital natives,” (b) “digital immigrants,” and (c) “digital learners,” and several other related terms. There seems to be a wide agreement that the terms “digital natives” and “digital immigrants” are especially problematic for two reasons: (a) there is little (if any) empirical evidence included to support the claims made about digital natives and digital immigrants in higher education, and (b) there is no research-based evidence that we should be focused on *age* as a determined factor in identifying competent and experienced students in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).

Educational leadership faculty members have been dealing (rather successfully) with online instruction and programs for several years. However, we all agree that many changes have occurred in the recent few years, especially moving beyond just productivity to really addressing what technology offers for more authentic and deeper learning. The following implications based on this *Integrative Review of the Literature Review* may identify and assist

higher education faculty as they design their programs with respect to Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).

Implication 1

It is necessary and recommended that we look at other individual variables besides age which can help us to better understand how best to offer our digital learners an academic environment that maximizes student learning.

Implication 2

There now is a significant amount of theoretical literature focused on the digital learner, but this effort is just beginning and fortunately seems to be “still growing.” As educational leaders, we need to stay abreast of current research as we move forward with innovative and learner-focused programs.

Implication 3

We must be open to possible adjustments and alterations in our digital programs. We are aware of the speed at which student characteristics may and can change, as this literature review has revealed. Therefore, as educational leaders, we must be conscious of and open to the diverse and varied characteristics of our students. As Kennedy et al. (2008) noted, “Evidence of who our students are must remain an important factor in informing how we use the array of technological tools at our disposal to design rich and engaging learning experiences for all students” (p. 120).

Implication 4

As many researchers in this literature review have covered, it is important for program designers to stay focused on collaborative technology tools (such as discussion forums, e-portfolios, and communities of practice) to develop communication, meta-cognition, and interpersonal skills. In creating the virtual learning environment, program designers and instructors must be cautious of arguments for changes in virtual pedagogy based on unsubstantiated variables such as age (e.g., digital natives). Educational leaders must exercise additional caution with surfacing positions that assume the digital learner brings advanced technological skills because of prior use of a variety of leisure and communication skills. Barnes, Marateo, & Ferris (2017) rightfully point to the work of educator Seymour Papert (1993) who argued “computers and technology can be powerful teaching tools, but their potential is not fully exploited by educators who use them as isolated tools, disconnected from the processes of student life and learning” (para. 8).

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