Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies

2015

The Link Between Leadership and Reduced Dropout Rates

Kathy Evans-Brown
Walden University

Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Kathy Evans-Brown

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Review Committee
Dr. Joseph Barbeau, Committee Chairperson,
Applied Management and Decision Sciences Faculty

Dr. Robert Levasseur, Committee Member,
Applied Management and Decision Sciences Faculty

Dr. Salvatore Sinatra, University Reviewer
Applied Management and Decision Sciences Faculty

Chief Academic Officer
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2015

Abstract

The Link Between Leadership and Reduced High School Dropout Rates

by

Kathy Evans Brown

MS, State University College of Buffalo, 1983

BS, Medaille College, 1980

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Management

Walden University

May 2015

Abstract

Urban high schools that predominantly service at-risk students have not been faring well, with disproportionate numbers of minority children and poor White children are dropping out. The purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine the relationship between leaders' successes and the number of reduced dropout initiatives in 2 urban schools. This research was guided by empirical literature that included a review of various successful leadership practices. Case study interviews were conducted with 2 principals and 3 directors and were analyzed for common themes. Quantitative survey data were collected from a purposeful sample of 195 students and 7 administrative leaders in these schools; these quantitative data were then analyzed via descriptive statistics. Findings from the interviews indicated that multiple styles of leadership (e.g., distributive, transformational) are recommended as critical in these complex environments. Findings from the quantitative surveys indicated that students appreciated the role of management and the need for increased engagement in school. Administrators indicated a need for upper management support. This study contributes to social and organizational change by providing stakeholders with a better understanding of how management indirectly influences reduced dropout of at-risk youth. Future studies should include parent voices as they relate to high school dropout and connectedness to schools.

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Dedication

This research study is dedicated to my nephew Rodney, who was my greatest champion during my proposal development. He ultimately succumbed to complications of the AIDS virus at the age of 39. If he were alive today, I can envision his "big smile" as though he were saying, "I am so proud of you, Aunt Kat," as he and all of my nieces and nephews affectionately call me. Also, I dedicate this research to my eldest deceased sister, Lola (Rodney's mother), who impacted my life positively in many ways that I never had the opportunity to tell her. Moreover, to my elderly parents, particularly my mother, who passed away prior to my PhD completion. They inspired me to be the best at whatever I do. Without them, I would not be the person I am today. For these reasons, I thank them both. Finally, to my beloved friend Dr. Lorraine E. Peeler, who truly inspired the culmination of my doctoral work. She was a friend, mentor, and confidant who encouraged me to complete the work necessary for the PhD. She recently passed away, much too soon.

Acknowledgments

First, I give thanks to my Heavenly Father. I would like to thank my mentor and committee chair, Dr. Joseph Barbeau, for his continued support, wealth of knowledge and expertise, and guidance throughout my doctoral journey. Also, to Dr. Robert Levasseur, committee member on my dissertation team, and Dr. Salvatore Sinatra, University reviewer for their guidance, perspectives, support, and expertise. To my colleagues, Drs. Traci Jackson and Theresa Harris-Tigg, for their expertise, reviews, and constructive criticisms. I would like to acknowledge and thank the building principals for their strong leadership, commitment to students, and recognition of the complexities of leading urban schools. To the precollege/dropout prevention program leaders who participated in this study, I thank you. I would also like to acknowledge all of the 195 students who participated in this study. I applaud all and wish them much success throughout high school and beyond. I also would like to acknowledge the school personnel of the varied schools who supported me during my research study. Thank you cousin Marvis and my close friends Pat and Rose for reviewing my tables and survey results with a "second eye" to ensure that my numbers and percentages balanced. Finally, to my dear husband, Paul; my sons, Nicholas, Roman, and Demetrius; and my daughter-in-law, Katie, who supported me throughout my journey, I love you all for your patience and support throughout my doctoral journey.

Table of Contents

iii

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Background

There are a number of factors that negatively impact at-risk students' ability to stay in school and graduate. These factors include high school dropout; increased student diversity and poverty; lack of leadership in urban schools; issues of pedagogy; more rigorous graduation requirements (state mandates); and behavioral, special education, and mental health issues among this population. This phenomenon is prevalent and constant in urban schools across the United States. Consequently, the issue of high school dropout rates in America's public schools has increasingly become a "hot topic" of concern (Azzam, 2007; Kids Count Data Center, 2009; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2011; Swanson, 2010). It is particularly prominent in urban public schools, where highly disproportionate concentrations of minority children attend.

Moreover, despite the increase in the diversity of the student population, it appears that the diversity of the teaching force is not keeping up with the diversity of the students (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008; Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006; Madkins, 2011). There appear to be (a) a lack of student development, (b) minimal parental involvement, and (c) institutional/systematic racism (Bartlett & Brayboy, 2006; Comeaux & Jayakumas, 2007; Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000; Gardner & Miranda, 2001; Karunanayake & Nauta, 2004; Vellymalay, 2012). Accordingly, Schargel, Thacker, and Bell (2007) indicated that schools can no longer afford to offer "one-size-fits all" education. Moreover, today's society demands an individualized approach that caters to the needs of each child.

Today's educational leaders cannot rely solely on traditional methods of teaching and learning. For these reasons, they need to develop new skills and approaches.

Likewise, in a earlier study, Gardner and Miranda (2001) noted that African American children were identified as having behavior disorders and mild mental retardation at higher rates than their European American peers. Roughly 80% of poor, non-White, linguistically different, and disadvantaged youth are eligible for the free and/or reduced-price breakfast and lunch program. They are in the greatest need of personal attention. These conditions are present in the public school system in my community. These conditions have negatively impacted a disproportionate number of young people of color (African American, Hispanic, and Native American), males, and poor European American children because members of these groups drop out of school at higher rates than their wealthier European American counterparts (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2009). Researchers use many different methods to calculate the high school dropout rate, and depending on the approach, the numbers can look very different (Shore & Shore, 2009). Shore and Shore (2009) noted the following:

> Using data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the KIDS COUNT Data Center reports the number and percentage of young people, ages 16 to 19, who are not enrolled in high school and are not high school graduates in a given year. Using this yardstick, in 2007, there were 1.2 million dropouts in the U.S., and the nation's dropout rate was 7 percent. (p. 2)

The other method used to measure the dropout rate is based on a review of the percentage of ninth graders who failed to graduate at the end of 4 years. The study found

that nearly half of the ninth graders in the nation's 50 largest cities (47%) did not graduate with their class in 4 years (Shore & Shore, 2009).

Moreover, dropout rates among students with disabilities vary. Students with emotional and behavioral disorders (51.4%) and students with learning disabilities (27.6%) experience disproportionately higher rates of dropout compared to other students with physical disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). The school system is central to the education of all children. However, in urban school systems, African Americans are especially concerned about the survival of their male children (Boyd-Franklin & Bry, 2000). Boyd-Franklin and Bry (2000) postulated that Black children as young as 5 or 6 were disproportionately placed in special education with a diagnosis of hyperactive, aggressive, distractible, emotionally disturbed, maladjusted, or conduct disorder. Black parents were often suspicious of the motives of school authorities due to historical issues with oppression and discrimination.

Similarly, Senge (2006) alluded to Deming, the father of the quality movement, who maintained that the prevailing system of management could not be transformed without transforming the prevailing system of education. In other words, the educational system is one piece of a societal system. In addition, Senge (1999) quoted Deming as follows: "my work is about a transformation in management and about the profound knowledge needed for the transformation. Total quality stops people from thinking" (p. 34). It is important, as educational reform seems to be a constant in the United States (e.g., No Child Left Behind Act [NCLB] and Race to the Top), that researchers continue to assess whether school leadership contributes to the academic success of students and

their ability to stay in school. Senge's system thinking is an emerging characteristic of effective leadership. He described it as a fairly new phenomenon that allows for the understanding of how subsystems create the whole. It enables the leader to better guide the process of creating a responsive organization through teaming, collaboration, and shared decision making. The skills and capabilities required in building learning organizations shape what people can understand and accomplish. It also allows for the ability to interact differently with one another. Thus, organizations learn only through individuals who learn. Systems thinking leads to experiencing more and more of the interconnectedness of life and to seeing "wholes" rather than parts (Senge, 2006).

It has been almost 60 years since *Brown v. Board of Education*. *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) was based on the Court's conclusion that separate schools were "inherently unequal" and began the largest constitutional change ever to affect American education. It declared that the racial policies of 17 states violated the Constitution (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014, p. 718). Lyons and Chesley (2004) contended that public schools were still not racially integrated and or equitably funded. There are multiple reasons why the integration of schools in America has been an elusive goal, including racism, preferences for neighborhood schools, closing of formerly Black schools, and the disproportionate number of Black students placed in special education programs. Many Black students matriculate through the public system throughout their careers (elementary and high school) without ever having access to a Black teacher or principal (Lyons & Chesley, 2004; Madkins, 2011). Lyons and Chesley postulated that there has been a slow increase in the number of minority principals employed in urban schools.

Despite the inroads made in this area, principals of color are most likely to supervise a predominantly White teaching force. The majority of the student population will consist of African Americans and members of other minority groups who are academically and economically disadvantaged. The teaching workforce has become largely White and female, which does not allow Black students or other minority students to see themselves reflected in the professional realm (Madkins, 2011, p. 417). Madkins (2011) argued for the importance for these students to have these models because many Black teachers have cultural experiences and linguistic backgrounds similar to those of minority students.

Thus, some scholars have argued that one of the major negative impacts that resulted from the Supreme Court's ruling in *Brown vs. Board of Education* was the dismissal, displacement, and/or demotion of Black principals and teachers (Lyons & Chesley, 2004). However, today a surge of Black principals are emerging who have been mentored by their counterparts (as assistant principals in the same school building) for principalships in some of the most troubled urban schools (Achinstein**,** Ogawa, Sexton, & Freitas, 2010; Jacobson, Brooks, Giles, Johnson, & Ylimaki; 2007; Schargel et al., 2007). The process of leadership mentoring will be critical to attracting qualified African American principals to work in high-risk urban area school buildings. This aforementioned process is especially important today, as highly disproportionate concentrations of minority children with increased poverty issues are enrolling in urban public schools in America.

Statement of the Problem

America's public high schools, especially in urban communities, are not faring well. Alarming and disproportionate number of minority and poor White children are dropping out of high school. Dropping out of school has both a negative personal effect and an economic impact on the individual and the community. Between 1972 and 1982, for instance, the school dropout rate increased nearly 5%, from 23.8% to 28.7% (Education Week, 1989).

Today, it is estimated that nationwide, one of four students who enroll in ninth grade drops out before high school graduation. Depending on how various states report their dropout data, the estimated dropout rate can vary from 7% to as high as a 40% across the 50 states (The Annie Casey Foundation, 2009). Comparatively, in a recent Castle News report, it was indicated that there was a rise in Castle's (pseudonym) graduation rate from 47% in 2010 to 54% in 2011. The scarce literature that exists surrounding the linkage between principal leadership practices and student dropout rates suggests that this is a worthy area of research (Jacobson et al., 2007; Mansfield-Cummings, 2013; Marzano, Walters, & McNulty , 2005; Schargel et al., 2007).

Marzano (2003) described leadership as the foundation for change at all levels. He considered leadership to be the single most important aspect of effective school reform. He noted that leadership is mentioned in early research on school effectiveness. Leadership is a necessary condition for effective reform relative to school-level, teacher-level, and student-level factors. Beliefs surrounding leadership are vital to the effectiveness of a school. The function of leadership is to create change. It is believed

that once good leaders are in charge of school buildings and precollege programs, they create "new patterns" of actions, "new vision," and "new belief systems" for change (Bruggencate, Luyten, Scheerens, & Sieegers, 2012; Schargel et al., 2007; Senge, 1999, 2006).

Moreover, Senge (2006) asserted that real change occurs when thinking in terms of the "ecology of leadership," which was described as the new view of leadership in learning organizations. He noted that these types of leaders need one another. Similiarly, Schargel et al. (2007) recognized the importance of the principal as a manager/leader, and the importance of parental and community involvement. This was equated to pure collaboration on behalf of students' success. They believed that school leaders can directly influence factors associated with the school climate, as well as culture, school connectedness, school safety, attendance, and school achievement. Thus, the development of leadership profiles, practices, and strategies that assist in the area of reduced high school dropout of at risk youth and their ability to graduate was a central focus of this research study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to build upon the current literature by empirically testing the linkages between leaders and followers and their respective successes in the area of reduced high school dropout of at-risk youth. A compilation of interventions that could increase attendance and ultimately reduce dropout rates was developed and used in this study. The research reviewed other factors that contribute to reduced dropout rates, such as parent and community involvement, school-based dropout

prevention programs, and the involvement of public stakeholders, which were used in this study. The research assessed the dropout prevention efforts of two urban schools. The study explored the link between effective leadership and students staying in school, and whether urban public schools can be effective with the right leadership. Specifically, the schools selected for this study are similar and very unique in various ways. For example, both schools are among the majority of "low performing high schools" in the Castle school district, meaning the school either has the greatest number or the greatest percentage of nonproficient students on New York State assessments in identified subgroups or a low graduation rate. These schools are open to students beyond the normal school day, which ends at 2:45 p.m. Often, these schools are open until 5:30-6:00 p.m. They accommodate students for afterschool assistance that includes tutoring in subject areas such as math, science, and English. A feature of the uniqueness of the schools is that both principals are newly appointed to their schools.

The principal at Tru-Tech Academy (pseudonym) is an African American woman who is completing her third year as principal. She oversees a population of approximately 700 students (Grades 5-12). Thus, the student composition is more racially diverse than that of Prosperous High School (pseudonym). The student population is 68% Black, 19% White, 10% Hispanic, 1% Native American, and 1% Asian. Moreover, Prosperous High School's principal is a Caucasion man who is completing his second year as principal. He oversees a population of approximately 550 students (Grades 9-12). The student composition is 93% Black, 4% Hispanic, 2% White, and 1% Asian. The graduation rates for Tru-Tech Academy and Prosperous High School in 2012 were 65% and 47%,

respectively. Both schools also accommodate students who have special needs such as special education and mental health disorders. It also appears that there may be issues prevalent among the student population (retention, poverty, residing in distressed and high-crime areas), families (parent participation and lack of knowledge about navigating systems), and communities (scarcity of jobs, crime, gangs, and teen parenthood) of both schools. Lastly, despite the fact that Tru-Tech Academy has admission criteria (i.e., auditions for specific programs such as arts or music), these students are also challenged with poverty issues, crime, and other factors that could challenge their ability to stay in school and graduate.

In the Castle Public School District, graduation rates vary from school to school. For example, there are five specialized/criteria schools in the district with graduation rates as high as 98%. The students must take an academic entrance exam for admittance. This process is not required among the majority of Castle's low performing high schools. Further, graduation rates in the Castle School District took a drop from 53.1% in 2009 to 47.4% in June 2010. However, as noted previously, a recent Castle News report indicated that high school graduation rates increased from 47.4% in June 2010 to 54% in June 2011. As mentioned, Tru-Tech Academy and Prosperous High School was involved in this study. Both schools are designated as "low performing high schools" in need of improvement by the New York State standards committee. For this reason, an assessment of effective leadership profiles and practices for teacher buy-in and programs that aid in the area of reduced dropout rates of the at-risk student determined the effectiveness of their success. In addition to an assessment of the dropout and graduation

rates, a review of the relationships between the students and the leaders was conducted. I

used a purposeful sample of students from both schools who completed a survey

questionnaire (Appendix J). The completed questionnaires were expected to provide

information about the relationships between the students and leaders in the building and

other factors pertinent to reduced dropout, social and emotional connections, and

graduation aspirations. Furthermore, the precollege programs involved in this study

(Liberty Partnerships Program and the Upward Bound Programs) were assessed to

discern their association and relationship to the schools identified in this study in

assisting with reduced dropout and increased graduation rates of at-risk youth. Thus, the

directors of these programs also completed the leadership survey questionnaire

(Appendix I & Appendix K) and were included in the leadership case study component of

this research**.**

Nature of the Study

The sites of the study were Tru-Tech Academy and Prosperous High School

located in the City of Castle. Both schools have been identified as "low performing

schools" in the district. The Liberty Partnerships Program and two Upward Bound

Programs (one located at the University at Castle [pseudonym] and the other located at

Castle State College [pseudonym]) were the identified precollege programs associated

with this study. All programs operate during the day in selected schools (offering

academic supports such as tutoring, college preparation, and enrichment and counseling

referrals) and after school from 3:00-5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, on the college

campus. During the summer, students participate in a myriad of activities that include

class work, enrichment, and career exploration, and there is an opportunity for selected

students to reside in the dorms (Upward Bound Programs only) for 6 weeks.

Theoretical Foundations

The theoretical framework for this study included (a) a review of various leadership

strategies and leadership styles and their effectiveness: (b) an assessment of dropout

prevention efforts and their effectiveness in the selected schools; and (c) an exploration

of leadership profiles and strategies between the high school principals of the two

identified schools for this study. I drew from Senge's (1990, 2006) work on systems

thinking and learning organizations; the focus of Marzano et al. (2005) on 21 leadership

responsibilities that could impact student dropout and help principals develop new

leadership strategies for assisting organizations to develop new vision(s) for change; and

Schargel et al. (2007) informed leadership as a critical factor in ensuring the success of

dropout prevention efforts to inform the theoretical framework(s) for this study.

Research Design

A mixed-method research model was used in this study. It included a quantitative

survey questionnaire (Appendix I). It was used for the leaders (two principals, two

assistant principals, three program directors) to determine (a) their strategy for retaining

at-risk students in school; (b) their interactions with the parent involvement team, or with

parents of individual students (i.e., students who may leave school due to medical issues

or students who decide to leave school due to parenthood); and (c) how leaders involve

their subordinates in the decisions and urgency surrounding reduced dropout rates of at-

risk youth. Case study research and interviews with the leaders (Appendix K) comprised

the qualitative part of the study. The case study included discussions with leaders in

school buildings (two principals) and directors (three directors) of precollege dropout

prevention and/or afterschool programs (Liberty Partnerships, and Upward Bound) who

have assisted in the area of reduced dropout of at-risk students.

A survey questionnaire (Appendix J) was used with the target population of all

students according to school. Purposive sampling was used to draw a sample from the

student population at the two selected high schools. This process was essential to assess

the students' reasons (a) why they stayed in school; (b) what adult figures in the buildings

influenced them; and (c) what role leadership played in their lives. For these reasons,

approximately 200 students from these schools were selected to participate in completing

the survey questionnaire (Appendix J), with an expectation of an equal number of male

and female students. One hundred students from the Tru-Tech Academy and 100 students

from Prosperous High School were the student participants. For each of the

aforementioned schools, I purposefully sampled a pool of 50 students enrolled in a

dropout prevention program (Liberty Partnerships Program, Upward Bound Program)

that provides services to students either in the school or after school on the college

campus, and 50 students who were not participating in a dropout prevention program

each from the aforementioned schools. This process assisted me in comparing,

quantifying, and qualifying the results of the dropout prevention programs and

identifying linkages to leadership involvement and their association to reduced dropout

and graduation success. Finally, as noted earlier, I identified leaders (two principals, two

assistant principals, & three program directors) of selected school buildings (two school

buildings) and precollege programs (Liberty Partnerships and Upward Bound) to view successful leadership attributes and traits. Thus, they completed survey questionnaires (Appendix I), and all but the two assistant principals participated in the case study component (for a total of five leaders). (See Appendix K.)

Assumptions

An assumption of this study was that the respondents would complete the questionnaire instrument both objectively and honestly. It was also assumed that I would maintain my subjectivity and lack of bias despite being a parent of a first-time freshman student enrolled in one of the participating schools, having been one of the first directors of the University at Castle's Liberty Partnerships Program in the 1990s, and having maintained professional relationships with the program directors of both the Liberty Partnerships and Upward Bound programs over the years. Moreover, it was assumed that the interpretation of the analysis of the data would reflect the intent of the respondents and that the methodology would reflect the most appropriate design for this study. Lastly, it was assumed that the research could establish a casual relationship based on a correlation of leadership styles and reduced dropout rates, while being unable to control for the influence of the structural retention efforts and special programming at the identified schools in this study**.**

Scope and Delimitations

The delimitations for this study included the selection of schools. The study involved two high schools with high concentrations of economically disadvantaged minority students. Both high schools (Tru-Tech Academy and Prosperous High School)

were selected from the total number of 17 high schools in the Castle School District. As noted earlier, the majority of Castle's high schools are designated as "low performing." There are only seven high schools in the district that are considered "schools in good standing" with graduation rates as high as 98%. Moreover, despite the fact that the Tru-Tech Academy has admission criteria and some special programming, it also has a high percentage of economically disadvantaged minority students enrolled in the school. In addition, Tru-Tech Academy has been identified as a "low performing" school and reportably has issues similar to those of the majority of the "low performing" high schools in the Castle School District. In addition, the school has high concentrations of economically disadvantaged minority students (approximately 80%) who attend. Lastly, Tru-Tech Academy had a graduation rate of 67% among its senior class in 2011-2012. For these reasons, I chose this school (Tru-Tech Academy) as one of the schools to be involved in this study. Thus, there were some commonalities between the two urban schools, some differences between the schools, and some uniqueness between the schools involved in this research study.

Limitations

The methodological limitations in this study was the value and validity of the questionnaire instrument that was developed and the method of collecting data. I was cognizant of the types of questions that were posed to the respondents and ensured that they are clear, precise, and meaningful. Another methodological limitation could have been my bias and potential lack of objectivity in the interpretation of data. Other methodological limitations could have included the following:

- participant withdrawal

- number of completed questionnaires returned

- the purposeful sampling strategy

- selection of only two schools out of 17 public high schools

Lastly, the determination of the appropriate computer program for coding and data analysis for this study could present a limitation.

Castle School District

The Castle City School District is a fiscally dependent entity. It is the second largest school system in New York State. It is regarded as one of the premiere urban school districts in New York State. It is responsible for the education of approximately 34,000 students who are educated in 58 facilities. The student population is very diverse. Moreover, the poverty rate for the city's children under 18 increased from 45% in 2012 to 50.6 % in 2013. Thus, some 29,726 of the city's 58,722 children under 18 live in poverty. These students attend one of 14 elementary schools, 12 early childhood centers, 18 Grade 3-8 academies, and/or 5-12 specialized schools, nine academic high schools, six technical/vocational high schools, and two special schools (a total of 17 high schools). The buildings are three times the age of statewide school buildings. Many are woefully outdated and in need of serious repair. Fortunately, the Castle School District (pseudonym) has secured approximately $2 billion from the federal government within the last 5 years to provide new construction for all of its schools. Six academies are newly constructed, $445-million state-of-the-art facilities and other schools, including high schools (Tru-Tech Academy and Prosperous High). Schools in the Castle School

District have had a multimillion-dollar renovation. This process is ongoing in the district.

The City of Castle has an estimated population of 261,025 residents, a decline of

approximately 100,000 residents over a 10-year span (2010 U.S. Census). The racial

composition is 50.4% White, 38.6% Black, 3.2% Asian, 0.8% Native American, and

10.5% Hispanic. There are 43.3% homeowners in the City of Castle. However, there are

roughly 10,000 abandoned homes and buildings in the city. The unemployment rate is

7.3%, the mean value of homes is $65,000, the median household income is $30,000

compared to the statewide average of $54,000, and 29.6% of people live below the

poverty level (U.S. Census, 2010). The severe poverty of Castle's population is revealed

in the schools. All students enrolled in Castle's schools are eligible to receive free

lunches. The United Way of Castle (pseudonym) has reported that in childhood poverty,

Castle ranks 11th among all U.S. cities, with one in five children in Castle County and

one in three children in Castle (pseudonym) living in poverty. Castle as a city has the

oldest housing stock in the nation. A disproportionate number of students in the Castle

schools, over a third, 44% are considered educationally disadvantaged and are close to or

actually failing final examinations. Yet these same students must be prepared to meet the

more rigorous requirements of the revised New York State Assessment and Standards. If

people believe that all children can learn, then the children who are most in need must

have the resources to achieve not only parity, but also success.

Tru-Tech Academy School is located in the "Ward District" of the City of Castle.

The student composition is more racially diverse than that of Prosperous High School.

The student composition is 70% Black, 18% White, 9% Hispanic, 1% Native American,

and 1% Asian. Prosperous High School is located in the "Albany District" (pseudonym) of the City of Castle. The student composition is 90% Black, 5% Hispanic, 3% White, and 1% Asian. The City of Castle has been known for its segregated status due to where the residents live—the West Side of Castle is home to African Americans, the East Side is home to Hispanics/Puerto Ricans, North Castle is home to Italians, the North district is home to other Caucasians, and so on. The two schools identified for this study are located on opposite sides of the city. Based on my experience, Tru-Tech Academy is located further north toward Main Street and downtown Castle. There are minimal abandoned houses and buildings visible in the area. On the other hand, Prosperous High School is located in the Albany district, where more crime is committed, and there are visibly more abandoned homes and buildings. The school sits on the east side going toward Mulberry Street (pseudonym).

Significance of the Study

The significance of the research is to determine the effects of leadership and reduced dropout rates in urban public schools. The study assessed the vision and mindset of leaders and school personnel to identify students at risk of dropping out of high school. The research explored the existing dropout interventions in the selected schools. The overall importance of this study rests in the effort to identify leadership practices that are associated with successful student outcomes. Effective leadership and management are crucial in educational school environments. Thus, a compilation of interventions that could increase attendance and ultimately reduce high school dropout rates were developed from the literature review and used in this research study. Moreover, other

factors that contribute to student dropout (i.e., parent and community involvement, school-based dropout prevention programs, and the involvement of public stakeholders) was addressed. The results of this research could assist colleges and universities in enhancing their principal leader development curriculum. This study may contribute to social and educational change by identifying effective leadership profiles, strategies for teacher buy-in, and programs that aid in the reduction of dropout rates of at-risk youth. The research could be of major importance to those involved in educational reform in the United States, particularly those who work in public schools and interact daily with the targeted student populations in this study. Thus, the research may be useful to superintendents, principals, teachers, parents, afterschool programs, precollege programs, faith-based institutions, students, and lawmakers. Lastly, the research may assist the aforementioned systems in highlighting the importance and influence of effective leadership and the association to students' reduced dropout rates, and for restructuring a defunct high school system into one that will retain at-risk students for completion of high school.

Research Questions

The overarching questions for this mixed-model research study were the following:

- What influences young people to stay in school?
- What is the relationship between school leadership and reduced high school dropout rates?

Research Subquestions

- What are the leadership "practices" in Tru Tech Academy and Prosperous High School that are "beating the odds" for reduced dropout and graduating disproportionate minority students from high school?

- How do the leadership practices of Tru Tech Academy and Prosperous High School compare and contrast with one another?

- What are the leadership "practices" in precollege programs (Liberty Partnerships, Upward Bound) that are "beating the odds" and influencing minority students (Liberty Partnerships & Upward Bound Programs are involved in both schools) to stay in school?

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used several times throughout this study. It is important to provide the definition of these terms.

At-risk: Students in this category exhibit characteristic factors typically associated with being at increased risk of dropping out of high school. These include the following: (a) are low achievers; (b) are 1 or 2 years behind in grade level; (c) have a high rate of absenteeism and truancy; (d) exhibit discipline problems in school; (e) come from single-parent homes; (f) come from low-income homes; (g) feel rejected by the school; and (h) have negative attitudes toward school (New York State Education Department—Liberty Partnerships Program, 2014).

Director: The operational definition of a director is as follows**:** a leader or manager of a precollege project such as Liberty Partnerships and Upward Bound

Programs who is responsible for the day-to-day operations of a specific state or federally funded program and for fulfilling the state and federal guidelines for executing the grant funds, scope, and deliverables of the project.

*Dropout***:** Considerable controversy surrounds the actual definition of *high school dropout*. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 directs states and their districts to track progress standards the state has put in place and dropout information, but dropout rate is not a required indicator for determining whether schools meet adequate yearly progress (AYP). Currently, there is a need for states to develop a more reliable and uniform dropout and graduation plan (National High School Center, 2007).

For the purposes of this study, my operational definition is as follows: a high school dropout is defined as a student who enters high school, generally in Grade 9, and drops out or leaves high school before graduating from the 12th grade, without a high school diploma .

Leadership: An individual that sets the direction, mentors others (developing people), provides decision making for an organization, and influences people to do things through the use of power and authority; the process of influencing the activities of an individual or group to achieve certain objectives in a given situation (Marzano, 2005).

Leadership responsibilities: The responsibilities of a leader include creating new patterns of action and new belief systems, being a catalyst for change, and operating as a change agent who creates a "shared vision" among followers. Leaders are responsible for preparing organizations and their workers for change and helping them cope as they struggle through it (Senge, 2006)

Liberty Partnerships Program (LPP): The operational definition of the LPP

Program: school dropout prevention program funded by the New York State Education

Department to keep young people in school, graduate them so they can go on to

postsecondary education or obtain meaningful employment. LPP programs are designated

in selected school buildings (Tru Tech Academy and Prosperous High School as well as

on the University at Castle's Main Street campus. Students participate in work readiness,

computer, college readiness, and basic academic core classes such as math, science, and

writing.

*Low-performing high schools***:** These schools have performance composite scores

of less than 60% (based on student performance on math and English statewide

standardized tests and high school graduation rates) compared to schools with

performance scores of 80% or more.

Precollege programs: The operational definition of precollege programs are as

follows: programs housed on university and college campuses that are called precollege

programs because all of the participants are enrolled in middle school or high school

(Grades 7-12). The programs (Liberty Partnerships and Upward Bound Programs), work

in collaboration with high schools to assist students to successfully complete high school

and prepare for the rigor of postsecondary education. Students attend afterschool

programming on college campuses after school. They are provided tutoring and classes in

math, science, and computer-assisted learning.

Principal: A school leader in charge of a middle or secondary school (my

operational definition).

*Shared vision***:** Described as a genuine vision (as opposed to a vision statement) of people excelling and learning who are bound together around a common identity and sense of destiny; people do this because they want to (Senge, 1990).

*Systems thinking***:** Described as a conceptual framework, a body of knowledge and tools that have been developed over the past 50 years to make the full patterns clearer and to help see how to change them effectively (Senge, 1990, p. 7).

Academic Talent Search Program: This program is designed to recruit and reach out to youth in Grades 9-12 to provide academic and enrichment activities as well as college exploration activities to engage students to go beyond high school. It is a federally funded program that focuses on at-risk inner city youth.

*Upward Bound Program (UBP)***:** This program is designed to assist first-generation college graduates. It is funded by the federal government. UBP works in collaboration with selected Castle Public Schools (pseudonym) to assist students with academic assistance, student development, college readiness, and preparation for the rigor of postsecondary education.

*Urban high school***:** An institution that is located in a city with a predominately minority enrollment that provides secondary education to young people (my operational definition).

Summary

The focus of Chapter 1 was on the issue of the disproportionate number of minority children dropping out of America's high schools. It highlighted the realities of the increase in both diversity of the student population and poverty rates in urban school districts. Dropping out of high school has an effect on numerous entities, including one's own personal wealth, the economy, increased crime, deteriorated health, and the overall community. African American, Hispanic, Native American, male, and poor European American children drop out of school at higher rates than their wealthier European American counterparts (Annie E. Casey Report, 2009). As mentioned earlier, there are many factors that negatively impact at-risk students' ability to stay in school and graduate. These aforementioned groups have had limited exposure to teachers of color and/or principals of color. According to Lyons and Chesley (2004), there has been a slow but steady increase in the numbers of African Americans, other people of color, and women in principal positions. In addition, poverty, institutional/systematic racism, minimal parent involvement, and lack of personal development were highlighted as other possible factors in being a high school dropout.

Moreover, leadership contributions to the academic success of at-risk students influence and shape the landscape of the school environment (Schargel et al., 2007). Schargel et al. (2007) argued that the principal is the middle manager in a system of rules, regulations, and mandates from policy makers. The traditional top-down model of school leadership is no longer effective (Rice, 2006). Thus, leadership consists of a team (principal, teachers, parents, and community members and other stakeholders); the leader

continues to direct the team for successful student outcomes. A leader requires certain

leadership attributes and characteristics. Moreover, leaders need to understand the

diversity of poor, non-White and male, linguistically different, and disadvantaged student

populations. This underscores the students' need for personal attention. Consequently,

systems thinking has become an emerging characteristic of leadership's success. For this

reason, leaders need to understand the dynamics of a multisystemic and complex process.

In turn, they must be able to convey this understanding to their subordinate staff. This

study involved assessing the link between effective leadership and reduced high school

dropout rates. I explored whether urban public schools can be effective, with the right

leadership, in promoting successful student outcomes, in reducing high school dropout

for at-risk youth, and in graduating at-risk youth from high school. Thus, as noted earlier

in this chapter, besides the principal as manager/leader, leadership roles and

responsibilities will be shared among others, such as assistant principals and program

directors. They will naturally take on leadership responsibilities for assisting in the goal

of increased student outcomes. This aforementioned group took part in the survey

questionnaire (Appendix I) portion of this study. Senge (2006) called that approach the

"ecology of leadership." Finally, the research study was outlined to include the two

school sites that participated in the study: Tru-Tech Academy and Prosperous High

School. In addition, the dropout prevention programs that will participate in the study

were identified: Liberty Partnerships Program and Upward Bound Program. The major

research questions and subquestions that were answered by the research findings were

highlighted. Definitions of terms were described. Lastly, (a) the assumptions; (b) the

limitations; (c) the nature of the study; (d) the purpose of the study; (e) the research

design; (f) the scope and delimitations; (g) the significance of the study; (h) the statement

of the problem; and (i) the theoretical foundations for this study were addressed.

Chapter 2 provides supporting literature on dropout data from various research

sources. I describe the importance of acculturation in school buildings. Additionally, I

highlight the importance of prevention and intervention practices for the at-risk student.

Further, I addressed how principal leadership may impact the at-risk student in a causal

and/or indirect way. It also contains (a) a literature review relating to the selection of

research methodology; (b) the study's theoretical framework and various bodies of

research that informed the current study; (c) descriptions of the literature on the dropout

problem in America and its causal links to principal leadership; (d) discussion of school

and social factors related to dropouts; and (e) descriptions of leadership and

organizational change initiatives.

In Chapter 3, sample data are described, along with the research design that was

used in this study, and the problems inherent in the analysis and the analytic methodology

are outlined.

Chapter 4 includes: the pilot study and the results, the setting, participant

demographics, data collection, analysis of interview data, quantitative data analysis,

evidence of trustworthiness, and a summary.

Chapter 5 includes the interpretation of these findings in relation to the theoretical

framework and the literature review for this study, the limitations to generalizability

and/or trustworthiness that arose from the execution of the study, recommendations,

implications for positive social change, and a conclusion.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In the following sections, relevant peer-reviewed research topics for this study are discussed. I conducted an empirical study of various databases. Among them were the Proquest, Sage Full-Text Publications, Emerald Publishing, JStor, Journal of Black Studies, Emerald Publications, Educational Leadership, Leadership and Management, and Journal of Academic Search Premier databases. In addition, books and other research literature from the Walden University Library, Empire State College, and the Castle Public Library were accessed to obtain the most current data pertaining to this study. Supporting literature on dropout prevention practices, teacher challenges, and how leadership and parent and community involvement could impact at-risk youth was reviewed for this study. This chapter also contains a literature review on dropout and its probable relationship to leadership, as well as the selection of research methodology that informed the current study.

The first section of this chapter addressed: (a) emerging trends and data concerning disproportionate numbers of students of color and males not graduating from high school in urban school districts; and (b) data and studies that support trends among dropouts to improve graduation rates. This builds the underlying premise of this study. In addition, the following issues were addressed in relation to dropout rates: (a) politics and discrimination, (b) culture and diversity, (c) students' lack of personal development, (d) how poverty impacts students' ability to graduate, (e) parent and community involvement, and (f) at-risk students' disengagement from education. Lastly, the role of

leadership practices and strategies, acculturation, diversity, and organizational change are discussed in detail. Leadership sets the tone in any environment. It is a shared responsibility that involves collaborative efforts among the principal, school and program personnel, and parents and community stakeholders to effect change. Effective leadership is critical in urban public education with student populations experiencing high rates of poverty and diversity. Leadership effectiveness could have a relationship with the success of promoting retention and in turn reducing high school dropout rates. According to Printy (2008),

> Researchers, practitioners, and policy makers want to know if school leaders can make a difference in how teachers think about their work and in the quality of their instruction in classrooms. Such influence could explain important links in the causal chain between leadership and student achievement. (p. 188)

Leaders were assessed to identify their interaction and association with their peers. Effective leadership profiles, strategies, and practices used for teacher buy-in and programs that aid in the retention of the at-risk student was explored. Types of leadership styles and characteristics assessed the leaders' ability to effectively address change initiatives and, in turn, shift the subordinates' mindsets to effect increased change in a learning organization. The importance of leadership development was also discussed.

Finally, the study provided examples of model programs, including research methodologies, and a developed compilation of interventions from the literature that could increase attendance and ultimately promote reduced dropout among the at-risk population. These dropout prevention initiatives promote the development of successful

partnerships and collaborations. They provide strategies for school and program

personnel buy-in, student and parent buy-in, and increased community stakeholder

relationships with the school community. The aforementioned initiatives proved that at-

risk students can be resilient when provided with a myriad of appropriate supports and

interventions. Thus, the success of urban schools in providing a "holistic approach" to all

students in their quest for completing high school rests in the hands of leadership. It is the

leader's responsibility to convey understanding to and engage subordinate staff

concerning the importance of infusing multiculturalism in their day-to-day operations. It

is critical for leaders to develop partnerships and relationships with social service

organizations and various dropout prevention and strength-based programs, parents, and

community stakeholders to effect change. Moreover, Ziomak-Daigle (2010), asserts that

dropout prevention takes a multisystemic, integrative services approach. She indicated

that six components are necessary for dropout prevention success:

- early identification and intervention;

- individualized attention;

- involvement of peers;

- involvement of families;

- involvement of community; and

- community-wide multiagency collaboration.

Alternative School Options

Taylor (2005) described a number of schools as alternatives to urban public

schools. Namely, charter schools have become popular among African American

families. They provide parents with autonomy, choice, and a sense of private education for their child with no cost attached. Charter schools are nontraditional public schools that educate over a million children each year and provide an educational choice for parents. Charter schools are not managed by state and local government boards, but instead by individuals, teachers, parents, community members, or organizations (Booker, Sass, Gill, & Zimmer, 2010; Paino, Renzulli, Boylan, & Bradley, 2014, p. 501). However, they are not designated or designed to close academic achievement gaps for African American students. Parochial schools are private schools where tuition is charged. These schools demonstrate the most effort in improving academic achievement gaps. Taylor asserts that there is little difference in academic achievement between African American students and Caucasian students who are enrolled in these types of schools.

For the most part, the majority of students in high schools today are respectful, want to learn, and graduate from high school. However, a number continue to be a challenge, and some students compromise the education of other pupils in the classroom who want to learn. Often, teachers are overwhelmed, and limited in resources to reduce disruptions. Teachers are struggling to gain the attention of students. One of the strategies that could be useful is the implementation of online classes. Many students today are computer savvy. This approach could address high absenteeism among at-risk students.

Taylor (2005) presented a strategy design of proven school reforms that have the potential to close racial achievement gaps. He regarded the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) as one vehicle that close racial achievement gaps. He also cited it as a pitfall, as

the reporting requirements of NCLB fell short in each of the following respects: (a)

assessment is annual rather than short-term; (b) there are no mandated standards for

evaluating short-term changes in instructional and pedagogical practices; and (c) there is

no mandated contingency analysis that allowed teachers to evaluate the extent of growth

in achievement competencies and pedagogical practices. In contrast, NCLB has

increased the accountability of school principals to ensure that all students are meeting

achievement standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). According to Wiener and

Hall (2004), young people from all backgrounds have high expectations for both

themselves and their schools, as do their families and communities. However, Wiener

and Hall contends that, schools have focused disproportionately on high-achieving

students and those with overall good averages, and have masked significant gaps between

various groups.

Improving Graduation Rates Today

Rabaka (2003) cited Dubois as an authority in the area of African American and

multicultural education. Dubois postulated that education is a vehicle to expose people of

color to ways in which they can solve their own problems. He stressed that the same

educational problems that existed in the past exist today. Dubois noted, "We must start

where we are and not where we wish to be"(Dubois, 1973, as cited in Rabaka, 2003, p.

413). In a slightly different vein, Ogbu (1999) stated the following:

Involuntary minorities (racially oppressed African Americans, Mexican

Americans and Native Americans) should be more like voluntary minorities

(immigrants who choose to come to US) who overlook racial slights, and look

forward to their opportunity for success in academic performance and careers. In

other words, he believes that involuntary minorities do not have an optimistic

view of the occupational or educational system. (Ogbu, 1999, as cited in Foley,

2005, p. 646)

Schargel et al. (2007) suggested that students began to disengage from the

educational arena as early as the first grade. However, Blondal and Adelbjarnardottir

(2009) believed that at-risk students begin the disengagement process in Grade 7. Thus, a

study of dropouts in Baltimore City Schools by Alexandor, Entwisle, and Kabbani

(2001), as cited in Schargel et al., (2007) found that dropouts had on average 60% more

absences in the first grade than did graduates, 134% more absences in middle school, and

247% more by ninth grade. They concluded that for at risk learners, dropping out is not a

spur of the moment decision. Similarly, Williams-Bost and Riccomini (2006) believed

that dropping out is a multifaceted process with direct links to disengagement from

school and not a single impulsive action. Improving graduation rates date back to the

1970s and 1980s when it was reported that U.S. educational standards had lagged behind

other industrial countries (Ziomek-Daigle, 2010). Cole and Boykin (2008) questioned

whether America as an industrialized society can maintain its dominance and leadership

if a meaningful percentage of its population is seriously marginalized because they failed

to master basic skills. They also noted that pedagogy used in inner-city classrooms tended

to promote low rates of student engagement. Active student engagement is identified as a

variable that increased student performance. Likewise, Hernandez (2011) posited that

"more than three decades ago research began to suggest that children with low third-

grade reading test scores were less likely to graduate from high school than children with higher reading scores" (p. 2).

There continues to be a high percentage of Black youth who do not graduate from high school. They do not ordinarily possess the characteristics described as students with high aspirations and self-efficacy. Most of these youth are disengaged from the academic scene by the time they approach high school. Some of the specific factors that encourage or impede academic achievement in Black youth include environmental such as family income, parents level of education, occupational status, neighborhood environments, school factors to include teacher expectations and school environment (Attaway & Bry, 2004; Nelson & Guerra, 2014). The cost of dropping out of high school has always been high but it appears to be greater today. According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2009), over the past three decades, individuals without a high school diploma has had a severe decline in their income. They note that the result is a pattern of severe economic marginalization.

Moreover, according to the National High School Center-NHSC (2007), the following indicators were discovered that identify who is most likely to drop out. Schools need to identify students who:

- receive poor grades in core subjects,
- possess low attendance rates,
- fail to be promoted to the next grade, and
- are disengaged in the classroom.

These are considered better predictors of dropout than fixed status indicators such as gender, race, and poverty, although background factors are indeed often associated with dropout, including being born male, economically disadvantaged, African American, or Latino (p. 2).

Moreover, the NHSC (2007) posited the following:

About 1.3 million students did not graduate from United States high schools in 2004, costing more than $325 billion in lost wages, taxes, and productivity. The more than 12 million students who will drop out over the next decade will cost the nation about $3 trillion. (p. 2)

Taylor (2005) asserted that the need is great to encourage more youngsters to complete high school. A high school dropout earned about $260,000 less over a lifetime than a high school graduate. They paid about $60,000 less in taxes. Annual losses exceeded $50 billion in federal and state income taxes for all 23,000,000 U.S. high school dropouts ages 18 and over. Accordingly, increasing the high school completion rate by just 1% for all men ages 20 to 60 would save the U.S. up to $1.4 billion per year in reduced cost from crime. While there are a number of unique opportunities that students can take advantage of in their quest to graduate from high school. Namely, becoming educated and mainstreamed into the workforce will be key to America's economy. Especially, as more "baby boomers" are retiring and the need for additional revenue will be necessary. It is appalling to have such high alarming numbers of high school dropouts in America's urban high schools.

National statistics surrounding high school dropouts highlight the far-reaching extent of the problem:

- 30 percent of students who enter high school this year will not graduate in four years, while roughly half of all African American and Latino students entering high school will not graduate in four years..

- Increasing the high school completion rate by just one percent for all men ages 20 to 60 would reduce costs in the criminal justice system by $1.4 billion a year.

- Globally, the United States ranks 17th in high school graduation rates and 14th in college graduation rates among developed nations. Concurrently, about 90 percent of the fastest growing jobs will require some post-secondary education (Kennelly & Monrad, 2007, p. 3).

These statistics reveal that there are important moral, social, and economic imperatives for resolving to turn around the dropout crisis. Dropout prevention strategies will be important to the at risk population in school districts. Particularly in urban schools where higher concentrations of minorities attend. The high school dropout rate among minority children is a concern because it is as high as 50% in some of the major urban cities across this Country (The Annie Casey Foundation, 2009; Bowers, 2010; NCES, 2011). The characteristic risk factors of high school dropouts include: (a) being poor; (b) having a parent who has dropped out; (c) repeated grade retentions; (d) suspensions; and (e) high absenteeism and peer pressure are associated with a student's propensity to drop out of high school. Consequently, at the same time, accountability measures, intense

educational reform, and high stakes testing of the 21st Century related to No Child Left

behind (NCLB), and Race to the Top are also critical factors in America's schools (U.S.

Department of Education, 2000; U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

Wiener and Hall (2004) asserted that the NCLB sought to change that culture. The

intent was to require States to set achievement standard goals for all groups of students. It

held schools and systems accountable for their progress toward meeting those goals.

These authors noted that a rigorous secondary education is not only the cornerstone of

success in college but offer the potential for a lifetime of learning. Young people who

obtain four-year degrees have higher earning potential than those who only have a high

school diploma. Finally, nine in 10 students in Grades 6-12 expect to attend

postsecondary education. This seemed consistent across students of different racial and

ethnic or economic backgrounds. Parents also viewed the necessity for youngsters to

consider college after high school (Blondal & Adelbjarnardottir, 2009; Wiener & Hall,

2004).

Obiakor (2007) posited that some general and special educators predict failure for

some of these students because they did not conform to their standards. He indicated that

multicultural learners should not be placed in special education and be excluded from a

general educational classroom. The following important placement principles for general

and special education professionals were noted:

- race and culture matter in the placement of students

- placements must be based on students' need and not on racial and cultural

   identities

- language difference should not be misconstrued as a lack of intelligence

- students are best served when their due-process rights are respected

- prejudicial placements have devastating effects on students

- the unique differences brought by students into classrooms must be valued.

The need for qualified and experienced teachers is important in schools today. As mentioned earlier, it has become important for teachers and school personnel to treat young people, particularly at the high school level as young participating adults in their education. Accountability should be shared among students; teachers; school districts; parents; community leaders; and mentors. Beyond the quality of teachers, there is at least some evidence that the quantity of teachers-as measured by pupil/teacher ratios-has a positive and significant effect on student dropout rates (McNeal, 1997 and Rumberger & Thomas, 2000, as cited in Rumberger & Palardy, 2005). Wiener et al. (2004) noted that disadvantaged students were assigned to inexperienced, unqualified and out-of-field teachers on a regular basis. Seemingly, this process has become a norm in urban school districts.

Adults can be an influencing, life changing agent for a young person for the rest of his/her life. It is critical for educators, school personnel, ministers, parents, communities, and youth leaders to understand the unique challenges that youngsters are facing today. The issues include increased educational rigor, high crime, peer pressure, cultural differences, low socio-economic backgrounds, and single parent head of households. In addition, educators, parents, school districts, community leaders, policy makers and ministers must continue to collaborate and partner in support of young

people. It is critical that the lines of communication stay open, as well as regular contact

with young adults. The reality is that all students can learn. However, some students will

fare better in alternative school settings. Some at-risk students will require additional

educational supports such as: after school assistance; work programs; computer assisted

learning; and shorter school days. It may be necessary for school districts to consider a

five-year high school career, as opposed to the current four-year structure. This change

could benefit young people in an effort to avoid taking mandatory preparatory in their

first year of college. That extra year could allow for increased academic performance and

work habits developed during their high school careers.

Ziomek and Daigle (2010) argued that students today have stricter educational

requirements than their parents did. Thus, this challenge is forcing educators and

counselors to focus needed attention on dropout prevention. Students enrolled in

America's urban inner-city schools represent an increasingly diverse student population

with greater academic, economic, and social needs (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008; Madkins,

2011). Cartledge and Kourea reported on a study conducted out of Columbus, Ohio city

schools of the number of English language learners (ELL's) that quadrupled. The

number of students from low-income families had increased by 19%, which made the

entire student body at or below the poverty level. They cited disproportionate academic

underachievement among these students. There were increased referrals to special

education and disciplinary actions associated with these students. Despite a series of

laws attempting to equalize educational opportunities for minority and high-risk students,

such efforts continue to be unfulfilled dreams. Culturally, linguistically and diverse

(CLD) students are identified as African American, Hispanic, and Native American. Characteristics associated with this population included: (a) high rates of dropping out of school; (b) disproportionate placement in special education; (c) greater failure in meeting the state and national standards across basic subjects; and (d) poorest outcomes of all students in our schools. The reality is that this is an increasing trend in urban schools across the country. A disproportionate number of minority students leave high school before graduating.

School effectiveness is most often assessed via student test scores. Test scores provide a direct measure of student learning, which is viewed as one of the most important outcomes of schooling (Leithwood, Patten, & Jantzi, 2010). Leithwood et al. asserted that school effectiveness can be assessed through other measures of student performance. At the high school level, school effectiveness can be measured by both dropout rates and graduation rates. They believed that using multiple indicators of school performance was that some schools may perform better on one type of outcome than another. This may be especially true if the resources and practices required to raise performance in one area are different from those required in another area. Leithwood et al. provided two alternative perspectives on the relationship between school characteristics and student outcomes that underlie most research on school effectiveness:

- *common view* - view of the schooling process according to which all aspects of school performance -test scores, attendance, and dropout (Purkey & Smith, 1985, as cited in Leithwood et al. p. 4).

- *differentiated view* - holds that different factors may influence different student outcomes. For example, dropout theories suggest that student departure is related to problems with not only student learning and academic engagement but social engagement as well (Finn, 1989; Wehlage et al, 1989, as cited in Leithwood et al. p. 5).

According to the NHSC (2007) citing a study by Neil and Balfanz (2006), only about one-half of African American and Caucasian males finished high school in Philadelphia for the classes of 2000-03; while only 46% of Latino males graduated with a diploma within six years. It was predicted that by the year 2050, the Hispanic student population will be as high as 60% enrolled in public schools (National Center for Education Statistics- NCES, 2004; NCES, 2011). In contrast, the teaching staff is not keeping up with the diversity of the students (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008; Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006; Makins, 2011;Tillman, 2008; Shatzer, Caldarella, Hallam & Brown, 2013). The teaching staff consists of a predominantly European and female teaching workforce. Madkins argued that this does not allow Black students to see themselves reflected in the professional realm. He indicated that it is important for these students to have these role models because many Black teachers will have cultural experiences and linguistic backgrounds similar to Black teachers (p. 417). For example, in a recent article published in the Castle news , over 50% of children under the age of 18 are considered socioeconomically disadvantaged. Moreover, 80% of students enrolled in Castle public schools are minority. The teaching force is 87% Caucasion. Nationally, it is reported that people of color represent 40.0% of the student population in public schools. Only 17.0%

of public school teachers are people of color. Public school teachers of color represented: 7.9% Black, 6.2% Hispanic, 1.3% Asian, 0.7% Multiple Races, 0.5% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.2% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2004, NCES, 2011). Proponents of increasing the diversity of the teacher workforce cited a "democratic imperative," which highlighted the failure of schools to serve the educational needs of students of color. This is evidenced in an achievement and retention gap between White students and students of color. Some assumptions behind this second imperative are that teachers of color may be suited to teaching students of color because of a potential understanding of the cultural experiences of these learners. Moreover, the following were noted: (a) the possibility of promoting culturally responsive teaching; (b) supporting cultural synchronicity; (c) and building cultural bridges from home to school for learners (Achinstein et al., 2010).

Achinstein et al. posited that teachers of color can produce more favorable academic results on standardized test scores, attendance, retention, advanced-level course enrollment, and college-going rates for students of color than their White counterparts. However, they did not claim that White teachers can not be effective teachers of students of color. As noted earlier in Chapter 1, Lyons and Chesley (2004) posited that teachers of color are not going into the teaching profession as they have in the past. The turnover rate for new teachers and teachers of color is high as 50% based on job dissatisfaction as follows: (a) working with poor inner city youth;(b) discipline issues; (c) youth' disinterest in school; and (d) lack of motivation, resources and supports. There are promising solutions to solving the problem of hard-to-staff schools. One noteworthy example was

ensuring that teachers salaries are commensurate to the job. Another important feature

noted was for opportunities to collaborate and connect with various stakeholders that

affect retention among at risk youth (i.e., dropout prevention, social workers).

The KIDS COUNT Indicator Brief (2009) outline five broad strategies for

reducing the dropout rate:

- Adopt a long-term approach that begins with strengthening school readiness

  (suggesting that efforts to improve academic achievement and reduce the

  dropout rate need to begin long before children enter high school-or even

  middle school).

- Enhance the holding power of schools, with an intensive focus on the ninth

  grade.

- Focus on the forces outside of school that contribute to dropping out.

- Address the needs of those groups at highest risk of dropping out (Researchers

  who measure the percentage of students who fail to complete high school on

  time, in four years, show that American Indians (49.4%), non-Hispanic blacks

  (44.7%) and Hispanics (42.4%) had higher non-completion rates than non-

  Hispanic whites (22.4%) or Asians (18.7%).

- Build on the skills and understanding of the adults who affect teens'

  motivation and ability to stay in school (p. 3).

Cassel (2003) alluded to Drucker (1989) who insisted that schools need to change

and begin to prepare students for the "world of tomorrow" (p. 649). Drucker insisted that

the critical point for change is that knowledge was rapidly becoming the true capital

resource base. The shift in the workplace is that workers will know more than their

bosses. They will become an associate rather than a subordinate. Cassel noeted that one

million of the two million prison inmates are high school drop-outs. A high percentage

of these inmates were addicted to alcohol and drugs. The success rate of addiction

rehabilitation was poor. Cassel argued that the primary reason for their dropping out of

school wass a general lack of personal development. In his study, the Personal

Development Test (PDT) was administered to 1,005 incarcerated Juvenile Delinquents

and adult prison inmates.

Cassel (2003) believed that high school drop-outs and individuals in prisons never

had a chance to go through the personal development process (PDT). He indicated that

the PDT test should be administered to all entering freshmen in every high school across

the nation. Bandura (1993) is also cited by Cassel (2003) in this study as it related to

self-efficacy and high aspirations. People with high self-efficacy not only preferred

normatively difficult activities but displayed higher staying power in those pursuits. The

stronger people's belief in their self-efficacy: (a) the more career options they considered

possible; (b) the greater the interest they show in them; and (c) the better they prepared

themselves educationally for different occupations or careers.

Students at-Risk and Potential Dropout Behaviors

Cole and Boykin (2008) conducted research related to the persistent issue of how

to create learning environments to improve academic performance among low-income

African American children. They explored academic disparities, negative academic self-

concept, threatened cultural identity and children feeling disconnected and uninterested in

the learning environment. Consequently, the pedagogy used in inner-city classrooms tended to promote low rates of student engagement. Active student engagement showed an increase in student performance. They explored a cultural asset, movement expression and its enhancement effects on African American children's recall performance. The study produced results for two experiments. The authors' predictions were supported at the conclusion of the experiments. Academic performance is highest in the condition with polyrhythmic-percussive music and high movement opportunity. There is a significant relationship between performance and positive affect.

At-risk youth do not ordinarily possess the aforementioned characteristics described by students with high aspirations and self-efficacy. Most of these youth are disengaged from the academic scene by the time they approach high school. Some of the specific factors that encourage or impede academic achievement in Black youth include: (a) environmental such as family income; (b) parents level of education; (c) occupational status; (d) neighborhood environments; (e) school factors to include teacher expectations; and (f) school environment (Attaway & Bry, 2004; Nelson and Guerra, 2014). Rejecting deficit thinking and blame is essential to differentiate between what children have or have not been taught to do and what they are able to do. Instead, it requires rich, vibrant, and engaging pedagogies and high expectations for all children in the school community as a whole (Shields, 2010, p. 582).

It is important to depict the State of New York Risk Factors, especially since I am based in Castle, New York; and has had many years of directing dropout prevention programs on the University at Buffalo's college campus:

Cognitive/Academic at-risk factors

    Poor academic performance

    Limited English proficiency

Non-Cognitive at-risk factors

Family/friends

    Patterns among family members and friends of not completing school

    Child abuse or neglect

    Negative peer influences

Psychosocial attitudes

    Dramatic changes in attitude and performance resulting from changes in family circumstances

    Residences in foster home or shelter for homeless

Behavioral/discipline

    Patterns of inconsistent school attendance or truancy

    Discipline problems

    Substance abuse

    Teenage pregnancy or parenting

    PINS (person in need of supervision) or probation (Bhaerman & Kopp, 1988).

Carpenter and Ramirez (2007) examined dropout behavior among Black,White, and Hispanic students, with a particular focus on gaps within groups. They found two common predictors for all three groups being held back and number of suspensions. Hispanic and White students showed three additional predictors in common-time spent on homework, gender, and family composition. White and Black students shared only one common predictor beyond being held back and suspensions: parental involvement. Black and Hispanic students did not share any other predictors than those mentioned above. Carpenter and Ramirez asserted that race/ethnicity generally proved not to be a predictor for dropping out. However, they cited Darling-Hammond (2007) study that concluded: (a) outcomes for students of color are much more a function of their unequal access to key educational resources; (b)it also included the unequal access to skilled teachers and quality curriculum (p. 57). There are on-going studies of ethnic differences in academic achievement, which assume the intellectual and social inferiority of many minority group students and their families. The results were not favorable, and ended up in the generation of "deficit models" to explain the achievement gap. Historically, many African American students believed that they were: (a) devalued; (b) at a higher risk of disengagement with school; (c) exhibited lower motivation for academic work; and (d) rejected academic achievement as a basis for self-esteem (Brown & Jones, 2004; Monroe, 2005).

According to Bartlett and Brayboy (2006), race has been and continues to be significant in matters of schooling. They posited that the longstanding issue of deficits in academic achievement gaps among children of color included a myriad of explanations:

intellectual deficits, cultural deficits, cultural difference, resistance, and institutional

racism. One of the theoretical approaches engaged by many contemporary ethnographers

of race and schooling was John Ogbu's cultural ecological theory. It was cited as the

most influential and controversial approach in sociocultural studies of race and schooling

in the past 25 years. His cultural-ecological theory posited that there were two sets of

factors influencing minority school performance: how society at large and the school treat

minorities (the system), and how minority groups respond to those treatments and to

schooling (community forces), (Bartlett & Brayboy, 2006, p. 156).

The NHSC (2007) reported that schools with high percentages of low-income or

minority students tend to have poor academic performance and high dropout rates, and

schools with the most low-income students were often concentrated in urban

communities. The assertion was that successful African American youth could be

instrumental in facilitating models of academic resiliency. They could also model

behaviors that may be helpful to lower achieving minority students. This pool of student

candidates could be instrumental in peer mediation and peer mentoring with lower

achieving students who are involved in an organized drop-out prevention program**.**

Karunanayake and Nauta (2004) in an earlier study supported the aforementioned

assertion by alluding to Bandura (1986) who posited that a role model will only be

inspirational to the degree that a person is able to identify with that model. Although

there was some success with role modeling from persons who may be dissimilar. It

appeared that same race role modeling was more effective. They found that adolescents

who had at least one race and gender matched role model demonstrated better academic

performance. They also had more achievement related goals than did students without a

race and gender matched model (Bandura, 1986 as cited in Karunanayake & Nauta, 2004:

Blondal, et al., 2009).

According to Cassel (2003), the majority of students who participated in a drop-

out prevention program have psychological problems. However, Arroyo and Zigler

(1995) earlier argued for the importance of group identification. The process involved

the awareness of clear boundaries between members of differing groups. Arroyo and

Zigler presented various types of group associations. Some of them included: values,

beliefs, social experiences, uniqueness among members, and conflicting decisions for

maintaining the distinctiveness of groups. An example cited was the way in which

African Americans have emphasized their African American heritage. This was based on

their experience of slavery, which enabled them to express their distinctiveness from

other American groups. Consequently, school failure may be interpreted as African

American student's defiance of succeeding in a White dominant culture. Arroyo and

Zigler contended that other African American students who were successful assumed a

raceless persona experience. Raceless students modulated their speech and behaviors, and

avoided affiliation with other African Americans students who were not as academically

motivated. The Racelessness Scale (RS) was used detailing characteristics of high-

achieving African American adolescents. The four factors of the RS included: (a)

Achievement Attitudes; (b) Impression Management; (c) Alienation; and (d)

Stereotypical Beliefs.

During this literature review, there appeared to be many at risk students who lacked role modeling, guidance, and experienced cultural challenges that was not addressed in traditional school settings. The majority of these students: (a) came from poor families; (b) have experienced childhood types of trauma that was not addressed; (c) internalizing racial discrimination; (d) victims of child abuse & neglect; (e) dealing with parental substance abuse; (f) associated with the juvenile justice system or child welfare system (foster care); and (g) exposed to domestic violence and criminal activity. Dropout prevention programs should be implemented in schools throughout the school year, particularly in urban city schools where high concentrations of minority students attend (Brown, 2006; Cassel, 2003; David, 2011). Often, this type of intervention may be the only "safety net" for many of these students. The staffing of these programs must be culturally sensitive, and provide a balance and a link to mainstream education as well as to the child's home (Karunarayake & Nauta, 2004; Tillman, 2008).

Results of the CDC 1998 Adverse Childhood Experiences survey (as cited in {Scott & Copping (2008)}, of over 17 thousand American adults receiving services from a major Health Maintenance Organization revealed that chronic traumatic events in childhood were vastly more common than recognized. Among the sample of adults surveyed, 11% reported being emotionally abused as a child, 28% reported physical abuse, 20% reported sexual abuse, 25% reported being neglected, 24% reported being exposed to family alcohol abuse, 19% exposure to parental mental illness, 12% witnessed mothers being battered and 27% reported that one or both of their parents abused drugs (Scott & Copping, 2008). Other scholars have viewed children who have had exposure to

multiple forms of trauma as "complex trauma." This occurs when children are exposed to abuse or neglect, or witnessing domestic violence in the home. These traumatized children were impacted for a lifetime resulting in other issues such as: psychiatric and addictive disorders (Cook et al., 2005, as cited in Scott & Copping, 2008). Scott and Copping postulated that children who experienced "complex trauma" continued to have attachment relationships with their caregivers, even if they were the cause of that trauma on the child. They noted that the best practice with this population would be a systems approach to intervention. It could include working with child protection, the schools, the courts, the community and the home. This effort would reduce poor outcomes for children in adulthood.

Unfortunately, in urban public schools, the teaching staffs are "bogged down" with numerous barriers that interfere with their ability to be creative and become familiar with their students. This was attributed to the fact that they are often "teaching to the test with their pupils" as it relates to State mandates. Carpenter and Ramirez (2007) posited that a relationship between teacher quality and student outcomes is critical. The lower teacher quality contributes to a greater likelihood of students dropping out. According to Williams-Bost and Riccomini (2006), researchers have clearly connected dropping out of school to prolonged low achievement. They pointed out that effective teaching practices are largely absent from the milieu of interventions and programs that are employed by schools to address dropout prevention. Williams-Bost and Riccomini argued that effective instructional design and delivery as a focus for keeping students with disabilities in school. They concluded that students with disabilities drop out of school for a variety

of reasons. Dropping out of school is a multifaceted process with direct links to

disengagement. Discussions with students about their perspectives about dropping out

could strengthen dropout prevention programs designed for this population. Thus, the

student voice literature argued that including and honoring students' perpectives yields

richer, more authentic research results as well as a more democratic learning space that

fosters positive student outcomes (Bertrand, 2014; Mansfield, 2013, p. 393). Mansfield

further noted that "rarely has the social justice literature offered seeking student voice as

an integral component to leadership decision making in transformative learning spaces or

educational leadership research endeavors" (p. 393). Similarly, Bertrand argued that

student voices can enrich educational decisions making by infusing important, but often

overlooked, perspectives. For example, Bertrand found that high school students'

"seemingly trivial" demands related to school lunches and bathroom cleanliness revealed

valid obstacles to student learning (p. 813).

Moreover, high teacher turnover is common in urban districts (Matsumura,

Garnier, Correnti, Junker, & Bickel, 2010; Simon & Johnson, 2013). Matsumura et al.

cited Marvel, Lyter, Peltola, Strizek and Morton (2006) study, which depicted a Teacher

Follow-Up Survey. The results showed that 16% of public school teachers leave their

school during any given year. In schools serving high numbers of low-income and

minority students, teacher mobility rates were much higher. These authors also viewed

Allensworth, Ponisciak, and Mazzeo's (2009) research conducted in the Chicago public

schools, which showed that schools that serve low-income and primarily African

American and Latino students lose a quarter or more of their teachers each year. The

typical elementary school in the district loses half its teaching staff within 5 years, and many schools lose half their staff within 3 years. The primary reasons given by teachers for leaving hard-to-staff schools stemmed from poor relations with the parents and student disciplinary problems. Teacher turnover created additional setbacks for students, principals, and the overall school community. They asserted that the new replacement teachers tended to be among the least experienced and least qualified teachers in the school. School leaders devoted a great deal of time to mentoring new teachers in order to ensure that they attain at least a minimum level of competency. This pattern appeared troubling since the large majority of schools with high teacher mobility tend to serve low-income students with the greatest learning needs.

In contrast to Matsumura et al. (2010), Simon & Johnson (2013) posited that when teachers leave schools serving low-income, minority students, they are *not* fleeing their students. On the contrary, teachers often enter such schools precisely because of their "humanistic commitment" to teaching in long underserved communities (Achinstein, Ogawa, Sexton, & Freitas, 2010, p. 71; Cochran-Smith et al., 2012; Kraft, Papay, Charner-Laird, Johnson, Ng & Reinhorn, 2013 as cited in Simon & Johnson, 2013, p. 4). Thus, when these teachers leave, it is frequently because the working conditions in their schools impede their chance to teach and their students' chance to learn (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Johnson, 1990, 2006 as cited in Simon & Johnson, 2013). Therefore, these findings suggest that policymakers and practitioners who wish to retain talented, effective teachers in high-poverty, hard-to-staff schools must pursue retention strategies that are designed to improve the teaching environment.

In the Castle Public School System, accountability statuses for student outcomes is at an "all time high". The New York State Education Department publish "school report cards" on every school in the district. States are providing additional revenue and resources to low performing schools in the Castle School District. When the Board of Regents (watchdog over schools located in Albany, New York) is not seeing the results of the additional revenue, identified schools are "placed on notice" with designations such as "Focus" or "Priority" on a placement list. In other words, parents are notified of the schools designation, which provides them with an opportunity to transfer (School Choice) their child to a school in good standing. Finally, teacher transfers are inevitable as well, especially if they have been teaching at the same school for years and the results for increased student academic outcomes are not favorable. In addition, the new debate has been on teacher evaluations in Castle, New York and throughout New York State. Teachers are "pressed" by this issue because they do not feel it to be a good measure of their teaching effectiveness, if students are not attending school.

Models for Working With Traumatized Youth and/or Resiliency in Youth

Scott and Copping (2008) developed the intergenerational trauma treatment model (ITTM). It represented an alternative model for treatment of complex trauma in childhood. The model was unique compared to other models. The focus was on the caregiver and the clinician engaged in counseling to resolve untreated childhood trauma. The caregiver had to resolve their own childhood trauma before they could assist their child to resolve trauma. The caregiver would become the primary agent of change for the child.

Nicolas, Helms, Jernigan, Sass, Skrzypek, and DeSilva (2008) developed a strength-based model of resiliency. The Strengths and Coping Model was designed to describe the interplay among barriers, racial socialization and coping strategies. They believed that Black youths ought to be protected from oppressive environments in order to prevent psychological disengagement. The students would learn coping strategies to alter negative conditions that exist in their environments. The model prefaced resistance rather than resilience. It described healthy functioning of Black youth's involvement of changing oppressive environments rather than being shaped or debilitated by them.

Ziomek-Daigle (2010) conducted a study out of the state of Georgia entitled the "Graduation Coach Program" (GC). The initiative was to assign a GC to every public high school to curb the state's 41% dropout rate. One individual at each school was dedicated to identify students at risk of dropping out of high school. The coaches' engaged parents and concerned adults and recruited organizations and government agencies to serve in a variety of ancillary roles. The GC was seen as the liaison between the school, community and the home. In 2008, it was reported that Georgia's graduation rate was at its highest ever at 75.4%. The Governor believed in the program and allocated appropriate funding of $15,400,000 to assign the graduation coaches. The results of this study showed how collaboration of systems may impact student high school completion. It also showed the importance of shared responsibility among significant systems in a student's life including school, family, and community.

Jozefowicz-Simbeni (2008), as cited in Ziomek-Daigle (2010), suggested that dropout prevention takes a "multisystemic, integrative services approach", and that the following components were necessary for dropout prevention success:

- early identification and intervention

- individualized attention

- involvement of peers

- involvement of families

- involvement of community, and

- community-wide multiagency collaboration.

Ziomek-Daigle (2010) believed that results of theoretical saturation: systemic influences, and accountabilities to school dropout should include the following components:

- At the School District level

    1. Awareness & Outreach

    2. Identification of student

    3. Development of graduation team

    4. Testing/tutoring

    5. Academic supervision

    6. Credit recovery (School or online)

    7. Individual counseling

- At the community level:

    1. Housing

2. Transportation

3. Health care

4. Individual counseling

5. Employment

6. Tutoring

- At the family level:

   1. Basic needs

   2. Support & supervision

   3. Day care

   4. Interpretation/Translation

   5. Support & supervision

   6. Mentoring (Ziomek-Daigle, 2010).

The above-mentioned components seemed important to stress because of the complex nature for providing a holistic approach to services to at-risk students for completeing high school.

Special Education Placement

As noted earlier in Chapter 1, equality in education has not been fully realized, which was the catalyst for dramatic changes in America's education system. African American children, in particular, were often identified as having behavior disorders and mild mental retardation at a rate twice as their European American peers (Gardner & Miranda, 2001). Gardner and Miranda asserted that parents are often convinced by school teachers and guidance counselors to place their children in Special Education**.**

These parents generally lacked the knowledge about the complicated Special Educational System. Consequently, a disproportionate number of minority children were placed in Special Education in urban public schools across this country. A high percentage of children of color and poor white children were mis-placed in Special Education, and may have other barriers that affected their low academic achievement.

Some factors that impact academic achievement among African American and other minority children included:

- Quality of instruction
- Pedagogy used in inner-city schools tended to promote low rates of student engagement
- Challenging student's behavior where behavior management is the primary goal of educators rather than academic achievement
- Low expectations by teachers who are not adequately prepared to teach in an urban school (Gardner & Miranda, 2001).

Kauffman (2007) differentiated between Special Education and its close alignment with general education. He defined the term "conceptual models" as the way people think about things, not the actual practices themselves. It guides the thinking and provides rules for practice. Kauffman made a distinction between two social structures or systems and their rules that played the most prominent roles in special education, law and medicine. He asserted that schools serving the general population were established under the legal system. Most of the early leaders in special education were physicians. Kauffman believed that Special Education Teachers need to return to the basics. They

need to identify children early found with a disability. Both general education and special education historically have shared a primary concern for problems of instruction, and both are now practiced under legal structures and with insights provided by medicine. Today, both general education and special education are being scrutinized of their effectiveness in teaching children to perform, and learn at or above grade level. Kauffman did not support the No Child Left behind Act (NCLB) because the focus seemed to emphasize that school districts should close "academic achievement gaps" among students in general education and children in special education. He thought that this mandate was impossible to achieve.

Many children with emotional or behavioral disorders (EBD) displayed both learning and behavioral problems. This made it difficult for teachers to provide effective instruction (Sutherland, Lewis-Palmer, Stichter, & Morgan, 2008). Sutherland et al. (2008) conducted a study examining the relationship between learning and behavior problems. They also discussed classroom contextual factors that impacted relationships between the teacher and the students. This could result in either the student's academic success or academic failure.

Sutherland et al. attributed poor academic progress displayed by students with EBD and school failure to other factors such as family unemployment, mental health issues, high rates of incarceration, and poor social support. They posited that students with EBD presented challenges to their interaction with teachers and academic performance. There were several assertions made to explain why there might be a relationship between learning and behavior problems. Students become frustrated when

they are faced with academic failure, resulting in aggressive behaviors. As students grow older they become more aware of their abilities and performances in comparison to their peers. Some are behind academically and grade level. They become embarrassed by their failures, setting the stage for increased problem behavior or potential dropout.

Issues of increased dropout rates, and academic achievement gaps between poor urban students and affluent students will continue to increase referrals to Special Education. This is due to the lack of qualified teachers and resources (Matsumura et al., 2010). The educational system must do a better job at increasing the engagement of students for improved dropout rates (Booker, 2006). Special education was designed for complex students to prepare them to maximize their full potential. It was not designed to keep children out of mainstream general education. Often, these children were excluded from mainstream education, which limits their ability to obtain the appropriate educational requirements for a high school diploma. Subsequently, they obtain an Individual Education Plan (IEP) diploma upon graduation. The IEP diploma is not recognized as a *bonafide* high school diploma since students did not fulfill the required 22-24 credits necessary for traditional high school graduation. According to Rice (2006), researchers have investigated how such reform can be accomplished most effectively. They viewed the role of the principal, buy-in and participation from faculty, sufficient resources, the culture of the school, communication and collaboration and how attitudes toward students with disabilities were addressed to close academic gaps for at-risk youth.

As noted earlier, students enrolled in America's urban innercity schools represent an increasingly diverse student population with greater academic, economic, and social

needs. There continues to be a need for more teachers who are skilled to work with these

youngsters in high risk schools. There is a need for increased parental and community

involvement as well as after-school programs and other effective interventions for the

success for urban students. Research conducted for this study has shown that pedagogy

used in inner-city schools promotes low rates of student engagement (Cole & Boykin,

2008; Gardner & Miranda, 2001)**.** When students recognize that innovative approaches

to learning are being employed, they are more apt to learn. Students will realize that they

are the focus of the teacher's interest and engagement. They feel validated, appreciated,

and confident that they can learn. According to Monroe (2005), when students perceive

that their lives and experiences are valued, they are less likely to engage in behaviors that

express resistance against alienating school forces. Moreover, youths are provided

opportunities to appreciate benefits gleaned from sharpening their scholastic skills and

broadening their knowledge base.

　　　Zion (2009) conducted a study of the importance of students having a voice in

educational reform that will impact-their futures. The focus of the research was on a

systematic approach requiring the participation and buy-in from all stakeholders,

including students. Zion emphasized the complex nature of change in an educational

arena. She believed that strategies to improve communication and ways to improve the

delivery of educational services to students were critical. The study examined how

systems, stakeholders and students should be critical parties involved in educational

reform. The students believed that adults are generally the ones who make decisions for

them. Because much of the focus on educational reform in the United States focused on

policies in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002, students were affected by decisions

that adults made about their futures. Therefore, students believed that their voices go

unheard. Zion asserted that little research has been done that directly connects student

participation to outcomes of change efforts. Issues of schooling and school reform were

discussed. The students did not feel that the adults involved them in discussions or

decisions. The study concluded with an emphasis on the need to have "buy-in" from all

stakeholders including principal leaders, teachers, school boards, and policy makers to

ensure that student voices do not go unheard. Similarly, Mansfield-Cummings (2013)

believed in the value of including students' voices in educational leadership and research

practices This process would assess what students are actually experiencing in

transformative learning spaces, and to learn from them to improve both leadership

practice and research efforts (p.392). Moreover, Mansfield-Cummings believed that:

> Students who were historically marginalized to race/ethnicity, gender, and
>
> socioeconomic status were the subject of policies rather than actors in shaping
>
> policy. Thus, student voice efforts result in the development of civic habits
>
> essential to democracy, while engaging students at higher levels results in
>
> curricular improvements and strengthens teacher, student relationships (p. 399).

Parent Involvement

Parental involvement and their presence in schools and in the lives of their

children are critical to his/her transition into mainstream education. Staples (1994)

believed that the dramatic increases in families headed by women has had a substantial

impact on poverty among African American children and youth. Female-headed families

suffered much higher rates of poverty than other types of families. Staples noted that poverty was one of the key measures used in the African American family as an adverse effect in educational attainment. Moreover, he stressed the need to review other measures such as crime and delinquency and teenage pregnancy as at-risk factors.

Some at-risk youth possess resiliency skills from surviving in poverty; crime-ridden communities; chronic homelessness; and other high-risk behaviors. They are able to defy the odds, and attend school on a regular basis. Those high-risk students should be provided an opportunity to be accommodated in an environment that will keep them in school, so that a high school diploma can be realized.

Obgu (1999) noted the following:

The involvement of working-class parents in schools really care about their children's educational achievement, but they fail to supervise their homework, lobby their youth's teachers, understand the tracking system and gatekeeping counselors, or the perils of hip hop/street culture. (as cited in Foley, 2005, p. 650)

Research showed that parents of at- risk children did not have positive experiences in school themselves. However, by including parents in the educational process, i.e. monthly breakfast, teacher-parent meet greet sessions, etc., can influence the conversation about academics in their homes (Schargel et al., 2007). Much research has been conducted on the direct positive relations between parents' education and children's academic attainment (Blondal & Adelbjarnardottir, 2009; Cohen-Vogel, Goldring, & Smrekar, 2010; Cram-Hauser, 2009; Niehaus & Adelson, 2014; Ziomek-Daigle, 2010). Cram-Hauser (2009) noted that those associations are closely aligned with one another.

He noted that researchers assumed that parent education is often considered a control variable. While other researchers believed that parent educational attainment could have an effect on student educational achievement. Moreover, other studies provided a much-needed examination of child benefits associated with increases in maternal education. There appeared to be strong associations between teachers' expectations for student performance and parental behavior. Cram-Hauser postulated that it was hard to find a study on children's educational achievement that does not build parents' education or some other proxy for socioeconomic status (SES) into the analytic frame. He pointed out three research articles that had similar findings. They suggested a strong relation between parents' educational success and children's academic success. One noteworthy example included the model of family stress proposed by Conger, Wallace, Sun, Simons, McLoyd, and Brody (1992), as cited in Cram-Hauser (2009). It takes into account economic pressures on families, their relation to child outcomes, and the mediating role of family processes. Ziomek-Daigle (2010) concurred and supported the notion that the involvement from families can influence the dropout rate. Students are less likely to dropout when parents provide supervision, monitoring, and ~~are more~~ involved in their schooling. Moreover, research indicated that parent involvement enhanced parents' attitudes about themselves and the school their child attends. It also builds an understanding among parents and educators about the role each plays in the development of the child. With that increased understanding promoted greater cooperation, commitment, and trust (Blondal & Adelbjarnardottir, 2009; Cohen-Vogel et al., 2010; Niehaus & Adelson, 2014; Vellymalay, 2012). In additon, many inner-city parents have

reported that they feel a sense of not "being welcome" in the school buildings. In a study

mentioned earlier by Rice (2006), similar themes of missed opportunities for

communication and connection with parents were identified. Disconnections were found

between home and school. Students indicated that they were being misunderstood by

teachers. Parents spoke of being underappreciated and misunderstood by faculty. Faculty

felt that their efforts went unrecognized by parents. A prerequisite for increased parent

involvement in schools could be a mandatory two week program. This planned activity is

performed at the onset of the school year to include role models. The role models would

include parents who understand the school culture. They would include experienced

teachers. They would include more faculty of color from various ethnicities. Thus, this

process will assist in the transition of new teachers and students into the educational

process. Students would learn the academic and behavior expectations for in-school

settings throughout the year. In addition, any other concerns of students and parents

could be addressed at that time. This two week program would allow parents, students,

teachers, guidance counselors, and dropout prevention programs, and other stakeholders

to engage with one another. It would promote the students' realization for the importance

of team work and responsibility. Parents would learn the importance of his/her role and

responsibility to their child. They would learn the importance for support of and the role

of the teacher. Ziomek-Daigle study acknowledged that students identified as at- risk for

dropping out had an increased probability of school completion. They found that families

provided advocacy on behalf of students by communicating concerns to teachers,

counselors and administration. They challenged policies that included issues with student

attendance, behavior, and suspensions. The graduate coaches in the study reported that parents became proactive and monitored their child's homework and assignments. Other highlights of the study showed that families became more involved when they observed genuiness and outreach from the school. They indicated that they felt validated when representatives from the school met with them outside of the school. Homevisits have always been a concern in this venue. However, as the graduate coaches became familiar with the families and the neighborhood, they provided outreach. This was another way to increase family engagement. It also provided a welcoming environment for parents. Increased parent involvement and trust from outside organizations and predominantly staffed by non-minorities is not new. This is an area that will continue to need work for assuring parents that they are integral to student outcomes. School personnel need to recognize that they need parental support for increased student success. Thus, this process would make their jobs less stressful. Moreover, the role of parents in the principal–teacher–student relationship is less well understood in research on school improvement and in-school factors that influence student learning (Orphanos & Orr, 2013, p. 683; Niehaus & Adelson, 2014; Vellymalay, 2012). Edmonds (1979) as cited in Orphanos & Orr drew attention to the quality of parental involvement (among other factors) for improving schools, as confirmed in other correlational studies. One study included a recent large-scale Chicago school research that found that the quality of parent and community relationships positively complemented other school-related supports in improving student achievement. Specifically, researchers have begun to explore how the quality of parental involvement contributes to teacher and leader

effectiveness. For example, in surveying teachers from 80 mid-Atlantic schools, Tschannen-Moran (2009) as cited in Orphanos & Orr found that their perceptions of colleagues' professionalism were influenced by perceptions of principal trust and professionalism moderated in part by their trust in parents (p. 680).

Thus, considering the widely documented positive academic outcomes stemming from school, community, and family collaborations (Auerback, 2012b; Epstein, 2009b; Goodall et al., 2011; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Swap, 1993 as cited in Johnson, 2014), it is easy to see why the federal policy on education-namely, the No Child Left Behind Act, and Race to the Top require-schools under improvement status to "include strategies to promote effective parental involvement in the school" (Johnson, 2014, p. 360). Johnson posited that schools unfortunately under the tightest federal sanctions were usually situated within socially and academically diverse contexts. This poses unique challenges for schools, causing further struggles for teachers to identify with their students' backgrounds and communicate with parents (p. 358). Consequently, in the study by Johnson, he alluded to the persistent pattern of dominant-class subordination over minority groups in the United States had produced a mutual ethros of misunderstanding, misrecognition, and unawareness between mainstream educators and minority families. In aligning the notion of parental "engagement" rather than "involvement" as a way to acknowledge issues of inequality that have affected minority parents, while valuing bicultural parents' perspectives and contributions (Auebach, 2009; M. Johnson, 2011; Olivos, 2012 as

cited in Johnson, 2014 p.361). Lastly, Johnson believed that educators should be

encouraged to envision school-home relationships in terms of family and community

partnerships and to recognize that "parents, educators, and others in the community

share responsibility for students' learning and development" (p. 364). In other words,

when viewing the aforementioned collaboration, it would enhance the overall

educational process for students.

　　　　According to Maslow (1978), as cited in Shippee (1992), parents have needs that

have not been met. They include: the need for better jobs, parent training opportunities,

transportation, language barriers, and increased knowledge about navigating systems.

The Multisystem Model

　　　　Nancy Boyd-Franklin (2000) created "The Multisystem Model", which included

seven levels critical to working with individuals and complex families. Particular work

was done with people of color and poor families. She infused Bronfenbrenner's (1979)

Eco-System model, into her "Multisystem Model".

　　Multisystems:

- Level I　　Individual

- Level II　　Subsystems

- Level III　　Family Household

- Level IV　　Extended Family

- Level V　　Non-blood Kin and Friends

- Level VI　　Church and community resources

- Level VII　Social service agencies and other outside systems

Boyd-Franklin is a psychologist by profession and confirmed Senge's (1990)

Systems Thinking assertion that human endeavors are also systems. In contrast to Senge,

her practical theory and work focused on individuals and families with an emphasis on

changing "at- risk behaviors", and improving quality of life. Boyd-Franklin believed that

the family was a unit and choices that individuals made in that family unit (whether good

or not so favorable), affected everyone in theat family unit. Her work also related to

Bertalanffy (1972) General Systems Theory that a "whole is more than a sum of its

parts"; treating individuals in a holistic manner (inclusion of other family members,

church, community, and other systems) is relevant, compared to just treating the

individual. Boyd-Franklin and Bry (2000) postulated that "reaching out" to this

population had advantageous results. The "reaching out" concept allowed the therapist to

meet other valuable family members who may live in the home (with the client), which

could facilitate and support the therapeutic work. The key concepts of this model was

that clients and families were viewed in their full ecological and systemic context. The

emphasis should be on cultural sensitivity and competence. Families should be

empowered to take over their own lives. Finally, there should be an emphasis on support

and support networks in the lives of children, adolescents, parents and families.

Despite these odds, leadership, academic supports, student involvement in pre-

college programs (Liberty Partnerships, and Upward Bound Program), parent

involvement, community involvement, and other dropout prevention initiatives will play

an integral role in bridging the student-teacher "cultural divide".

Cultural Competence and Its Importance in Urban High Schools

It is important to explore the essence of culture as it pertains to minority youth, particularly, African American youth. In many instances, the lack of culture in the school's curriculum underscores the need for youth to understand self-identity, increased self-esteem and increased self- efficacy. Boyd-Franklin and Bry (2000) acknowledged the various systems critical to the success of working with African Americans and Latino families in therapy. They stressed the importance of the Black church as the most common help among Black people. The church provides both spiritual and social activities for the whole family. Specific activities such as summer enrichment programs are offered as well as Sunday school and Bible classes for the family.

In the Hispanic family system, they deal with a cultural conflict between the acculturated with a cultural conflict between the acculturated children and the traditional parents or grandparents (Boyd-Franklin & Bry, 2000). Boyd-Franklin and Bry (2000) noted that if one spouse becomes acculturated more rapidly than the other, the traditional gender role expectations are challenged. It is not uncommon for children who are mainstreamed into the American culture to stay home from school to assist parents, and other adults to interpret and complete paperwork for non-English speaking adults. This group is most frequently referred by schools to child welfare departments.

Cartledge and Kourea (2008) believed that when teachers become more culturally competent and skilled, they raise their expectations for both their students and themselves. They cited important teacher characteristics including empathy, caring, and the ability to create a healthy classroom climate. Rabaka (2003) also stressed the value

for educators to learn and understand the cultural affirmation/backgrounds of their

students. They will become better educators and stewards of their classrooms. Rabaka

argued that Dubois' educational philosophy of the "whole cultural history of Africans in

the world" should be taken into consideration when one is seeking to grasp with the

"present conditions" of African peoples" (p. 400). She contends that one needs to know

about the history, and only after a careful and critical study of classical, colonial, and

contemporary continental of African history, an educator will be deemed minimally

prepared to proceed with the pedagogical process where African peoples are concerned.

Likewise, Tillman alluded to Hilliard (1999) who insisted that teachers and leaders must

know, understand, and acknowledge the history and culture of African Americans in

order to effectively teach and lead African American children (Hilliard, 1999 as cited in

Tillman, 2008, p. 592). Thus, almost 50% of children in urban school districts in the

United States were from racial/ethnic groups other than white, non-Hispanic. 13% of

public school children receive Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for problems

such as learning disabilities, emotional disturbance, developmental disorders, and other

health impairments. Large proportions of these students come from low-socioeconomic

backgrounds and reside in poor neighborhoods (Eckland & Johnson, 2007). Eckland and

Johnson argued for the importance of psychologists and other professionals who render

services to children and families acquire cross-cultural competencies. They defined

cultural competence as:

> The ability of individuals and systems to respond respectfully and effectively to
>
> people of all cultures, races, ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations, and faiths or

religions in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the work of individuals,

families, tribes, and communities and protects the dignity of each. (p. 3)

As noted earlier in this paper, culturally diverse students enter schools with more

(a) complexities, (b) with varying degrees of behavior and academic concerns, (c) low-

income, (d) language barriers, and (d) come from harsh and crime ridden neighborhoods.

The numerous challenges that these children face have impacted an increase in referrals

to the mental health area. Oftentimes, high-risk youth in urban school districts could be

misdiagnosed or have not had any contact with mental health professionals. Often,

urban students have experienced various forms of racism, violence, poverty, trauma,

prejudice and oppressions that their European counterparts have not encountered.

Professionals working with this population will need to be empowered to learn how to

work with non-traditional students who enter the classroom with complex lives (Eckland

& Johnson, 2007).

The prevalence of educational equity and access for minority students is a concern

in large school districts across America. The process of labeling students and identifying

them with emotional disturbances and learning disabilities could pose negative learning

opportunities. One of the critical factors associated with increased rates of minority

students is poverty (Klar & Brewer, 2014,Valenzuela, Copeland, & Huaqing, 2006). It

was noted that an emerging and understudied area in the research literature included

students identified as English Language Learners. Other factors that emerged from the

research for successful educational programs, included smaller class sizes. It also cited an

approach where churches and organizations invest in programs and strategies offering

increased math, science, reading for African American and other minority groups
(Valenzuela et al., 2006).

Wheeler, Ampadu, and Wangari (2002) postulated that Westerners had the ability
to always put themselves in a superior role. Important factors such as spirituality and
knowledge of community were either missed, or ranked low on the Westerners
importance to the African American-centered highest attainment. These authors discussed
spirituality in cognitive development. They believed Western theories should have
incorporated spirituality at the center of cognitive, social, and emotional development .
Wheeler et al. believed that spirituality, community and family were critical tools for
African people to deal with: (a) self-esteem, (b) mental health, and (c) increased identity
development. There were three goals used to discuss their meaning of missing spiritual
essence: (a) to define and illustrate the centrality of spirituality in the healthy psychology
of people of African descent; (b) to explain the inadequacy of traditional psychology as a
model of healthy psychological development in people of African descent; and (c) to
create a workable synthesis between traditional Western approaches to stage theories of
human development and the spirituality of African people (Wheeler et al., 2002). The
authors cited scientists, such as Gould (1993) who began measuring blackness in terms of
hair texture, and the color of skin tones and thickness of lips. Also, Clark and Clark
(1939, 1940) was cited by Wheeler et al. whose findings became precursors for current
self-esteem issues among blacks. Wheeler et al. asserted that spirituality played a critical
role in helping people to overcome self-esteem issues. They viewed stage theories
produced by Westerners, which judged people on how they compared or resembled them.

It is believed that incorporating mandatory courses in urban public high schools such as:

Black history, Society and Change, Leadership Development. and Career Development &

Exploration throughout the year for all students. This would increase self-knowledge

about oneself and others, particularly among African American and other minority

youngsters.

Native Americans have been struggling to infuse a culture-based curriculum in

tribal schools for many years. Poverty and oppression is prevalent among this culture

and, culture-based schools have been diluted by the inability to create systemic change

(Hermes, 2005). Hermes (2005) proposed theoretical underpinnings for work on minority

cultures and educational failure stemmed from at least two main areas of educational

research as follows:

- Sociolinguistic and micro ethnographic research suggests that a lack of cross-cultural communication, or "cultural discontinuity", can result in minority failure .

- Work by critical theorists suggests that larger societal variables, such as power structures, institutional racism, and opportunity structures, also play an important role in minority student failure .

It was noted that White teachers who worked with Native American students were

successful because they were able to integrate themselves in the lives of the Native

American culture with confidence. They wanted to work with the Native American

community.

Comeaux and Jayakumar (2007) offered a critical analysis of John Ogbu's *Black American Students in an Affluent Suburb: A study of Academic disengagement*. Ogbu studied Black student performance in Shaker Heights Ohio, an affluent Cleveland suburb with a school district that is equally comprised of Black and White students. Ogbu was invited to study Shaker Heights in an attempt to understand why Black students were not performing at the same level as their White peers. Consequently, the authors posited that Ogbu outlined compelling explanations for the apparent disparities in academic achievement between Black and White students in an affluent community. Ogbu blame students themselves for teacher expectations that are either high or too low. He states that in classroom observations suggest that Whites believe that Blacks are intellectually inferior to them. The observations have become an ingrained part of the thinking of some Shaker Heights Blacks. They noted that other scholars had a different interpretation of similar data from Black parents with regard to educational values. Unequal access to resources, less qualified teachers, lower expectations, deteriorating schools, and racial micro aggressions-contribute to the low academic performance and concentrated disadvantages of Black students on a national level (Comeaux & Jayakumar, 2007). Comeaux and Jayakumar used the Critical Race Theory (CRT) to study the role of race and racism in U.S. society. The CRT explored such questions as how the institutional structures, practices, discourses, policies and processes help to maintain inequalities for students of color.

Carter (2003) introduced the Racial-Cultural Counseling Competence model (RCCC). It affirmed that every person brought a wealth of cultural knowledge about

individual backgrounds and group affiliations to the counseling process. The RCCC

model was used as an integrative approach to train culturally competent psychologists

and counselors. Carter provided a typology of assumptions about the meaning of culture:

(a) individual differences or diversity; (b) country as the basis of cultural differences; (c)

the experience of oppression or being the oppressor; (d) ubiquitous, in which a social

group is considered a cultural group; and (e) race-based, in which skin color and physical

differences were the bases of cultural differences.

Hartas (2006) conducted research reflective of pupils who were excluded from

school with backgrounds of at-risk characteristics. They were generally ethnic and

linguistic minority group members and dysfunctional families. Hartas indicated that a

collaborative effort among teachers, mental health professionals, and the home could

provide a bridge to helping these children. An attempt was made to forge a link with

evidence-based approaches to understand the concept of exclusion. There appeared to be

a relationship between both absenteeism and exclusion, and student and teacher

interaction.

Finally, Nicolas et al. (2008) presented a strength-based model of resiliency. The

emphasis was on Black youth and their capacity to function effectively from adolescence

to adulthood regardless of the environments they socialized. The model attempted to

describe the interplay among barriers, racial socialization and coping strategies among

Black youth. They believed that Black youth ought to be protected from oppressive

environments in order to prevent psychological disengagement.

Theoretical Framework

Researchers often hypothesize that a disproportionate number of minority children fail to graduate from America's high schools due to: (a) unequal access to key educational resources; (b) ethnic differences in academic achievement; (c) inexperienced teachers working in urban schools; (d) student disengagement from the academic scene; (e) deficiencies in academic achievement gaps; and (f) lack of leaders and teachers of color in the educational arena. The theoretical framework for this study drew from Marzano et al. (2005) focus on 21 leadership responsibilities that impact student achievement; help principals develop new leadership strategies and new vision(s) for change; Senge (1990, 2000, 2006) systems thinking and learning organizations; and Schargel et al. (2007) informed leadership as a critical factor in ensuring the success of dropout prevention efforts. I also included scholars such as Rice (2006) who stressed the importance of shared leadership (principal, teacher, school and program personnel) that is a norm in school buildings.

Leadership and Its Effect

According to Drucker (1989), leaders can learn to be effective leaders. It is a process that warrants an individual to assess self-first, and then filter those attributes to their subordinates and throughout the environment. Drucker described an example of an Egyptian who 4500 years or more ago, first conceived the pyramid, designed it, built it in a short time. The first pyramid still stands. The discipline of management is barely fifty years old. It was first dimly perceived around the time of the First World War (Drucker, 1994). Management was further described as the fastest-growing new function and the

fast-growing new discipline. The essence of management is to make know ledges

productive. It is a social function. In practice management is truly a liberal art (Drucker,

1994). Allix and Gronn (2005) concurred with Drucker's argument that theories of

knowledge-how processes of perception and learning occur imply theories of mind, or

what kind of cognitive creatures human beings are. Issues of knowledge, mind and

cognition therefore clearly have a bearing on questions about leaders and leadership.

Allix and Gronn posited that considerations of theory building in leadership research, and

how well evolving conceptions of leadership have managed to illuminate the stubbornly

perplexing phenomenon. Methodological considerations play a central role in theory

building, in determining the content and structure that theories have. Allix and Gronn

noted the following excerpt:

> Theories of knowledge-how processes of perception and learning occur also
>
> imply theories of mind, or what kind of cognitive creatures human beings are.
>
> Issues of knowledge, mind and cognition therefore clearly have a bearing on
>
> questions about leaders and leadership. (p. 3)

Effective leadership plays a vital role in the success and outcomes of organizations. This

includes the impact it has on employees, consumers, families, product, community,

business, nonprofit organizations and overall status in the environment. Research has

shown that successful organizations, corporations, and public educational institutions are

successful due to the leadership of the leader (Jacobson et al., 2007; Marzano et al., 2005;

Seah, Hsieh, & Huang, 2013; Stone-Johnson, 2013; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty,

2003). Thus, Seah et al. posited that leaders enhance their firm's adaptive capabilities by

recognizing the needs and demands of various stakeholders (Heifetz and Laurie, 1997 as

cited in Seah et al.), and by establishing a conducive organizational culture (Volberda,

1997 as cited in Seah et al., p.1410). Likewise, Stone-Johnson arguefor the concept of

responsible leadership, which deemphasizes the notion of the leader as a hero and

replaces it with the vision of the leader as a weaver of both relationships (leader and

developer of stakeholders). The strength of an organization is determined by the strength

of the web. This idea of the leader as weaver is its most important distinguishing feature.

Leadership is about developing relationships and building leadership capacity within

stakeholder groups. Furthermore, it is about relying on these stakeholders for

participation rather than just including them when it suits the purposes of the leader (p.

665). Lastly, Seah et al describe the following:

> For school leadership, this distinction is crucial. Returning to Murphy's identified
>
> valued ends of leadership, responsible leadership focuses not on school
>
> improvement, democratic community, and social justice as discrete outcomes but
>
> rather weaves together all the three as a single outcome, highlighting the
>
> importance of benefit to all stakeholders as the ultimate goal. In this way, it is
>
> different from ethical or moral leadership, which focus more on individual
>
> leadership decisions. The framework of responsible business leadership provides
>
> a useful lens by which to better understand the ethic of community in educational
>
> leadership practice (p. 674) .

Moreover, through extensive investigation into leadership in South Africa in

1983, Schilbach in Gerber et al.,1996 as cited in Dandira (2012) defined the concept of

leadership as follows: "leadership is an interpersonal process through which a leader directs the activities of individuals or groups towards the purposeful pursuance of given objectives within a particular situation by means of communication" (p. 187). According to Allio (2013), leadership is complex and emerges or develops over time. Allio stressed the fact that "the aspiration of the leader to build a community is often handicapped and compromised by the resistance of the followers" (p. 5). In other words, the followers have a distrust in their leaders, and generally had hidden agendas. In this study, subordinates did not consider their leaders to be either honest or competent, and believed that leadership could improve with practice (p. 11). Moreover, Schyns, Maslyn, and van Veldhoven (2012) posits that "in large groups in particular, trying to establish high-quality relationships with all followers is a difficult endeavor. Despite calls to the contrary, the reality of resource constraints has led some scholars to suggest targeting some key followers, rather than trying to achieve high-quality exchange relationships with all followers in a large group would be more likely" (p. 595).

Raelin (2012) indicated that leadership has historically been defined as occurring through the traits or behaviors of particular individuals. However, an alternate approach is to consider leadership occurring as a practice. He defined a practice "as a cooperative effect among participants who choose through their own rules to achieve a distinctive outcome" (p. 10). Raelin described leaderful practice as a fairly new phenonomen that use a democratic process. Therefore, "if leadership is connected to a practice rather than to the intersecting influence between individuals, namely between a leader and a group of

followers, then the negotiation of sharing understanding among a group of interacting individuals can become a source of leadership" (p. 10).

Thus, effective leaders possess the following attributes once they become familiar with their role:

- Think through what results are wanted in organizations-then define objectives

- Responsible for thinking through the theory of business

- Think through strategies, which the goals of the organization become performance

- Define the values of the organization, its system of rewards and punishments, its spirit and its culture

- Knowledge and understanding of the organization; its purposes, its value, its environment and markets, its core competency (Allix & Gronn, 2005, p. 18).

Rice (2006) in an earlier study posits that shared leadership has become the norm in school buildings today. She cited Lambert (2002) definition of shared leadership as follows:

The days of the principal as the lone instructional leader are over. The old model of formal, one-person leadership leaves the substantial talents of teachers largely untapped. Improvements achieved under this model are not easily sustainable. Leadership is the professional work of everyone in the school (p. 37).

Shared leadership was further described as teachers being encouraged to take on leadership roles, involve themselves in school wide goals based on their areas of expertise and interest. Shared leadership also includes the functions of counselors and

social workers, and other ancillary school and program personnel. In addition, parent/guardian and community should be involved in students' lives as they progress through their academic careers. This process will further assist the principal with the "buy-in" concept for improving, identifying, and retaining at risk youth. The shared leadership concept will be further discussed later in this paper.

Jacobson et al. (2007) believed that principals exert a measurable positive influence on student achievement, especially in schools serving low socioeconomic communities. They examined the influence various leadership styles had on student achievement as well as teachers support. Three high poverty middle schools were examined, each having a principal with at least a master's degree; one principal had a doctorate degree. One school was on the State Education Department's list for "low performing school". Jacobson et al. noted that despite the fact that there is a growing body of qualified leaders to select from, they are generally reluctant to go into high poverty school buildings due to extreme accountability and scrutiny. There were transition issues of children who came in and out of classrooms and school buildings. It appeared that there was a high transient rate of minority children who moved multiple times throughout the school year. These moves had an impact on the child's academic performance and impacted a high absenteeism rate. The authors described the necessary practices for principals to be successful in high poverty schools:

- Setting directions

- Developing people

- Redesigning the organization

Overall, the study concluded with positive results indicating: (a) that all principals had unique leadership capabilities; (b) they had the ability to engage teachers in their mission; and (c) they were responsive to student needs as well as parents. It was noted in this study that the principal of the lowest performing school mentored under the Principal with the Doctorate degree as an assistant principal.

Kottkamp (2010) provided a historical perspective of genuine preparation reform that depended on professors' becoming learners, examining behaviors, and changing themselves before they could expect student changes. He alluded to what Cambron-McCabe (2003) called the "conversation." Kottkamp examined Murphy and Vriezenga's empirical research from 1975-2002 and found only four empirical articles on leadership preparation. He postulated that teacher education was being targeted year after year. He also recognized that minimal data about what they do with the preparation of students had no serious examination and accounting of the outcomes of all that professors do.

A taskforce on Evaluating Leadership Preparation Programs was implemented to review the current design, which needed improvement. A redesign of the leadership program was put in place as a longitudinal case study of a single preparation cohort to inform one department's attempt to develop stronger leadership for improving student achievement. The longitudinal evaluation design was designed specifically to operationalize and test variables and theorized relationships through the first three stages of the Longitudinal Evaluation Design as follows: (1) conditions of the program participants; (2) program experience to develop leadership; (3) learning outcome; (4) leadership behavior; (5) leadership impact on staff & school community; (6) leadership

impact on school performance outcomes; (7) participant and program comparisons; and (8) mediating factors and influences. Kottkamp asserted that he and his colleagues developed a good roadmap linking leadership preparation to improved schools and student achievement.

Jogulu (2009) viewed cultural-linked leadership. They viewed styles of leadership perceived in different cultures and the importance of workforce diversity. He cited Burns (1978) comprehensive theory to explain the differences between the behaviors of political leaders. Transactional and transformational leadership was highlighted. Jogulu posited that many leadership theories today indicate that leadership styles are transforming at a rapid pace. He noted that because of the turbulent times of change in organizations, leaders must possess a specific skill set. Hazarika (2009) concurred with the assertion that leaders must possess a specific skill set. She believe that companies need capable leaders who are critical to their success. Similarly, Rogelberg et al. (2013) posited that leaders must be adaptive to change, and project goals and objectives through the use of "self-talk". The process involved executives writng letters to themselves for their own personal development; thus, the language used represented a form of naturally occurring self-talk. Two types of self-talk were coded: constructive and dysfunctional (p. 182). Moreover, Rogelberg et. al noted that the concept of self-talk is not specific to the leadership literature; and has been embraced by multiple disciplines, such as sports, clinical and psychology, and education.

Hazarika (2009) described how in 2007, they realized that thirty-five of its senior executives, general managers, and deputy general managers would retire by 2010. The

company decided to conduct a thorough diagnostic assessment of its top 26 executives.

They wanted to identify areas of leadership competency development. They believed that

by offering customized leadership development models, it would address the specific

needs of the senior executives in the organization. OIL partnered with the Hay Group,

which is a global management consulting firm that works with organizations to develop

talent and organize people. They stressed the importance for effectiveness and

motivativation in performance. She noted that the strongest characteristic that affected

individual behavior was motivation. Five key factors were identified and linked directly

to superior individual and organizational performance, (extensive research conducted at

Harvard and Boston Universities):

1. Organizational climate

2. Leadership styles

3. Job requirements

4. Project competency

5. Interpersonal skills.

Finally, Rao (2013) argued for a new leadership phenomenon entitled soft

leadership, which is leading through soft skills and people skills. It blends soft skills, hard

skills, and leadership. Further, he posited the following as it related to soft leadership:

It places emphasis on the significance of precious human resources. It helps in managing

the emotions, egos, and feelings of the people successfully. It focus on the personality,

attitude, and behavior of the people, and calls for making others feel more important. It is

an integrative, participative, relationship, and behavioral leadership model adopting tools

such as persuasion, negotiation, appreciation, motivation, and collaboration to accomplish the tasks effectively. Succinctly, soft leadership can be defined as the process of setting goals, influencing people through persuasion, building strong teams, negotiating them with a win-win attitude, motivating them constantly, aligning their energies and efforts, and appreciating their contribution in achieving organizational goals and objectives with an emphasis on soft skills (p. 144).

Research on Multicultural Leadership, a Case Study

Gardiner and Enomoto (2006) conducted research in an urban school district. The study's theme and process seemed more in line with my qualitative research component. It involved an exploratory and mulitiple case study. Gardiner and Enomoto's research model and methodology was a significant reference for my research study. It consisted of case studies of six school principals in one urban school district (four elementary schools and two secondary schools). Traditional qualitative analysis, field data, and the researcher's experiences, and theoretical points from the research literature informed the study. All of the principals were Caucasian, three females and three males, one with a doctoral degree, and all others with Masters Degrees, ages from 42-51. The majority of the students were Caucasian with a small percentage of minority youngsters, some of whom were relocated refugees. Although there were a number of Hispanic and other ethnic minority students, there was little diversity in the teaching or administrative staff that was predominately Caucasian. Bennett (2007) cited in Gardiner and Enomoto (2007) focused on the urban school principal as a multicultural leader. Multicultural education rested on four broad principles: (a) cultural pluralism; (b) ideals of social justice and the

end of racism, sexism, and other forms of prejudice and discrimination; (c) affirmation of

culture in the teaching and learning process; and (d) visions of educational equity and

excellence leading to high levels of academic learning for all children and youth.

Three key tasks in determining whether administrators would be adequately

prepared to respond to diversity and demonstrate multicultural leadership included the

following:

1. Fostering new meanings about diversity

2. Promoting inclusive, instructional practices within schools by supporting,

   facilitating, or being a catalyst for change.

3. Building connections between schools and communities. Are principals

   engaged with parents and families to encourage success for their children?

Initial fieldwork, observation, and collection of documents were aimed at learning

the social, political, historical, and cultural context of each school and community

(Gardiner & Enomoto, 2007). The goal was to identify the principal's roles and

involvement and engagement as multicultural leaders to serve the diverse population in

their schools. Gardiner and Enomoto conducted supplemental interviews with assistant

administrators to better understand the support that principals were receiving. Interviews

were conducted on site with the leaders. The researchers used an interview guide. All

interviews were transcribed and field notes were written. School-based documents were

also collected, which comprised of an extensive research record.

Gardiner and Enomoto concluded that all principals dealt with problems as they

occurred. Three out of the six principals were committed to become multicultural

proficient. All principals were empathetic with new immigrants. Some administrators

held high expectations for all youngsters. Others maintained deficit views about certain

groups of students. Finally, Gardiner and Enomoto asserted that principals who stressed

multiculturalism, modeled those behaviors with their staff. These leaders ensured that

teachers were including multicultural knowledge and pedagogy in the curriculum.

Recommendations were made to include multiculturalism in teacher education

curriculums as well as working with at risk students in urban school settings.

Leadership Development

Leadership development is a shared responsibility. Its building blocks are

assessment, challenge, and support. Learning new leadership behaviors requires breaking

old habits. It includes an individual approach, motivation to change, practice, and

feedback from bosses. Autonomy and risk taking is described as a subdimension of

responsibility and involve delegating important tasks to employees and encouraging

employees to take calculated risks. In order for organizations to survive and succeed in

today's turbulent and highly competitive business environments, they need to develop

leadership at all levels (Dalakoura, 2009). Dalakoura noted that leadership development

programs are usually designed and conducted by the human resources specialists within

the firm, outside consultants, and academic co-coordinators. There is generally a limited

role of the CEO and top management in this area. He postulated that developing

leadership development programs in everyday practice of the ongoing work initiatives is

difficult to do. However, the successful integration of the leadership development

programs into everyday organizational practices is a critical factor to effective leadership

development at all levels. According to Dalakoura (2009) the following list features a

number of items used to determine whether an organization develops leadership at all

levels:

1. The organization has a steady focus on developing leaders at all levels.

2. The organization has a culture that values leadership behavior at all levels.

3. The organization has explicitly stated values and principles concerning

   leadership behavior.

4. Structures facilitate leadership behavior at all levels.

5. Line managers actively put time into developing other leaders through

   training, coaching, and mentoring.

6. Desired leadership behaviors are explicit to everyone in the organization.

7. Training for developing leadership skills is systematic.

8. Opportunities are offered to exercise leadership at all levels (p. 436).

Mostovicz, Kakabadse, & Kakabadse (2009) viewed the theory of leadership

development, the process of leadership and the choice that the leader makes. They

examined how an individual practicing leadership helps an organization to affect

adaptive change. Consequently, they asserted that the developmental school holds that

leadership is grounded in experience and reflected by the personal interpretation of

specific meanings articulated by inconsistent uses of language. Mostovicz et al. based the

leadership theory on three key questions what, why, and how as follows:

- What- refers to the constructs analyzed, or the target of theorizing

- How- explains the methods we use to create interrelationships between constructs of the theory;

- Why- represents the conceptual assumptions behind these relationships .

According to Russon and Reinett (2004), the W. K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF) leadership team began to question how to evaluate leadership programs. WKKF commissioned the Development Guild/DDI to conduct a scan to determine the current status of efforts to evaluate change-orientated leadership programs. A total of 80 leadership programs were solicited to participate in this scan. Some of the leadership programs were sponsored by WKKF, however, most were not. Of the 80 programs contacted, 55 agreed to participate in the study. The researchers reviewed materials from the programs, conducted interviews with staff to gather information about outcomes, and approaches and method and data sources.

An outcome was defined as changes in attitudes, behavior, knowledge, skills, status, or level of functioning expected to result from program activities. Impact referred to long-term future social change that a program works to create. There were four key findings of the scan:

1. Increasing demand throughout the field for this type of evaluation.

2. Leadership development programs evaluate outcomes and impact on multiple levels.

3. Few leadership development programs have an explicit program theory.

4. Many leadership development programs desire to evaluate outcomes and impact, however, because of a need to show immediate results to funders,

some programs often end up evaluating short-term outputs, i.e. number of participants and satisfaction with workshops.

Santora and Sarros (1996) alluded to Drucker's (1969) comment that "survival in the complex and turbulent environment of the 1990s means learning to manage discontinuous change described as fast, traumatic, and revolutionary" (p. 63). According to these authors, change and leadership are inextricably linked. They also noted Kotter (1995) identified eight steps to transforming an organization: (1) establishing a sense of urgency, (2) forming a powerful guiding coalition, (3) creating a vision, (4) communicating a vision, (5) empowering others to act on the vision, (6) planning for and creating short term wins, (7) consolidating improvements and producing skill change, and (8) institutionalizing new approaches. The organization in this case study was funded in 1970 and was led by its founder and CEO. He had the ability to foresee changes in the environment and responded by altering the name of the organization. Santora and Sarros (1996) asserted that corporate name change and improved organizational performance were synonymous. They described the CEO as a "hands-on" individual who was involved in every aspect of the multi-million dollar enterprise. The CEO believed in his vision and wanted to make sure that his staff understood his vision.

Leadership Development in High Schools

Whitehead (2009) asserted that involvement in student organizations in leadership roles correlate to enhance academic experiences. He suggests that authentic leadership is the fundamental development concept in helping young people in the early stages of their leadership growth continum. He notes that due to the overload of student's academic

course load, there is little room to include a formal leadership development program.

Often, students gain these experiences from JROTC, sports & athletic programs and

student government. However, many students who have been disengaged from the

academic arena over a period of time tend to "drop out" of traditional school.

Consequently, this category of students would benefit immensely from leadership

involvement; the same does not normally fit the qualities of the preconceived leadership

candidate. Unfortunately, leadership development programs are not well integrated into

the formal high school curriculum (Chan, 2000b, as cited in Whitehead, 2009), and those

programs that are available do not adequately reflect the integrated needs of the

adolescent agenda (Starratt, 2007, as cited in Whitehead, 2009).

Traditional leadership development inadequacies encompass a range of biases

(Dobosz & Beaty, 1999; Holland & Andre, 1999) including exclusivity, gender, social-

class and ethnic discriminations (Cooper et al., 1994; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; Mullen &

Tuten, 2004 as cited in Whitehead, 2009). Similarly, Ghimire and Martin (2008) state

that leadership development for young people, particularly minorities begins in the

school. Minority populations are continually underrepresented in educational leadership

positions and institutions need to do more to promote leadership education. They

reported that the academic achievement gap and inadequacies in high school preparation

of minority students are responsible for the underrepresentation of minority groups in

educational leadership positions. Educators need to be more systematic in their approach

to leadership development. Leadership development does not come to people

automatically because they happen to be members of an organization. It is a sustainable

and systematic approach to learning. Moreover, Ghimire and Martin asserts that business and industry will benefit by having a future workforce prepared with leadership traits and abilities. The following are guidelines for promoting educational leadership among all students in urban schools:

- Provide enough support to promote self-efficacy beliefs of students that often develop interest in professional careers and higher education.

- Promote diversity awareness and multicultural sensitivity programs in school to engage students with the larger community.

- Develop awareness among the parents about the consequences of school instability in students' learning ability because families of many students move often.

- Provide experienced mentors to students to guide their educational careers and academic goals.

- Develop a coalition with leaders from the community, churches, political arena, corporations, and education centers to develop a base of intellectual and financial power in support of student recruitment, retention and academic achievement.

- Introduce students to the professional development network with the community through internships and include them in both social and professional situations.

- Provide a support group of caring individuals (such as peers and teachers) for students new in school.

- Provide training to teachers on how to mentor, and advise students effectively (Ghimire & Martin, 2008).

Finally, before adopting a leadership program, schools must consider how to develop sustainable educational leadership practices. This process begins early in the child's educational career as early as Grade 5 in some instances. Many of the underrepresented minority groups do not have role models in the home to get a jump start or vision of leadership development traits or attributes. This is why it is important for schools to take the lead and involve parents and community as noted in the suggested guidelines above.

Leadership Characteristics/Types

Sendjava and Pekerti (2010) conducted a research study to address the gap in the literature relating to servant leadership and trust among followers. They empirically tested the linkages between servant leadership behavior and followers' trust in their leaders. They posit that one of the significant gaps that exist in the literature is trust in interpersonal concerns and organizational settings. The authors described trust as a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based on positive expectations of the intentions. They asserted that servant leadership is not about leadership than it was about servant hood. Servant hood manifest whenever there is a legitimate need to serve in the absence of extenuating personal benefits. McKimm, Millard and Held (2008) introduced a study related to a project entitled "LEAP (Leadership, Education and Partnerships Projects)" aimed to develop genuine partnership

and collaborative working among health and social care education providers. They stress

that policy agendas emphasize greater collaborative and partnership working between

providers of services and education. McKimm et al. study is important to this research

to show the reader how collaborative leadership and partnerships can be successful with

the right leader at the helm of an organization. Some of the goals of the project included:

- Create real, meaningful and deep partnerships between BCU and health and

  social care employers

- Increase and flexibility of learning opportunities

- Encourage and enable non-traditional applicants to the health professions

- Develop the capacity for prompt organizational and curriculum change.

McKimm et al. asserted that the LEAP project brought together over 40

healthcare educationalists and health practitioners from across the West Midlands and

empowered them to work together in new ways. The vision of the project was to "sow the

seed" of educational collaboration at the formative stages of these future leaders'

development in order to influence the next generation of NHS leaders. Whitehead (2009)

strongly believed in the concept of leader development, particularly among adolescents

and young people. Most adult leadership studies deal with individuals who represent

maturity in their leadership philosophy (Dobosz & Beaty, 1999, as cited in Whitehead,

2009). According to Whitehead (2009) leadership is defined as the capacity to guide

others in achievement of a common goal, which is in line with other scholarly

observations that leadership is a relationship between leader and follower. Consequently,

he identified authentic leaders as one of the most prominent types in the industry. He

defined authentic leadership as:

- Self-aware, humble, always seeking improvement, aware of those being led

  and looks out for the welfare of others

- Fosters high degree of trust by building an ethical and moral framework

- Committed to organizational success within the construct of social values.

Whitehead (2009) postulated that authenticity is multi-faceted and is concerned

with more than individual self-satisfaction. It concentrates on the external factors of

one's influence as it does on the internal factors of being true to oneself. The attributes

indicative of Authentic leaders are: they generally know themselves well, are self-

confident; are concerned with developing others, they build trust with their followers, and

have a deep sense of community and organizational values.

Marzano (2003) noted some of the prominent theorists who influence leadership

practice in K-12 education; and who influenced his theoretical framework as follows:

1. *Warren Bennis* (2003) focused on the future. He identified four critical

   characteristics of effective leadership (a) leaders must be able to engage others

   thought the creation of shared vision, (b) leaders must have a clear voice that

   is distinctive to constituents, a sense of self, and a self-confidence, (c) leaders

   must operate from a strong moral code, (d) leaders must have the ability to

   adapt to relentless pressure to change

2. *Peter Block* (2003) framed leadership as the act of effective questioning.

   Asking "how questions" too early in the change process undermine the power

of dialogue. He suggests that leaders are social architects who can either enhance or inhibit the effectiveness of an organization.

3. *James Collins* (2001) highly influential work on the nature of businesses that have gone from "good to great". Asserted that Level 5 leaders are interested in building a great company than drawing attention to themselves.

4. *Stephen Covey (*1992*)* - highly known for his book "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People". He frames these behaviors as directives such as (a) be proactive, (b) begin with the end in mind, (c) put things first (goals of the organization), (d) think win-win, (e) seek first to understand involves establishing strong lines of communication by listening to & understanding the needs of the organization, (f) synergize – cooperation & collaboration will produce more, especially from isolated individuals, and (g) sharpen the saw involves learning from previous mistakes, not to repeat (p. 21).

Marzano et al. (2005) described transactional leadership as trading one thing for another (quid pro quo); management by exception-passive, management by exception-active, and constructive transactional. They believed that transactional leadership is the most effective and active of constructive leadership styles.

Marzano et al. (2005) noted other types of Leadership as follows:

- *Servant Leadership*: first appeared in the leadership literature in the 1970s. This perspective stands in sharp contrast to those theorists (such as transactional leadership) that emphasize control or "overseeing" those within the organization.

- *Situational Leadership***:** the leader adapts her leadership behavior to the followers' maturity', based on their willingness and ability to perform a specific task.

- *Instructional Leadership***:** the principal actively supports the day to day instructional activities and programs by modeling desired behaviors, participating in in-service training, and consistently giving priority to instructional concerns.

According to Latta (2009), "change resides at the heart of leadership, organizational culture is one of many situational variables that have emerged as pivotal in determining the success of leaders' efforts to implement change initiatives" (p. 19). This quote is especially true in the Castle Public Schools where accountability is now at its peak. All schools are required to make their yearly student academic requirements, where the results are posted locally and statewide via a report card. Organizational change and development is a challenge (Guay, R. P. 2013). It involves the role of strong leadership as well as committed individuals who recognize the change "as critical" to support young people as they navigate through the educational system, so they can graduate from high school. School districts will require individuals to do things differently from the status quo (particularly with the social inequalities and marginalization due to race, class, gender and limited resources in urban schools). This process was equated to social justice leaders who recognize policies and procedures that perpetuate inequalities, and they take action (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014, p. 846).

School Reform—No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Wohlstetter, Datnow, and Park (2008) research focused on the No Child Left behind Act (NCLB) pushed for increased accountability, and improved student achievement. They posit that the theory of action underlying NCLB require that educators "have the will" and "know- how" to analyze, interpret, and use data to make informed decisions in all areas of education. The authors believed that data-driven decision-making had the potential to increase student performance by: (a) effectively reviewing their existing capacities, (b) identifing weaknesses, and (c) better chart plans for improvement in specific areas. Teachers benefit in a positive way with an increased understanding of data-driven decision-making strategies initiated at the systems level. They note that the principal-agent theory (systems level) is to identify strengths and diagnose problems in current data-driven decision-making plans. For example, within school districts, the local school board delegates authority to the central district staff to implement its decisions.

As noted earlier in this chapter, Kauffman (2007) in contrast to Wohlstetter et al. did not support the "No Child Left behind Act (NCLB) in its efforts for closing achievement gaps among students in general education and children in special education. He believe the focus seemed to emphasize that school districts should close "academic achievement gaps" among students in general education and children in special education. He thought that this mandate is impossible to achieve.

An Exploration of Organizational Change

Organizational change is inevitable in most organizations to keep up with "cutting edge competition" in today's diverse and global economy. Organizational change does not occur unless member groups and individuals change by adopting different behaviors and goals. As a result, understanding the individual, group, and organizational processes that must occur to drive positive change proves critical for leaders (Gilley, McMillan, & Gilley, 2009). Gilley et al. asserts that leaders' thoughts and skills are manifested in actions that enhance or impede change. It strengthens the linkage between leader behaviors and effectiveness in implementing change. Strong leaders are critical to organizations that possess specific skill sets and characteristics to lead and oversee the various changes. A good leader is one that is successful and generally has followers who enjoy working for them, not particularly for the organization. According to Dalakoura (2010) citing Conger (1993) significant changes are occurring in human values and in the backgrounds and needs of the employees. Conger explained these changes as follows:

> Due to the increasing emphasis on organizational behavior in management
> schools and the development of employee rights acts, have made subordinates less
> tolerant of any interpersonal weaknesses of their superiors. Subordinates today
> expect their leaders to be more interpersonally competent in order to succeed in
> being truly influential as organizational leaders (p. 434).

Strategic managers have to continuously seek for ways of ensuring that their organizations fit into the changing environment (Mulili & Wong, 2011). Mulili and Wong argues that this partly explains why concepts such as organizational life-cycles,

changing environment, organizational change, business process improvement, re-engineering. and total quality management (TQM) have advanced so that organizations can grow and develop. Elias (2009) posits that employee's attitudes toward change is a key component to whether an organization's change efforts are either successful or fail. He describes a three-component model of commitment that has received much empirical support: a) affective commitment, b) continuance commitment and c) normative commitment. His study examined three potential antecedents of 258 police officers' attitudes toward organizational change (ATOC), and whether ATOC mediates the relationships between these antecedents and affective organizational commitment (AOC). Specifically, the department's organizational design was being modified to implement a more community-and problem-orientated police department. In essence, they wanted to change the MPD management style to provide better services to the public. Elias used a theoretical model to assess full mediation based on the model proposed by James and Brett (1984). In this model, all the antecedents' effect on the criterion variable is transferred through the mediator variable as follows:

Locus of Control→ Attitudes toward change→ Affective Commitment
$\updownarrow$
Growth need strength
$\updownarrow$
Internal work motivation
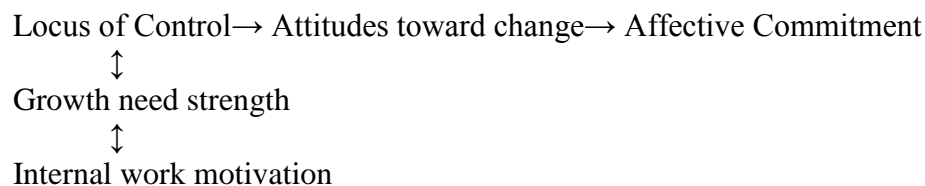
Data was collected via written surveys completed in the same order by MPD employees in small group settings, during the normal work day (Elias, 2009). Elias concluded that due to the diversity found among employee's personalities, the responses would vary. Some of the individuals welcomed change because it provided them

opportunities to broaden their professional horizons and fulfilled their growth needs. On the other hand, some employees believed that change would require them to exert extra effort that interfered with external motives for employment .

Similarily, Mishra, Bhakar, and Khurana (2007) conducted a research study, which aimed at developing a questionnaire to measure the employees' perception of change in the organization. They describe change as complex and suggest that some organizations have sailed successfully through changes in their business environment while others have failed. Mishra et al. noted that organizations operate in at least three types of environments: a) the temporal environment b) the external environment and c) the internal environment. Consequently, Mishra et al. suggest various reasons change occur in organizations such as competition, changing stakeholder expectations, technological developments, product improvement, and changes in administration. Gilley, McMillan, and Gilley (2009) explored leadership behaviors and their effect on organizational changes. The study explored leaders' efforts and effectiveness in implementing change from their subordinates perspectives. Results of the study contributes to the research on leadership and organizational change in three areas:

- 74% of respondents reported that their leaders never, rarely, or sometimes were effective in implementing change.
- Certain leader skills and abilities have been positively associated with successfully implementing change, including the abilities to coach, communicate, involve others, motivate, reward, and build teams.

- Positive relationships were identified between certain leader behaviors and rates of success with change.

Gilley et al. focus on why change in organizations is difficult to achieve. They believe that leaders lack a clear understanding of change. They view change as evolutionary in organizations as: transitional, transformational, or developmental. How and when the change is accepted rely on the methods of communication used, and their perceived appropriateness by the individual. The stages of change acceptance are as follows: awareness, interest, trial, the decision to continue or quit, and adoption. Gilley et al. (2009) cited Drucker (1999) postulating that the behaviors of organizational leaders directly influence actions in the work environment that enable change. Leaders and managers are responsible for change strategy, implementation, and monitoring, thus they function as change agents. They believe that there was a need to review associated leader skills that underlie their behaviors and actions.

Guidroz, Luce, and Denison (2010) alluded to Kotter (1996) book on leading organizational change that successful transformation is 70 to 90 percent leadership and only 10 to 30 percent management. They conducted case study research to share with organizations a method for integrating organizational culture change and leadership development within one balanced corporate initiative. It describe the activities undertaken to create an integrated leadership and development program at a global manufacturing organization. The manufacturing organization employed nearly 20,000 employees, and operated in 114 locations Guidroz et al. indicates that organizational leaders at the aforementioned institutions recognize two competing needs:

1. Align business strategies with organizational goals; and

2. Provide development for the top 200 leaders of the organization.

The goals of the program were: (a) to improve the skills of their top teams; (b) highlight the awareness of individual strengths and weaknesses; and (c) discern the leader's awareness of his/her impact on the organization's culture. They asserted that organizational change and development is more successful when it is supported by top management (CEO & Board members). The success was also attributed to having the right personnel and appropriate resources. The case study included that the top 180 leaders within the company complete the survey (The Denison Organizational Culture Survey (DOCS) and Denison Leadership Development Survey (DLDS) were both based on a model of organizational effectiveness. The human resources (HR) staff worked with the Denison Consulting firm to be trained as "in-house" coaches, mentors and resources for these leaders. The leaders had to think about organizational culture and leadership results at three levels: (a) company, (b) function, and (c) individual. As a result, two themes emerged from the training: weak in customer focus and capability development. Each leader had to include 10% of their individual and departmental goals in a development related area in their strategic plan for the ensuing year.

As noted earlier in this paper, Latta (2009) describe the leader as "the change agent." The primary objective of her study is to model the interaction between organizational culture and change. She reviewed ways in which a leader's knowledge of organizational culture affect the process of implementing change.

Organizational change and development occur in a myriad of organizations.

Specifically, profit and non-profit organizations, business and industry, schools, and

health care environments. No matter what specific organization, change will occur.

Leaders and their subordinates must be accountable for the outcomes of that change

(Boyd, 2011; Green & Davis, 2010). Green and Davis (2010) conducted a study on the

evolution of benchmarking in magnet schools in urban areas. They suggested that the

magnet school was approved legislation for equality. They are designed as a strategic

roadmap for America ridden itself of past segregation. The approach was to attract White

students to predominantly Black schools. The schools were well-funded, to enhance a

student's ability by learning a specialized field such as technology. They analyzed

secondary data from relevant sources to evaluate the results of America's magnet

schools. The results of the analysis will assist in the development of organizational and

leadership theory efforts. Green and Davis described benchmarking as the process of

identifying, understanding, and adapting outstanding practices. In turn, those evidenced-

based practices would benefit other organizations. It is an activity that looks outward to

find best practices. Those best practices were measured by the business operations

against those goals. All organizations use some type of benchmarking procedure. It is a

management tool that should be used in every discipline such as education. Most

importantly, Green and Davis noted that benchmarking became an identifier of best

practices so that improvement could be made regardless of sector. Sustainability has not

been a factor in the magnet school arena. They reviewed approximately 20 research

articles relating to benchmarking in urban schools and magnet schools. It was concluded

that the transformational leader was the best fit for these types of schools. They explained

that the postmodern leader should possess a spiritual focus, have an entrepreneurial

approach, and be service oriented.

Brown and May (2012) concur that transformational leadership is essential in

organizations. They explored which transformational leadership training impacted

desired organizational outcomes. They conducted research in a large manufacturing

organization that failed to achieve expected productivity improvements. The management

of the company decided to involve all of the employees in the study. They began the

study with an exploratory attitude survey conducted by academic-based consultants.

A series of interviews were conducted with the workers and supervisors to

establish sorts of data that might be useful and to develop a base-line measurement tool.

The criticality of first-line supervisors' roles emerged as a major theme in the interviews.

Brown and May noted that there seemed to be a general distrust and suspicion of

management by the hourly employees. Bass and Avolio Multifactor Leadership

Questionnaire (MLQ) (1990) as cited in Brown and May (2012) was used to measure

leadership elements. Transformational and transactional leadership were the most

significant. After the two day study, the results were shared with the internal staff. They

concluded that there is a strong relationship between contingent reward and

transformational leadership and desired organizational outcomes. Leaders/managers can

be taught how to affect transformational leadership in the workplace.

In contrast to Brown and May study, Hulusisozen (2012) studied social network

theory. The study was conducted in four units in a University setting. Secretaries can be

powerful and influential in work environments. Hulusisozen wanted to determine the level of relationship between network status and power of the junior level office secretaries. Power in organizations was defined as "the capacity of an actor to create dependency over others and/or "the ability to get things done the way one wants them to be" (p. 3). Hulusisozen cited Mechanic (1962) who claimed that there can be several sources of power for lower participants in organizations. He cited power as the length of time in an organization, expert knowledge, and value of an employee, amount of effort, personal attractiveness and structural centrality in the organization.

The results of the study showed:

- that the managers had no time to work on improving their social relations with others working in other departments and critical administrative units

- Office secretaries could easily transform daily work interactions into social ties and use these connections to influence academicians working in their departments.

- Office secretaries were generally stronger than the managers due to their extended social networks.

- Managers generally relied on their secretaries to use their social connections to reach the other departments.

Secretaries are essential to managers and to the overall unit of an organization. However, despite the magnitude of work and job responsibilities, the manager is the person that must be accountable for all aspects of his or her department, not the secretary.

Organizational Change Models

This area was included because of the complex nature of leading individuals with

different personalities in the workplace. There are a number of people who "resist

change" in their lives whether it be personally in the home or in the workplace. Gilley et

al. (2009) viewed Rogers (2003) change model that explained the acceptance of change

that occurs in stages of: awareness, interest, trial, the decision to continue or quit, and

adoption. Individuals are categorized based on their overall acceptance of change as: (a)

innovators, (b) early adopters, (c) early majority, (d) late majority, and (e) laggards.

Specifically,

- Innovators: are those who desire change

- Early adopters: individuals who like change and challenges

- Early majority: those who prefer to observe the effect of change on others
  prior to engaging in change themselves

- Late majority: the skeptical, suspicious, and hesitant to change

- Laggards or non-adopters: individuals who resist or completely reject change.

The OC3 Model was developed by Latta (2009), which included the importance

of organizational culture as the central phenomenon. The OC3 Model was grounded in a

systemic view of organizational change embodying feedback loops linking cultural

dynamics with the change process. Eight stages of cultural influence were identified:

cultural analysis of readiness, shaping vision, informing change initiatives, reflecting

culture in implementation strategies, embodying cultural intent, cultural mediation of

implementation, moderating outcomes of change, and documenting collateral effects .

The model embodied two theoretical assumptions for the interactions of organizational culture and change: The first one stressed the idea that effective leaders must consider other aspects of culture that influence change throughout the process of implementation.. The second one stressed the importance of the leader's knowledge-base about cultural awareness that will ensure success of the change initiative in the workplace.

Principal as Leader

Kimball and Sirotnik (2000) asserted that most urban districts will not advertise the below-mentioned position for a new principal because it is an honest depiction of what the job consists of the following excerpt:

Wanted: Experienced K-12 educator with administrator certificate willing to take on principalship of urban middle school. Must know how to manage and lead complex educational organization including renewing mission and core values; creating viable organizational structures and work environments; allocating wisely inadequate human and fiscal resources; handling conflict via adept negotiations, compromises, and human relations; building new and more substantive school-community relations; and spearheading major school improvement efforts in teaching and learning. Must also coordinate increasing numbers of social services programs with the daily functioning of the school. Must be skillful in doing all of the above by spending no more than an average of 5 to 10 minutes on any given task during the normal school day—must tolerate ambiguity and be comfortable with trying to control the uncontrollable. Additionally, must know how to break up fights between students and fights

between students' parents. Although not a requirement, self-defense skills and experience disarming gun-toting students is desirable. Must also know when not to trample on students' rights, must be familiar with regular and special education school law and due process issues, and must know when to call in district lawyer. Must be highly skilled in race relations and be able to deal effectively with multiple interest groups and coalitions. Must be effective in instructional supervision Must be willing to do what is necessary to fire poor teachers, and to help capable teachers become even better. Successful entrepreneurial track record in securing grants and other sources of funding is highly desired, especially resources focused on dealing with homeless children, newly arrived immigrants, high dropout and transiency rates, and limited and non-English-speaking student populations. Must be willing to work 15-hour days, often 6 days per week, for salary barely above that of experienced classroom teachers (Kimball & Sirotnik, 2000, p. 536).

Leadership Practices and the Association With Successful Student Outcomes

School leaders are capable of having significant positive effects on student learning and other outcomes (Klar & Brewer, 2014; Printy, 2008; Robinson et al., 2009; Silins & Mulford, 2002; Walters et al., 2003, as cited in Leithwood et al., 2010; Marzano, 2003; Schargel et al., 2007). According to Printy (2008), the question concerning if school leaders can make a difference in how teachers think about their work with students in the classroom remains unclear. They believed that it could explain important links in the causal chain between leadership and student achievement. The principal is the key

stakeholder in the school environment. Leithwood et al. posits that enough evidence is now at hand to justify claims about significant leadership effects on students. Leadership researchers now question how those effects occur. They believe that the effects of school leadership on students are largely indirect. They developed a Four Paths model that explained 43% of the variation in student achievement. Variables on the Rational, Emotions, and Family Paths explained similarly significant amounts of that variation. Variables on the Organizational Path were unrelated to student achievement. Leadership had its greatest influence on the Organizational Path and least influence on the Family Path.

The results from Leithwood et study is that trust has an impact on student learning and achievement; organizational path had the least influence on student learning; and family path improved student achievement, but was the recipient of essentially no leadership influence. Children from low-income and minority families has the most to gain when schools involved parents. Consequently, Leithwood et al. asserts that most individual empirical studies aimed at identifying significant leadership mediators since the aforementioned review have examined only a single or a very small number of mediators (p. 672).

Moreover, Klar and Brewer (2013) concur that decades of research -determined that principal leadership can have a significant, if indirect, effect on student learning. Klar and Brewer stressed the challenges and complexities of leading schools with high levels of poverty, diversity, and student/family mobility. Often, students from high poverty areas tend to move multiple times during the school year. Thus, despite

widespread agreement among scholars that school leadership is influenced by context, relatively little research has focused on this critical aspect of leadership practice (p. 769).

A study by Urick and Bowers (2014) examined the independent direct effects of student and principal perceptions of academic climate on student achievement in high school. They noted that principals influenced student outcomes through the school's academic climate (Heck, 2000; Heck, Larsen, & Marcoulides, 1990; Hoy & Hannum, 1997; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008; Supovitz, & May, 2010 as cited in Urick & Bowers, 2014). More important, academic climate has been found to mediate the influence of socioeconomic status on achievement, which can promote increased equity in student success and influence overall growth in school performance (p. 387).

Thus, the structure of urban schools with predominately Black urban schools with primarily Black populations often do not provide an atomosphere that is conductive to leadership practices that include commitment to students, compassion for students and their families, and confidence in student's abilities (Tillman, 2008, p. 597). Tillman conducted an empirical review for a study from an interdisciplinary approach, including work from the fields of history, education, leadership, and supervision. Her study included 58 Black principals, with emphasis on the importance of cultural proficiency, implications for the preparation of school leaders, and how school leaders can impact the education of African American students. Further, she included references and studies by Hilliard (1999), a renowned professor and researcher who was concerned about school leadership, particularly among the minority student population. Accordingly, Tillman asserted the following:

Evidence from this review of the literature on Black principals suggests that interpersonal caring in educational leadership can be effective in creating socially just learning environments that are conducive to promoting student success. Thus, interpersonal caring is a critical element of leadership in schools with predominantly Black student populations because it is often the case that many of these students have been subjected to external and internal factors that can contribute to low self-esteem and underachievement (p. 590).

Consequently, Tillman believe that the relationship between teachers and students and principals and students is a critical factor in the social, emotional, and academic development of students. She also emphasized the fact that Black principals may not be the best fit for some schools because they may be "out of touch" with the community where the students reside. Likewise, Tillman alludes to Hilliard (1999) who insist that teachers and leaders must know, understand, and acknowledge the history and culture of African Americans in order to effectively teach and lead African American children (Hilliard, 1999 as cited in Tillman, 2008, p.592). Accordingly, Hilliard believe that master leaders could lead in any type of school regardless of race and socio-economic status (SES). As an example,

Hilliard pointed to the work of Sandra McGary, an African American female principal who was assigned to a predominantly African American low-performing school in Cobb County, Georgia. After McGary became principal, student test scores increased, and the school became a high-performing school within 1 year. He attributed McGary's success to her strong leadership and her commitment to

the academic and social development of African American students. Hilliard

wrote: Her highest concern is with the quality of the instructional program, and

that is the topic of most of her conversations with teachers. She has managed to

gain the collective commitment of her staff to strive for excellence and to

expend whatever energies it takes to get there (Hilliard, 1999 as cited in Tillman,

2008, p. 599)

Consequently, school leaders wear "many hats" and represent the most influential

change agent in their building. They generally support teachers' "communities of practice

functions" (professional development arrangements that go on in the school building with

other professional teachers, such as math to math teachers, science to science teachers,

etc; (Printy, 2008). Printy noted that principals contribute to teachers' joint work as

described earlier. They also extend support for teachers' efforts and protect teachers from

external interference.

Lastly, schools are critically important to the education of all children because

they spend many hours in these buildings during the day. Thus, it seems important for

teachers and leaders to build relationships with students (besides the academics) to

enhance trust, and recognizing students' families, and their communities

as critical to their educational outcomes.

Connecting Leadership and "At-Risk" Youths' Success—A Multisystemic Paradigm

Schargel et al. (2007) asserted that businesses and military were the only

professions that trained their leaders. They note that principals are selected from the ranks

of good teachers, good classroom managers, or superior teacher mentors. Schargel et al.

contend that the consideration of the skills, attitudes, and characteristics is essential to effective and instructional leadership. These authors posited that successful schools with evidence-based practices include schools that truly believe all students can learn. They also stress the importance for shared vision, parent involvement, community stakeholder collaboration and the principal's contribution to staff as vital factors to student success.

The traditions surrounding leadership are vital to the effectiveness of a school (Marzano, 2003). Marzano (2003) indicate that an effective principal is thought to be a precondition for an effective school. He cited a response from a 1977 U.S. Senate Committee Report on Equal Educational Opportunity (U.S. Congress, 1970), in which he indicated that the principal was the most important and influential individual in any school. The principal is key to all activities that go on in the building. The principal sets the tone for leadership in the school. He or she is responsible to a degree for the success of all students. Kimball and Sirotnik (2000) argue that there is always a political agenda when it comes to blaming fault for disproportionate concentrations of minorities school failure. Political and corporate leaders tend to focus on school leadership instead of the lack of resources actually going into the schools. The need for improved administrator preparation programs is warranted.

Although we hold leaders responsible and accountable for effectiveness, they cannot get the job done without the support of responsive educators, community, parents and students (Schargel et al., 2007). Schargel et al. viewed the principal as the middle manager in a system of rules, regulations, and mandates from top down policy-makers. They contended that traditional top-down models of school leadership do not work. The

discipline of systems thinking provides a different way of looking at problems and goals-

not as isolated events but as components of larger structures (Senge, 2000). Senge (2000)

asserted that a system is any perceived whole whose elements "hang together" because

they continually affect each other over time. Consequently, within every school district,

community or classroom, there might be dozens of different systems worthy of notice;

the governance process of the district, the curriculum development, the school board, etc.

Overall, organizational learning functions on all three levels:

- Classroom

- School

- Community

Moreover, all interrelated and can work seamlessly together to benefit teachers, students,

parents, and the community. School leaders are capable of having significant positive

effects on student learning and other important outcomes. Likewise, research has shown

that successful organizations, corporations and public educational institutions are

successful due to the leadership of the leader (Jacobson et al., 2007; Klar & Brewer 2013;

Marzano & McNulty, 2003; Marzano et al., 2005; Shatzer, Caldarella, Hallam & Brown,

2013)**.**

Marzano (2003) described leadership as the foundation for change at all levels.

He considered leadership the single most important aspect of effective school reform. He

noted that leadership is mentioned in early research on school effectiveness. Leadership

is a necessary condition for effective reform relative to the school-level, the teacher-level,

and the student-level factors. He indicates that leadership has a strong relationship with:

- The extent to which a school has a clear mission and goals

- The overall climate of the school and the climate in individual classrooms

- The organization of curriculum and instruction

- Students 'opportunity to learn. (p. 172)

Marzano (2003) developed a research model for schools, which included a model of school-level, teacher-level, and student-level factors. It was described as collecting perceptual data on specific elements of factors such as:(a) identifying and implementing an intervention; (b) examining the impact of the intervention on student interventiont; and (c) moving to the next issue. He developed three principles pertaining to effective leadership. First, the importance for the principal to work collectively with groups of educators. Second, the need for strong guidance from the leadership team. Third, the importance of effective leadership that will ultimately enhance the development of interpersonal relationships.

Leadership Traits and Their Responsibilities in Schools

Friedkin and Slater (1994), as described by Marzano (2003), concluded that the effective leader has two primary traits:

1. Accessibility and attentiveness to matters of concern to teachers

2. Collaborative problem solving and decision making on instructional

issues in the content of mutual respect. The frequency of transactions between

principals and teachers is not a key dimension of (effectiveness). Intrusive forms

of governance are negatively associated with (principal effectiveness) and school

performance.

Marzano et al. (2005) conducted extensive research in *Leadership of Education and Business*. The research included a meta-analysis that supported major elements of various theorists in the area of leadership and types of effective leadership styles. Two terms that were foundational in their analysis of research included transformational and transactional leadership. They also reviewed a number of theorists' views on leadership, and provided definitions and examples of how the various styles could impact change in organizations.

Burns (1978), as cited in Marzano et al. (2005), defined leadership as:

leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values, motivation, wants and the needs, the aspirations and expectations-of both leaders and followers. Moreover, the genius of leadership lies in the manner in which leaders see and act on their own and their followers' values and motivation. (p. 19)

The assertion was that transformational leadership is the favored style of leadership given that it is assumed to produce results beyond expectations. It is more focused on change. Marzano et al. posited that transformational leaders form a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents. They described the four I's of transformational leadership:

- Individual consideration: characterized by giving personal attention to members who seem neglected

- Intellectual stimulation: characterized by enabling followers to think of old problems in new ways

- Inspirational motivation: characterized by communicating high performance expectations, through the projection of a powerful, confident, dynamic presence that invigorates followers

- Idealized influence: characterized by modeling behavior through exemplary personal achievements, character, and behavior (p. 14).

Waters et al. (2005) identified 21 leadership responsibilities that are significantly associated with student achievement. They translated the results into a balanced leadership framework. It described the knowledge, skills, strategies, and tools leaders need to positively impact student achievement. The balanced leadership framework is predicated on the notion that effective leadership means more than simply knowing what to do it's knowing when, how, and why to do it. Of the 21 leadership responsibilities, the authors' suggested that 9 must be addressed by the school principal to craft a purposeful learning community as follows:

1. Optimizer

2. Affirmation

3. Ideals/beliefs

4. Situational awareness

5. Visibility

6. Relationships

7. Communication

8. Culture

9. Input (Waters et al., 2005. as cited in Zoul and Link, 2007).

Zoul and Link (2007) asserts that the principal as leader has to exude all of the aforementioned qualities and characteristics because for the most part, their day is never typical as planned. The other 12 leadership responsibilities include the following:

1. Order

2. Resources

3. Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, assessment

4. Change agent

5. Monitors/evaluates

6. Flexibility

7. Focus

8. Intellectual stimulation

9. Outreach

10. Discipline

11. Contingent rewards

12. Relationship

Waters et al. (2005) assert that effective leaders understand how to balance pushing for change while at the same time, protecting aspects of culture, values, and norms worth preserving. Leaders must understand and value the people in the organization. A leaders responsibility is multifaceted. It includes a leadership focus on school and classroom practices. Leaders must also tailor their own leadership practices

based on the magnitude or "order" of change they are leading. Waters et al. (2005)

asserted that the implication of the change for individuals, organizations, and institutions

determines the magnitude of order of change. They described McRel's (research

institution for school reform) taxonomy which organizes the literature into the following

four types of knowledge. They can be applied to the 21 leadership responsibilities and

associated practices:

- Experiential knowledge-knowing why this is important;

- Declarative knowledge-knowing what to do;

- Procedural knowledge-knowing how to do it; and

- Contextual knowledge-knowing when to do it.

The value of the above-mentioned taxonomy was described as organizing the knowledge

in the theoretical research on leadership. The taxonomy was a tool used for organizing

and for their "balanced leadership framework".

As mentioned earlier, several prominent theorists influenced Walters et al's

research resulting in the development of their theoretical framework of 21 leadership

characteristics of leaders and balanced leadership. They also emphasized the importance

for including other critical leaders working in schools (teachers, program staff, etc) as

well as collaboration and respect for teachers and professionals in the school.

Systems Thinking

Senge contend that systems' thinking has emerged as a critical characteristic for

leaders. It is the heart of the learning organizations. The leader's responsibility is to learn

how to shift mind sets, team build, and teach others the process of shared vision. Senge

(1990) believe that it is critical for organizations and other work related environments to adopt his described disciplines as seamless as possible for the success of learning organizations.

The following definition was depicted for a discipline:

A discipline is not simply a "subject of study". It is a body of technique based on some underlying theory or understanding of the world that must be studied and mastered to put into practice. As you develop proficiency, your perceptual capacity develops; you gradually surrender to new ways of looking at the world. (p. 7)

The disciplines included in Senge's system thinking model were: personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision, and team learning. He indicated that personal mastery was the cornerstone of the learning organization. Mental models are described as deeply ingrained assumptions, and started with turning the mirror inward. Building shared vision bind people together around a common identity or theme. Lastly, team learning was the process of thinking together and recognizing the patterns of interaction in teams that undermine learning.

Research Model Related to Organizational Change and Development

As a way to capture the nontraditional student and retain them in school, Laursen (2011) presented a research study on four organizational development projects ran by four Danish upper secondary schools ("gymnasium"). It was reported that the "gymnasium" accepted students who had completed 9 years of school, and between 16-19 years of age. Organizational development projects were understood as a particular

form of intentional organizational learning. Laursen posits that the development program highlighted the necessity of improving the quality of the upper secondary education system. According to this author, one of the prime intentions of the upper secondary school reform was to strengthen the relations between school subjects and to increase their study habits. He described "school development" as targeted efforts to change both the structure of collaboration and the practices of teaching. Consequently, the organizational structure will be changed.

The research was organized as four case studies based on a selection of four schools. There are three empirical techniques employed, producing three sets of empirical material as follows:

- A survey carried out by sending a questionnaire to all teachers and everyone engaged in management at the four schools.

- An effort to go deeper into the different profiles of attitudes and engagement in relation to development projects uncovered through the survey was added in the form of an investigation based on qualitative interviews.

- A large number of documents and written material concerning the projects were analyzed and focusing on perspectives, identities and themes (p. 569).

Laursen concludes that the general attitude towards the project was positive. The attempts to alter the relationships between management and employees were pointed out as an important aspect of all four projects.

Organizational change and development is a complex endeavor. Organizational change requires the knowledge and direction of a leader that understand systems and

possess interpersonal skills. The preferred leader-type seemed to be transformational.

Transformational leaders "lead by example". They believe in engaging employees in the

"planned approach" model of change. As noted by Grieves (2000) the failures of

organizations have been linked to "lack of vision" and commitment from senior

management. There was limited integration with other systems in the organization

coupled with a poor implementation plan. Gilley et al. (2009) concurred and noted that

leaders' thoughts and skills are manifested in actions, structures, and processes that

enhance or impede change. It further strengthend the linkage between leader behaviors

and effectiveness in implementing change. Accordingly, subordinates today expect their

leaders to be more interpersonally competent. They looked at their leaders to succeed in

being truly influential as organizational leaders (Dalakoura, 2009). As mentioned earlier,

organizational change require strategic managers to seek for ways of ensuring that their

organizations fit into the changing environment (Mulili & Wong, 2011). Employee's

attitudes toward change is a key component to whether an organization's change efforts

are either successful or fail (Elias, 2009; Mishra et al., 2010). Mishra et al. (2010)

suggested various reasons why change occur in organizations. Some examples were

competition, changing stakeholder expectations, changes in administration.

Consequently, various scholars have indicated that a leader's inability to achieve success

in organizational change is due to its complex nature. Gilley et al. (2009) viewed change

as evolutionary in organizations. He cited them as: transitional, transformational or

developmental. How and when the change is accepted relied largely on the methods of

communication used. It is how the perceived communication is conveyed to the

individual. The stages of change acceptance were noted as: awareness, interest, trial, the decision to continue or quit, and adoption.

There are a number of intriguing models that have been identified with success in organizational environments, and are useful today. One salient example is the OC3 Model developed by Latta (2009). The OC3 Model is grounded in a systemic view of organizational change embodying feedback loops linking cultural dynamics with the change process. It includes eight stages of cultural influence as: (1) cultural analysis of readiness; (2) shaping vision; (3) informing change initiatives; (4) reflecting culture in implementation strategies; (5) embodying cultural intent; (6) cultural mediation of implementation; (7) moderating outcomes of change and (8) documenting collateral effects. One of the critical factors that emerged from the literature is the importance for the inclusion of human capital (employees) in the change process in organizations. Green and Davis (2010) stated that benchmarking was a process of identifying, understanding, and adapting outstanding practices from organizations to improve its performance. The concept of "cascading management" where leaders are the "only thinkers" is no longer effective today.

Research Methodology

The methodology for the research study is a mixed-method approach based on Creswell and Plano Clark's (2007) contributions to the mixed-method approach. They asserts that: (a) the mixed method approach provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone, and (b) a method and a philosophical worldview provide strengths that offset the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research.

In addition, Creswell (2007) suggest that the researcher might select for study several programs from several research sites or multiple programs within the single site. Creswell also noted that the researcher purposefully select multiple cases to show different perspectives on the issue. Triangulation is an essential process in the analysis of the study. Singleton and Straights (2010) noted that triangulation occurs when multiple methods are applied to the same setting. It is a mixed methods approach to testing hypothesis/questions that enhance the quality and confidence of the information and answers sought. Triangulation is the use of two or more dissimilar methods or measures, which do not share the same methodological weaknesses, errors or biases. When using one or more methods, the rate of confidence increases (p. 36).

My research methodology was also informed by Gardiner and Enomoto's (2007) research study (mentioned earlier in this paper) on multicultural leaders. The purpose was to identify the principal's role, assess their involvement and engagement as change agents for at risk youth, as well as identify multicultural leaders to serve the diverse population in their schools. Gardiner and Enomoto's study was particularly interesting because it involved the use of qualitative research with an emphasis on case study methodology. Interviews were conducted on site with the leaders and/or with their designee. Specifically, the case study design was utilized. Gardiner and Enomoto stressed the importance of initial fieldwork, observation, and collection of documents aimed at learning the social, political, historical, and cultural context of each school and community.

I used a mixed-method approach that included both quantitative and qualitative research. Specifically, a case study design addressed the problem through narrative, and leadership practices and strategies. The study included individuals affiliated with the sites under study. The school principals at the two school sites andtheir designee; and the three directors and their designee from the Liberty Partnerships Program (LPP), the Upward Bound Program (UBP) at the University site, and the Upward Bound Program (UBP) at the College site comprised the leadership component of the study. The student participants consisted of 200 individuals, 100 students each from Tru-Tech Academy and Prosperous High School. The total population of high school students in Grades 9-12 enrolled in the aforementioned schools/programs is roughly 1,000 students.

According to Singleton and Straits (2010), the absolute size of the sample dictates the degree of variability in the sample estimate because when the population is large, the proportion of the population sampled has little effect on precision. Other factors that could influence sample size include heterogeneity of the population, type of sampling design, and available resources. Consequently, I determined an appropriate number of 200 students from these schools/programs as the sample for this study. Based on a table developed by The Research Advisors (2006), the sample size is based on the desired precision (the total population), the confidence level, and the standard margin of error. The sample size of 200 students is sufficient with a confidence level of 95% and 5.0% margin of error. The sample (200) was divided between the two schools/programs. Each school provided a total of 100 students, 50 students involved in a dropout prevention program (Upward Bound, orLiberty Partnerships Programs) and 50 students not involved

in a dropout prevention program. This comprised the purposeful sampling process for

comparison to quantify and qualify the relationships of leadership strategies, school

retention and dropout prevention initiatives. Employing a questionnaire survey

instrument (See Appendix I) provided the quantifiable information regarding leadership

practices. Leadership styles and practices (Appendix K) can be "captured" and

documented thoroughly with a mixed-method approach (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

Summary/Conclusion

The issue of alarming and disproportionate numbers of minority students

dropping out of America's public school system, and the relationship to effective

leadership is complex. Diversity in urban schools has become the norm across this

country. Moreover, the increased number of students from low socio-economic

backgrounds enrolled in public schools has become the norm. Varied research assertions

such as: (a) the lack of teachers of color in urban classrooms as well as principals of color

in urban schools (Achinstein et al., 2010; Lyons & Chesley, 2004); (b) the act of

dropping out is a multifaceted process with direct links to disengagement from school

(Williams-Bost & Riccomini, 2006); (c) urban inner-city schools represent an

increasingly diverse student population with greater academic, economic, and social

needs (Cartledge & Kourea 2008); and (d) individuals who drop out of high school start

to flicker warning signals as early as first grade (Schargel et al., 2007), illustrates the

complexity of this issue. It is important as educational reform is prevalent in the United

States (No Child Left Behind Act and Race to the Top) that researchers continue to assess

whether School Leadership contributes to reduced dropout rates of students, and their

ability to stay in school.

Emerging trends reflected in the research literature of this study surrounding at-

risk youth dropping out of high school included:

1. early identification of student disengagement from school

2. continued absenteeism

3. poor academic performance, and

4. repeated grade failure.

In addition, these students are in need of individualized attention. They require

support from external sources beyond the traditional teacher classroom environment.

Moreover, the need is greater for increased parental/guardian support, and assistance

from dropout prevention programs, as well as community stakeholders. School personnel,

counselors, and administrators need to be educated about signs of mental health related

issues concerning young people. They need to know when to refer these students for

assessments. Similarly, school districts need to put interventions in place to identify

students who are either receiving mental health services, or on medication for mental

health behaviors. The issue of mental health continues to be "taboo" among minority

families, particularly, about divulging that type of information to others. Ziomek-Daigle

(2010) called the aforementioned a "multisystematic process". This process is critical for

utilizing a "holistic approach" or "wrap around approach" to the delivery of success for

preventing at risk students from dropping out of school.

Today, teachers report that they are struggling with student disrespect and behaviors, which impede their ability to effectively teach. The lack of parental involvement is also a concern. Research has shown that strong, involved parental support has a positive effect in student academic success and ultimate high school graduation completion. The research showed that Black males are disproportionally placed in special education classes at higher rates than their white counterparts. They also have higher suspension rates than any other ethnic group. Schools are being scrutinized more due to the increased failure of minority students not meeting minimum benchmark criteria determined by New York State Department of Education. In addition, schools are graded for their accountability for student academic outcomes, and graduation rates via the New York State Report Card. The Report Card reflects student test scores, which measures student learning, and in turn marks the effectiveness of the school's success. The research showed that there are other indicators for measuring school success. At the high school level, school effectiveness can be measured via two related indicators: dropout rates, (which indicate the percentage of students who quit school before completion), and graduation rates, (which indicate the percentage of students who remain in school and earn a high school diploma) (Leithwood, Patten, & Jantzi, 2010).

The need is great for strong leaders in urban schools who understand the complex lives of all students, particularly minority students and families. Leaders are critical in these areas who recognize and understand the cultural differences of students. It is important to train and support school personnel in their roles. Leaders need to develop collaborations and partnerships with parents, community stakeholders, and social service

agencies. Despite the fact that principals are in authoritarian roles, they cannot do it alone. They need to realize the importance of sharing leadership. This is a process of developing others (teachers, parents, school. and program staff) to become leaders in efforts to support their role. Senge asserts that shared leadership in a learning environment is essential for success in school environments. Many scholars supports the notion that leaders are the central key to organizational success, and "top down management" is no longer effective. The 21 leadership responsibilities that Waters et al. identified are significantly associated with student achievement. This was a result from their 30 years of empirical assessment of research in the area of school leadership and student behaviors. As noted in the literature review, race continues to play a factor in urban school environments. Teacher expectations of inner city youth seem to underscore their perceptions of inferiority. However, this agreement is not true with the majority of teachers and staff in the school system. Consequently,culturally competent leaders and teachers are considered more successful in engaging students and parents than non-culturally competent professionals. The lack of financial resources directed to urban school districts plays a role in delivering quality services in urban school districts. Although, there continues to be debate in the research community whether school resources contributes to school effectiveness. School resources consist of both fiscal resources and the material resources they can provide such as teachers, and textbooks (Rumberger & Palardy, 2005). In addition, the research shows that low performing urban schools are generally staffed by teachers who are less experienced then their suburban counterparts. Thus, the teacher turnover rates are high as 40 percent in some cases. This

process can provide a temporary burden on the principal as he/she will need to train and acquaint new teachers to the school culture. This is also an area where colleges and universities can be proactive in their administrative and training focus with new college graduates. The infusion of cultural competency, leadership development, and case studies are beneficial in the curriculum. The process could better equip teachers in their preparation for working with at risk youth and lead successfully in complex school environments. Currently, special education teachers obtain some of the aforementioned competencies in their curriculum training and development. However, all teachers need similar competency training & development due to the increased diversity, and the complex nature of the student population.

Finally, Latta (2009) acknowledged the fact that change is in the heart of leadership. Leaders need to review the entire landscape to effect change. Gilley et al. (2009) cited Drucker (1999) postulating that the behaviors of organizational leaders directly influence actions in the work environment that enable change. Bringing about the sorts of change needed in the creation of learning organizations is enormously challenging work and requires real leadership (Senge, 2006). Dropping out of school has tremendous repercussions on a personal level, economic level, and national level. Student voices and their involvement are critical to social and educational reform. Student socialization is as equally important as academic rigor. In many instances, the Castle public school buildings are closed by 3:30 pm (a minimal number of schools are open to 4:30 pm for tutoring). The doors of these school buildings should be open on a regular basis at least until 7:30 pm. They should be accessible to students and families with

structured activities (music, tutorials, arts, etc.). Policy makers must be involved to learn

and understand the importance for "increased student and family engagement" that could

ultimately result in reduced school dropout rates. For example, in a recent Castlenews

article, the "Say Yes to Education" group announced that it will offer a college tuition

guarantee for graduates of traditional public and charter schools in the city starting in

June, 2013. The CastlePromise Scholarship is proposed to provide a strong incentive for

high school seniors upon graduation. This incentive will combat a dismal 54%

graduation rate among its senior class. "Say Yes to Education" will target one geographic

area of Castle, which is a low socio-economic area. They plan to help implement an

approach designed to reverse years of dysfunction and neglect in a struggling urban

school district. The CastlePromise Scholarship is modeled after the Harlem Children's

Zone in New York City. It was earmarked to change the way the schools are governed,

scrutinizing how effectively money is spent, and expanding the services offered to

children. In order to change a defunct educational system, the leader cannot lead in a

"status quo" systematic way. The leader must assess the current environment. They must

communicate to his/her subordinates. They need to rally support from colleagues,

parents, and community stakeholders to highlight the realities of dropout rates in urban

schools in America.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

Leadership practices developed to promote retention and, in turn, reduce high

school dropout rates have yet to be realized within the northeastern city of Castle, New

York. Tru-Tech and Prosperous High School are the focus of this research. These

schools serve a diverse student body in Grades 5-12 and 9-12, respectively. The structure

of urban schools with predominantly Black populations often does not provide an

atmosphere that is conducive to leadership practices that include commitment to students,

compassion for students and their families, and confidence in students' abilities (Tillman,

2008, p. 597). Thus, after conducting an extensive and exhaustive research review of

possible survey instruments to use in this study and finding none that was appropriate, I

determined that I needed to develop instruments specifically for this study. I designed

the student survey and the leadership survey questionnaires based on the research

literature review and the research questions for this study. I was not measuring school

climate specifically or school leadership specifically. Rather, I sought to explore effective

leadership profiles and strategies that promote reduced high school dropout, factors

contributing to high school dropout among the at-risk population, and how dropout

prevention programs and their leaders influence dropout rates. Related factors include

high school dropout; increased student diversity and poverty, lack of leadership in urban

schools, issues of pedagogy, more rigorous graduation requirements (state mandates), and

behavioral, special education, and mental health issues among this population. The study

used a mixed-method model—specifically, the case study and quantitative survey

approach. The case study design was a viable choice because it could address the

problem through narrative and place focus on leadership practices and strategies

(Appendix K). A questionnaire survey instrument (Appendix I) provided quantifiable

information regarding leadership practices. Leadership styles and practices can be

"captured" and documented thoroughly with a mixed-method approach (Creswell &

Plano Clark, 2007). Specifically, I sought to capture the perceptions of leaders and

identify difficulties in guiding subordinates, assessing mindsets, and providing the

necessary tools (referral sources, contacts and information, etc.) to be effective. Creswell

and Plano Clark (2007) asserted that (a) the mixed method approach provides a better

understanding of research problems than either approach alone and (b) a method and a

philosophical worldview provide strengths that offset the weaknesses of both quantitative

and qualitative research.

I used a leader survey questionnaire (Appendix I), interview questions for leaders

(Appendix K), school websites, and archival data (graduation/dropout data via NYS

report card on Buffalo schools) to ascertain leadership styles. The study explored specific

leadership practices in the school buildings. Leadership practices included: (a) how

leaders interact with their peers and subordinate staff; (b) how leaders identify potential

dropouts and how preventative methods are developed; (c) strategies to promote

community involvement; (d) strategies to promote stakeholder involvement; and (e)

strategies to promote parent involvement. As noted, I reviewed graduation data from the

New York State Education Department's report on the participating schools. I also

reviewed intervention strategies in place for students identified as at risk of dropping out

of high school, i.e., dropout prevention programs. This process determined whether a

relationship exists between reduced high school dropout rates and effective leadership

practices.

Design of the Study

A mixed-method model was used in the study and incorporated both a

quantitative and qualitative component. Specifically, the study consisted of a quantitative

survey questionnaire (Appendix J), which was used with the target population of

predominantly African American students ages 13-20 to identify (a) why they stay in

school; (b) who/what influences them to stay; and (c) their awareness of the importance

of completing high school. In addition, a survey questionnaire (Appendix I)

(quantitative) was used with the leaders to identify (a) their strategy for dropout

prevention of at-risk students, (b) their involvement with parents, and (c) how the

leadership communicates reduced dropout goals to faculty and staff who work with the

at-risk student population. Case study research and interviews (Appendix K) with

selected leaders comprised the qualitative part of the study. The case study included

discussions with leaders (two principals) in school buildings and directors (three

directors) of precollege programs who had retained at-risk students in their

schools/programs.

Through the use of purposive sampling, I drew a sample from the population

enrolled in the Liberty Partnerships Program and the Upward Bound Program, as well as

from Tru-Tech and Prosperous High School located within the Castle Public School

District. The total population of high school students in Grades 9-12 enrolled in the

aforementioned schools/programs was roughly 1,000. According to Singleton and Straits (2010), the absolute size of the sample dictates the degree of variability in the sample estimate because when the population is large, the proportion of the population sampled has little effect on precision (p. 181). Other factors that could influence sample size include heterogeneity of the population, type of sampling design, and available resources. Consequently, I determined an appropriate number of 200 students from these schools/programs as the sample for this study.

According to the Research Advisors (2006), the sample size is based on the desired precision (the total population), the confidence level, and the standard margin of error. The sample size of 200 students is sufficient with a confidence level of 95% with a 5.0% margin of error. The sample (200 was divided between the two schools/programs. For example, 100 students from Tru-Tech Academy (50 students who were involved in a dropout prevention program and 50 students not involved in a dropout prevention program) completed a questionnaire designed specifically for this study. Similarly, 100 students from Prosperous High School (50 students who were involved in a dropout prevention program and 50 students not involved in a dropout prevention program) completed a questionnaire designed specifically for this study. This process was part of the quantitative portion of the study.

I identified leaders of Tru-Tech Academy and Prosperous High School —two principals and two assistant principals, as well as Liberty Partnerships and Upward Bound Program—three program directors, for a total of seven leaders, as a means to both quantify and qualify successful leadership attributes. I used the collective or multiple case

study method. This process allows the researcher to focus on one issue or concern, using case studies to illustrate the behavior (Creswell, 2007).

Permission to conduct the study and participation was obtained from school and program personnel.

Instrumentation

As noted earlier, after an extensive and exhaustive search to identify survey questionnaires that could be used in my study, I decided to design the instruments based on the literature review and the research questions. I designed two instruments specifically for the study. The first questionnaire (Appendix I) requested the leaders to identify their "best leadership practices" for effectiveness and for "cascading" those practices to subordinate staff. The emphasis was on (a) a high percentage or disproportionate number of minority students dropping out of high school; (b) evidence-based practices and interventions to minimize suspensions ("pushing students out"); (c) identifying struggling students "at risk" of dropping out of high school, and (d) the impact of the involvement of parents (transferring learning environments to the home), community stakeholders, and the superintendent and board of education officials in students' decisions regarding whether to drop out. The second questionnaire (Appendix J) was designed to request information from the student participants about why they stayed in school; what role leadership and other staff played; participation in dropout prevention programs, if any; types of work-related activities; what extracurricular activities they were involved in, and what role their parents/guardians played in dropout prevention efforts. Prior to disseminating the questionnaires (to leaders and students), I

used appropriate protocols to conduct a pilot study, which tested my designed

instruments for both validity and reliability.

Population and Sample

The study included individuals affiliated with the sites in this study. The two

school principals at the school sites and/or his/her designees (two assistant principals);

and the three directors and/or his/her designees from the Liberty Partnerships Program

(LPP) and the Upward Bound Programs (UBP) at the University site (a total of seven

leaders) will comprised the leadership component of the study. They were asked to

participate. I used a survey questionnaire (Appendix I) (quantitative) for the leaders to

identify: (a) their strategy for retaining at risk students; (b) their involvement with

parents; and (c) how the leadership communicates retention goals to faculty and staff

who work with the at risk student population. Case study research and interviews

(Appendix K) with selected leaders comprised the qualitative part of the study. The case

study included discussions with leaders in school buildings and directors of dropout

prevention programs (two principals, three program directors-a total of five leaders) who

have contributed to reduced dropout rates of at risk students in their schools/programs.

The student participant sample consisted of a total of 200 individuals, 100 students each

from Tru-Tech Academy and Prosperous High School. Each school will provide 50

students who are involved in an Upward Bound Program or Liberty Partnerships Program

and 50 students who are not involved in the Upward Bound or Liberty Partnerships

Programs.

Sampling Technique

The school principals at the school sites and/or his/her designees (a total of four leaders-two principals, two assistant principals); and the directors and/or his/her designees (three leaders) from the Liberty Partnerships Program (LPP), and the two Upward Bound Programs (UBP) at the University at Castle site as well as from the Castle State College campus site comprise the leadership component of the study, and were ~~will be~~ asked to participate. The use of purposive sampling drew a sample from the student population enrolled in the aforementioned pre-college programs, as well as from Tru-Tech Academy and Prosperous High School. Specifically, a quantitative survey questionnaire (Appendix J) was used with the target population ages 13-20 to: (a) identify why they stay in school; (b) who/what influences them to stay; and (c) assess their awareness of the importance for completing high school. There are roughly 1000 students in Grades 9-12 at both schools. As mentioned, the student participant sample consisted of ~~a total of~~ 200 individuals, 100 students each from Tru-Tech Academy and Prosperous High School . Each school provided 50 students who were involved in an Upward Bound Program or Liberty Partnerships Program, and 50 students who were not involved in an Upward Bound or Liberty Partnerships Program. This comprised the purposeful sampling process for comparison to quantify and qualify the relationships of leadership practices and strategies, and dropout prevention initiatives.

The following Table 1 depicted the data collection procedure for this study. It summarizes the fact that I will be the only researcher to collect all data for the study.

Table 1

Data Collection Procedure

Leaders complete questionnaire	Procedures to collect data			
	An examination of the data from the case studies (inclusion of two principals and three program directors, for a total of five leaders)			
Interviews with administrators & leaders from school-based sites and University based sites (face-to-face, e-mail, telephone, text messages)	I will keep journal during the study	Archival (review school report card regarding graduation/dropout rates of participating schools via NYS Edu Department)		review school web sites
interviews will be transcribed verbatim with accuracy, and field notes will be written	Web site information and brochures obtained from pre-college/dropout prevention programs (LPP & Upward Bound)	Obtain/review school mission		Purposeful student sample complete questionnaire (50 students enrolled in dropout prevention program and 50 students not enrolled in dropout prevention program at each of the two schools)
An examination of completed questionnaires (two principals, two assistant principals, three directors-for a total of seven leaders)				
audio record interviews	Review school based documents		Archival (analyze public documents & newspaper articles relating to Buffalo schools)	Students not enrolled in dropout prevention prog. complete questionnaire (total of 100)

The goal is to identify the principal's role, involvement, and their engagement as change agent for at risk youth. It also assessed their role as multicultural leaders that serve the diverse population in their schools. Interviews were conducted on site with the leaders. Creswell (2010) indicate that the analysis of data uses multiple levels of abstraction. The codes and themes were combined into larger themes or perspectives, or layer analysis from the particular to the general. The analysis of themes is critical for understanding the complexity of the case.

Pilot Study

I tested the instruments with a small group (three leaders, three students) of individuals who had characteristics similar to the target population prior to using them in the field. This seemed to be an appropriate number for the pilot study. My instruments were reviewed by an outside expert panel (outside of Walden) who found the instruments appropriate for this study. The expert panel consisted of two individuals with PhDs, one is the director of research education at the University at Castle , and the other is an English professor and coordinator of teacher Education at Castle State College, as well as an individual with a master's degree in Education, who holds a certification in principal leadership who worked in an administrative role with the Castle School District. The purpose of the pilot was to confirm whether the materials were understandable and appropriate for my study. According to Singleton and Straights (2010), the aforementioned process generally provide evidenced based procedures for validity and realiability purposes. Both leaders and student participants described in the study tested the leader survey questionnaire (Appendix M & I), and individuals who had similar

characteristics of the students described in the study tested the student survey

questionnaire (Appendix J, I & N).

Validity and Reliability

As noted earlier, the instruments developed for the study were pre-tested by

individuals who had similar characteristics as those identified in the actual study. This

process allowed for any refinements necessary to the instruments (Appendices I & J)

prior to distributing it to the participants (leaders and students) at the research sites.

Triangulation

Triangulation - was an essential process in the analysis of the study. Singleton and

Straights (2010) noted that triangulation occurs when multiple methods are applied to the

same setting. It is a mixed methods approach to testing hypothesis/questions that

enhances the quality and confidence of the information and answers sought.

Triangulation is the use of two or more dissimilar methods or measures, which do not

share the same methodological weaknesses, errors or biases. When using one or more

methods, the rate of confidence increases (p. 36). All participants were informed that

confidentiality would be upheld throughout the study. Completed questionnaires were

held in a locked safe cabinet, which is in compliance with Walden's IRB guidelines and

ethical standards. Creswell (2007) believe that innovation to data collection procedures

allows the reader and editor to be curious and engaged in examining the researcher's

study.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed for gaps, emerging trends, themes, and relationships between leadership practices, reduced dropout rates, and dropout intervention practices. The overarching questions for this mixed-model research study are as follows:

1. What influences young people to stay in school?

   Type of data collection:

   - Students completed a survey questionnaire (Appendix J) designed for this study with specific questions about why they attend school, who/what influences them in or out of school, and knowledge of parental involvement. I collected completed surveys from the participants over a course of approximately 30 days. Surveys were collected upon completion, and the participants were given a $2 gift card as a thank you for participating. The surveys were analyzed and grouped (students involved in dropout prevention program and students not involved in dropout prevention program) to assess emerging themes and trends.

2. What is the relationship between school leadership and reduced school dropout rates?

   Type of data collection:

   - Interviews with leaders (Appendix K) (two principals, and three program directors of dropout prevention programs for a total of five leaders)

   - Leaders completed a survey questionnaire (two principals, two assistant principals and three program directors-Appendix I) specific to this study.

The Research Sub-questions for this mixed-method research study are as follows:

3. What are the leadership "practices" in Tru-Tech Academy (pseudonym), and Prosperous High School (pseudonym) that are "beating the odds" for reduced dropout rates and graduating disproportionate minority students from high school?

 Type of data collection:

 - Interviews with leaders (Appendix K) (two principals of identified participating schools and three program directors in this study)

 - Assessment of leader case study data (two principals, three program directors)

 - Analyze completed survey questionnaires (Appendix I)-(two principals, two assistant principals & three program directors)

4. How do the leadership practices of the Tru-Tech Academy, and Prosperous High School compare and contrast with one another?

 Type of data collection:

 - Archival (review graduation/dropout data from New York State Education's report card regarding Castle Public Schools

 - Interviews with identified principals (Appendix K)

 - Review of completed survey questionnaires by the leaders (Appendix I)

5. What are the leadership "practices" in Pre-College Programs (Liberty Partnerships and Upward Bound Programs) that are "beating the odds" and

influencing minority students (Liberty Partnerships & Upward Bound

Programs are involved in both schools) to stay in school?

Type of data collection:

- Interviews with precollege program directors (Appendix K)

- Archival (obtain graduation/dropout data from program and compare it to New York State report card data on selected high schools identified in this study

- Analyze questionnaire survey completed by three program directors (Appendix I)

Creswell (2007) posits that analyzing data be performed through the description of the case, themes that arise as well as cross-case themes. A coding system should be devised for the process. The researcher might focus on a few key issues (or analysis of themes), not for generalizing beyond the case, but for understanding the complexity of the case (p. 75). In other words, Creswell believed that the best strategy was to identify issues within the cases and focus on themes.

According to Singleton and Straits (2010),

Objectivity or "observation free from emotions, conjecture or personal bias" in qualitative research is rarely possible. This is because the life experiences of the researcher come into play as he/she interprets the observations made during the study. Although the life experiences of the researcher come into play in quantitative research, the use of standardized numerical methods allows for greater objectivity. (p. 36)

Creswell (2007) posits that "the researcher's interpretations cannot be separated from their own background, history, context, and prior understandings" (p. 39). Thus, it is more difficult to "keep a focus on learning the meaning that participants hold about the problem or issue, not the meaning that the researchers bring to the research or writers from the literature" (p. 39).

For these reasons, I was aware of how bias could interfere with data interpretation. I took a proactive approach and an objective stance to minimize any bias. The aforementioned process did-not pose a problem. The focus was on the themes that arose from the study.

Ethical Considerations

Participants were informed that my proposal was approved by Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), which consists of staff and faculty members from each of Walden's major research areas who are responsible for ensuring that Walden University research complies with the university's ethical standards as well as U.S. federal regulations and any applicable international guidelines. IRB approval indicates that the institution's official assessment of potential risks of the study are outweighed by the potential benefits. Further, that all doctoral candidates submit an IRB application prior to going out into the field for the purpose to collect enough specific information to document that the study's benefits outweigh the costs. In addition, to verify that the procedures are in compliance with federal regulations and university policies. To those ends, the board evaluated my IRB application based on how well the following ethical principles were upheld:

- Beneficence = maximize possible benefits and minimize possible harms

- Justice = fairly distribute benefits and burdens of research

- Respect for Persons = acknowledge participants' autonomy and protect those with diminished autonomy (IRB@waldenu.edu)

I described the purpose of the study, and the benefits of the study to the participants so they could obtain a true picture of the research project. Both the purpose of the study and the benefits of the study was delineated in the assent/consent forms for further detail of the study. The participants were informed that confidentiality of their responses were upheld to the fullest. As mentioned, this process was performed both verbally as well as infused in written form via the consent form for participation. I protected the anonymity of the participants by either using a number or pseudo name assignment on completed surveys and/or questionnaire instruments (Creswell, 2007). Creswell recommends that during case study development that the researcher develop a composite picture of the leader, rather than an individual picture (p. 141). I was consistently clear with participants throughout the study to avoid any deceptive issues.

Summary

A mixed-method model was used in this study. The collective or multiple case study method was used to identify aspects of effective leadership practices and strategies. A myriad of different perspectives were reviewed that supported: (a) Senge (1990, 2006) systems thinking and learning organizations for helping organizations develop new vision(s) for change; (b) Marzano et al. (2005) focus on 21 leadership responsibilities that could impact student achievement; and (c) Schargel et al. (2007)

informed leadership as a critical factor in ensuring the success of dropout prevention

efforts. The overall importance of this study was to identify leadership practices

associated with reduced dropout rates. One of the methodological limitations in this

study was the value and validity of the questionnaire instruments (quantitative portion of

the study) and method to collect data. Given the latter, I developed the instruments

(Appendices I, J & K) for this study. I assured that the types of questions posed to the

respondents were clear, precise, and meaningful. A "pilot study" of the questionnaires

was used with a focus group prior to utilizing it in the field. It included individuals with

similar characteristics of both the leaders and the student population in this study. This

process addressed the validity and reliability protocol of the instruments, and determined

whether the materials were appropriate. Another methodological limitation included my

bias and objectivity in the interpretation of data. As mentioned earlier, I did not find this

to be a problem.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This mixed-methods research study explored the linkages between leaders (principals of school buildings and directors of dropout prevention and precollege programs) and followers and their respective successes in the area of reduced high school dropout of at-risk youth. In 2010, Castle City School District experienced a 47% graduation rate among its senior class. Thus, leadership practices developed to promote retention and, in turn, reduce high school dropout rates have yet to be realized within a northeastern city in New York. The purpose of this research was to build upon the current literature by empirically testing the linkages between leaders and followers and their respective successes in reduced high school dropout efforts. Moreover, this research study assessed the dropout prevention efforts and their effectiveness in two urban schools. The overall importance of this study was in identifying leadership practices associated with reduced dropout rates. I described how school leaders and directors of dropout prevention programs strategize ways to retain at-risk students in school. Moreover, three precollege/dropout prevention programs associated with the two participating schools in this study were assessed in their effort to reduce high school dropout among this population (Liberty Partnerships & the Upward Bound Program, located at the University at Castle and Castle State College, respectively). The study explored the link between effective leadership and students staying in school, and whether urban public schools can be effective with the right leadership. Thus, the following research questions directed this mixed-method study.

Research Questions

The overarching questions for this mixed-model research study were as follows:

- What influences young people to stay in school?

- What is the relationship between school leadership and reduced high school dropout rates?

Research Subquestions

- What are the leadership "practices" in Tru-Tech Academy and Prosperous High School that are "beating the odds" for reduced dropout and graduating disproportionate minority students from high school?

- How do the leadership practices of Tru-Tech Academy and Prosperous High School compare and contrast with one another?

- What are the leadership "practices" in precollege/dropout prevention programs (Liberty Partnerships, Upward Bound) that are "beating the odds" and influencing minority students (Liberty Partnerships & Upward Bound programs are involved in both schools) to stay in school?

In this chapter, the overall results of this study are described, including the results of the pilot study. Moreover, the setting, the participant demographics, and the data collection process are highlighted. Also, the results specific to the research questions for this study are described in detail. Lastly, specific strategies that were used to improve the credibility, transferability, and dependability of this study provide evidence of the trustworthiness of this study.

Pilot Study

After I received IRB Approval #03-10-14-0047017 to begin data collection,

a pilot study was conducted prior to using the instruments in the field. The instruments

(Appendices I, J, M, & N) designed for this study were tested with a small group of

individuals (three leaders, three students) who had characteristics similar to those of the

target population in this study. Moreover, the instruments were reviewed by an outside

expert panel (outside of Walden) who found that the instruments were appropriate for this

study. The expert panel consisted of three individuals: two with PhDs—a director of

research education at the University at Castle) and an English professor and coordinator

of teacher education at Castle State College—and an individual with a master's degree in

Education and a certification in principal leadership who worked in an administrative role

with the Castle School District. The participants consisted of individuals with whom I

was familiar professionally, and the student referrals were from professionals in the field.

Thus, three leaders were asked to participate in the pilot study. After talking with each

individual leader over the telephone and securing agreement to participate in the pilot

study, I emailed the leader consent form and leader questionnaire (Appendix I & M) to

the participants. All leader survey questionnaires and consent forms were returned within

1 week. Moreover, I introduced the study to a purposeful sampling of student participants

at one of the participating schools. Parent consent forms were sent to the participants'

homes with a stamped, addressed return envelope. The student participants signed the

assent form, completed the student survey questionnaire (I, J, & N), and were given a $2

gift certificate upon completion. The purpose of the pilot was to confirm whether the

materials were understandable and appropriate for this study. According to Singleton and Straights (2010), the aforementioned processes generally provide evidence-based procedures for validity and reliability purposes. Both leaders and student participants described in the study tested the leader survey questionnaire (Appendix I & M), and individuals who had characteristics similar to those of the students described in the study tested the student survey questionnaire (Appendices I, J, & N). The results of the pilot study indicated that it confirmed that the materials were understandable and appropriate for this study. The following tables (Table 2 & Table 3) depict the demographics of the participants and results of their participation in the pilot study.

Table 2

Pilot Study Participants—Leaders

Leaders	Gender	Position	# years	Familiarity with at-risk youth
		Leader participant demographics		
Leader 1	F	Administrator	5-8	Strongly agree
Leader 2	F	Director	4	Strongly agree
Leader 3	M	Administrator	20 or more	Strongly agree

Note. There were a total of three leader participants. As shown, participants were two administrators employed with the Castle School District and a director of an afterschool program within the school district. A theme that arose from the survey analysis was that all were familiar with at-risk youth and indicated their familiarity with the process of referring these students to the appropriate resource(s) if needed. Other interesting comments included the following: One of the three leaders "did not believe that his/her compensation was fair for the work," and one of the three leaders noted "a lack of support and accountability from upper management in a timely fashion" (i.e., superintendent and school board).

Table 3

Pilot Study Participants—Students

Students	Gender	Grade	Does leadership play a role in your high school career?	Participate in precollege/ dropout prevention program	Plan to finish high school?
Student 1	F	11	yes	no	Strongly agree
Student 2	M	10	yes	no	Strongly agree
Student 3	M	9	yes	no	Strongly agree

Note. There were a total of three student participants. As shown, student participants were similar in their perspectives on how leadership played a role in their relationship to finishing high school. Other comments revealed during the pilot study included "that standardized testing for the "common core" has an effect on students dropping out of school" and "there is a need for "life skills training in the schools."

Finally, none of the participants involved in the pilot study had any recommendations or omissions for any of the questions on the survey and reported that the material was appropriate for this study. Thus, the timing for completing the survey questionnaires were in line with the proposed projection completion time as noted earlier in this paper.

The Setting

The setting for this mixed method study was the Castle School District, located within a northeastern city in New York. It is the second largest school system in New York State. It is regarded as one of the premiere urban school districts in New York State. It is responsible for the education of approximately 34,000 students who are educated in 58 facilities. The student population is very diverse. Moreover, the poverty rate for the city's children under 18 increased from 45% in 2012 to 50.6 percent in 2013. Thus, some 29, 726 of the city's 58,722 children fewer than 18 live in poverty. These students attend one of 14 elementary schools, 12 Early Childhood centers, 18 Grade 3-8 academies, and/or 5-12 specialized schools, 9 academic high schools, 6 technical/vocational high schools, and 2 special schools (a total of 17 high schools).

In this study, I selected two high schools in the district. Both are among the majority of low performing schools in the district. Both are unique and similar in many ways. For example, Tru-Tech Academy School is located in the "Ward District" of the City of Castle. The student composition is more racially diverse than Prosperous High School. The student composition is: 70% Black, 18% White, 9% Hispanic, 1% Native American and 1% Asian. Prosperous High School is located in the "Albany District" of

the City of Castle. The student composition is 91% Black, 5% Hispanic, 3% White, and 1% Asian.

As mentioned earlier in this paper, two urban high schools were selected to participate in this study. In addition, the University of Castle and Tru-Tech Academy College are home to the pre-college and dropout prevention programs, and were utilized for interviews with the program directors. Thusboth qualitative and quantitative phases of the study were also conducted, i.e. directors and Castle school district students enrolled in their programs (after-school, on-site at the campus) who also attended one of the participating schools completed survey questionnaires.

Participant Demographics

The participants in the qualitative phase of this study included two high school principals from the Castle school district, and three directors of precollege/dropout prevention programs (Liberty Partnerships, & Upward Bound Programs) from the college/university campuses. They were asked to participate in the case study portion of this study. Also, the two assistant principals at the participating schools were asked to participate in the quantitative component by completing the leadership questionnaire survey only, along with the aforementioned leaders. In this study, the use of purposive sampling drew a sample from the student population enrolled in the aforementioned pre-college/dropout prevention programs, as well as from the two participating high schools: Tru- Tech Academy School and Prosperous High School located within the Castle Public School District. Specifically, a quantitative survey questionnaire (Appendix J) was administered with the target population of students ages 13-20 to (a) identify why they

stay in school; (b) who/what influenced them to stay; and (c) their awareness of the

importance for completing high school. There are roughly 1000 students in Grades 9-12

at both schools.

According to Singleton and Straits (2010) the absolute size of the sample dictates

the degree of variability in the sample estimate because when the population is large, the

proportion of the population sampled has little effect on precision (p. 181). Other factors

that could influence sample size include heterogeneity of the population, type of

sampling design, and available resources. It was determined that 200 students from these

schools/programs was an appropriate number as a sample for this study. According to

The Research Advisors (2006), the sample size is based on the desired precision (the total

population), the confidence level, and the standard margin of error. The projected sample

size of 200 students was sufficient with a confidence level of 95% with a 5.0% margin of

error. Thus, the student participant sample for this study was projected at 200

individuals, 100 students each from Tru- Tech Academy, and Prosperous High School. I

obtained completed surveys from students at each school who were involved in dropout

prevention/precollege programs and some who were not involved in any dropout

prevention/precollege program. Specifically, there were a total of 195 (110 participants

involved in dropout prevention/precollege programs, and 85 participants not involved in

dropout prevention/precollege programs) who completed student surveys, 107 (70 student

participants involved in dropout prevention/precollege program; 37 student participants

not involved in dropout prevention/precollege program) total surveys obtained from Tru-

Tech Academy School , and 88 (40 student participants involved in dropout

prevention/precollege program; 48 student participants not involved in dropout

prevention/precollege program) total surveys obtained from Prosperous High School.

Thus, Table 4 comprised of the purposeful sampling phase for comparison to quantify

and qualify the relationships of leadership practices and strategies, and dropout

prevention initiatives.

Table 4

Purposeful Student Sampling Phase

	A total of 195 Surveys Obtained	
	Students involved in dropout prevention programs	Students not involved in dropout prevention programs
Tru-Tech Academy (pseudonym)	70	37
Properous High School (pseudonym)	40	48

Data Collection

Between March and July, 2014, two sets of data were collected. I began collecting

the qualitative data by beginning individual interviews with the leaders in March after

receiving IRB approval. I began setting up interviews face to face with the leaders (three

principals and three directors) during the month of March, as their signatures had to be

obtained on a revised letter of cooperation from a community partner as part of the IRB

finalization. During that time, a brief review of the study was presented to the individual

leaders. I provided each of them with the leader questionnaire survey to complete. They

were told that the completed survey would be retrieved on the day of their actual

scheduled interview. At that same time, a discussion of the logistics for sampling students

that would be involved in the study, as well as providing the assent/consent forms for both students and parents to review and sign (Appendices F & G). During that meeting, the principal proposed opportunities to complete the study and identified available rooms/space for privacy in the building for interviews with principals. The leaders were informed that a pseudonym would be assigned to both schools and participants. This would ensure anonymity and protect the confidentiality of participants. Participant names and contact information was not recorded in the research records. Instead, code names were given to participants and were the only identifiers for research purposes.

The first interview was conducted in March, 2014, as all of the five interviews were completed by the end of July, 2014. I also provided either a text reminder or email message to the leader participant prior to his/her scheduled interview (up to 60 minutes) as a reminder of the interview, and to complete the leader questionnaire survey given to them (up to 10 minutes to complete). Lastly, none of the leader participants had access to the interview protocol questions (Appendix K) prior to their actual interview. Moreover, on the day of the scheduled interview with the leader, I reiterated the purpose of this study, the interview process, and the confidentiality guidelines were outlined. I also explained that the interview would be audio recorded, using a digital audio recorder to ensure accurate data collection. Once the participants agreed and felt comfortable with the interview protocols, the interview began. Each participant was asked to respond to 14 open-ended questions. After the completion of the interviews, I thanked the participants for participating in this study. As mentioned earlier, the completed leader survey (Appendix I) was collected at the time of the scheduled interview.

Despite the fact that the principals of the school buildings have the authority to authorize research in their facilities, the Castle School District also have protocol in place for students who will be conducting research either at the Master's or Doctoral level in the district that must be followed. Thus, I submitted a proposal request to conduct research in the district. The required process included an application with my personal data, along with a 20 page proposal about my research, as well as a copy of the feedback information sent to Walden University's IRB board, and the IRB approval number. Moreover, I had an opportunity to personally talk with the Castle school district superintendent in the interim (after the submitted proposal) who verbally told me that my research was quite interesting and did not foresee any problems. She also indicated that she would call her staff person in charge of the School District's Office of Research Accountability to follow up. Thus, I received the approval from the school district (Appendix O) to conduct research shortly thereafter (two weeks) from that office in mid-April, 2014. Moreover, I continued setting up individual interviews with the leaders until the official approval was granted by the school district. Lastly, I retrieved each school's report card data. This is archival data that was retrieved from the New York State Department of Education's web site. It reflected the school status in terms of graduation rates and dropout data for the 2012-13 school year. This archival data enhanced my study in terms of validity, reliability, and trustworthiness of data and findings by using the methods of triangulation. In addition, I met with groups of students on the college campus enrolled in either Liberty Partnerships or the Upward Bound Programs to introduce my study. The presentation included an overview of the study, the significance

of the study, the types of questions that would be asked, how much time it would take to complete the questionnaire (maximum of 20 minutes), potential risks, and the benefits of their contribution to the research. Students were given a copy of the assent form to read along with me as I introduced the study and the instructions for completing the survey. They were also given an opportunity to sign the assent form upon their decision to participate. Moreover, all participants in the room were provided with an opportunity to participate, opt out, and/or an opportunity to think about his/her participation in the study. Students did not have to decide at that time whether or not they wanted to participate. During this phase, there were no students who indicated that they did not want to participate in this study. Each participant was given a $2 gift card upon completion of the survey. Moreover, parent consent forms were sent to the homes of participating students. A self-addressed stamped envelope was provided to the precollege/dropout prevention program for each parent to return the signed parent consent form to the precollege/dropout program associated with individual students. Moreover, I went into each participating school on three separate days during three study hall periods each to introduce this study. As mentioned earlier, the study was introduced to a purposeful sample of students. All students in the study hall were asked to participate as no students were eliminated from participating. As mentioned, they were given a $2 gift card upon completion of the survey. Again, parent consent forms were sent to the homes of participating students. Thus, as noted earlier, a total of 195 student surveys were collected from the participating schools and dropout prevention programs (107 from Tru Tech Academy, and 88 from Prosperous High School .

Analysis of Interview Data

The interview analysis began by transcribing each interview verbatim with accuracy from the individual recorded interview sessions. Moreover, I referred to Charmaz (2006) who indicated that line-by-line coding is essential for written data. In addition, fresh data and line-by-line coding prompts you to remain open to the data and to see nuances in it. Charmaz indicates that when you code early in-depth interview data, you gain a close look at what participants say and, likely struggle with (p. 50).

A series of interview questions were asked during the case study interview. For example, interview question #1: How many years have you worked as a school administrator or program director (precollege/dropout prevention program) ? Participants were asked to respond to this interview question because it was important to consider the expertise and experiences of the leader participants in working with at-risk students**.** It was also a relevant question since the leaders would know what resources were available for referral for this population. Lastly, because of their expertise and knowledge, the leaders would be instrumental in assisting teachers and other school personnel in recognizing behaviors and patterns of struggling students and how to assist the at-risk youth. Table 5 described the principal leader participants in relation to school association, and program director leader participants association of where they worked and the number of years in leadership. Lastly, I included the responses that emerged from the analysis of leader participant responses to Interview Question 1: How many years have you worked as a school administrator or program director (dropout prevention/pre-college program). The responses are described in the following Table 5.

Table 5

Leader Demographics for Participating Schools and Dropout Prevention Programs

Name of Participant	Name of School/Program	Position	Years of Experience in Leadership
Jane	Principal at Tru-Tech Academy	African American	14
Matt	Principal at Prosperous High School	Caucasian	20
Sharon	Ass't Principal Tru-Tech Academy	Caucasian	20
Becca	Ass't Principal Prosperous High School	Caucasian	1
Ryan	Director of Liberty Partnerships	African American	7
Morgan	Director of Upward Bound-University at Castle	African American	22
Jerome	Director of Upward Bound Castle State College	African American	15

As Table 5 indicates, these leaders have worked in school/dropout prevention programs ranging from 1 year to 22 years. In relation to school leadership, the principals and assistant principals had a combined total of 55 years of experience. Both principals indicated that they were assistant principals prior to becoming principals of a school. For example, Jane indicated that she has been the principal at her existing school for 3 years; and Matt indicated that he has been the principal at his existing school for 4 years. Matt ~~and~~ also has a a doctorate degree from Walden University. Sharon has been the assistant principal of Tru-Tech Academy for 4 years, and has had leadership experiences in roles similar at other schools for a total of 20 years in leadership. She has a doctorate degree. Lastly, Becca, the assistant principal of Prosperous High School indicated that she has

been in leadership for a short time of 1 year. Sharon and Becca were asked to participate in the quantitative phase of this study only by completing the leader survey questionnaire. This will be described in detail in the quantitative section of this study. They did not participate in the case study component of this study. Moreover, the three directors are housed on college campuses (Ryan and Morgan are located at the University at Castle, and Jerome at Castle State College. They have a total of 42 years of combined leadership experience in the area of dropout prevention/precollege programs.

Thus, I categorized the interviews according to leader type, i.e. principal, director, and associated each survey question to each specific research question specific to leader type. For example, the following research questions were specific to the building principals of the participating schools in this study:

Research question #2: What is the relationship between school leadership and reduced high school dropout rates?

Research question #3: What are the leadership "practices" in Tru-Tech Academy, and Prosperous High School that are "beating the odds" for reduced dropout and graduating disproportionate minority students from high school?

Research question #4: How do the leadership practices of Tru-Tech Academy and Prosperous High School compare and contrast with one another?

The following research questions were specific to the principals of the participating schools during the case study interview phase in this study:

Research question#2: What is the relationship between school leadership and reduced high school dropout rates?

Leader 1—Jane, Principal at Tru-Tech Academy (Pseudonym)

Interview question #1: How long have you been an administrator or program

director? "I have been in school leadership since 2004, leading now into my 10th year

as a school leader. This is my third year as school principal in this building. Prior to that,

I was an assistant principal. Our school comprises of a diverse student population, which

includes: 75% African American; 15% Caucasian; and 10% other, i.e. Hispanic, Native

American, and Asian. Overall, 80% of our students are eligible for free and/or reduced

lunch program. Overall, the student population is African American. The school meets

magnet criteria, meaning that there are some special circumstances for entry such as an

audition. It is a specialized school for the arts."

Interview question #2: What is your leadership style? "I consider myself a

collaborative leader. I think it is important to obtain input from all stakeholders, which is

valuable. There are lead teachers in every department. Leadership is shared. I make sure

that shared leadership is taking place continuously. However, certain areas are non-

negotiable, as others may not have any input in decisions. When this occurs, it is solely

the principals' decision".

Interview question #3: Do you make it your business to be visible in the building?

If so, why? If not, why not? "Yes, visibility is critical. I like to move about in the

building as much as possible. I like for the students to see me as well as school

personnel".

Interview question #4: Do you think employees should be involved in decisions

specific to their jobs? "Yes. I believe that staff thoughts, and voices should be heard. They have a genuine interest in their jobs. When teachers have a vested interest, students will be successful".

Interview question #5: How do you involve employees in decisions of the organization? "I don't think that anyone has all the answers. However, I hold regularly scheduled faculty meetings to disseminate information about changes, obtain input, and receive team reports".

Interview question #6: Briefly explain any dropout prevention practices that you utilize in your school? "Dropout as you know is a major issue. Our graduation rate last year was 68%. This year the graduation rate has increased to roughly 70-75%. Our goal is aiming it toward 80%. There are a variety of factors why students do not graduate. There are flags before they become 16 or 17. As noted, the district has an automated phone system that calls the students' home when absent. I have a teacher's aide who follows up with the student/family after that call. Her responsibility is to find out why the student is not in school. We take student attendance very seriously. We also have the various dropout prevention programs in our school (Liberty Partnerships, Academic Talent Search, and Upward Bound) who work with students at-risk of dropping out".

Interview question #7: How does your leadership team identify at risk students? "We look at attendance, particularly, chronic unexplained absenteeism. We have a team of workers that intervene to find out why these absences occur. The district has an automatic phone system that calls the parents' home. As a follow up, I have an attendance aide who is assigned to make phone calls to find out why the child is absent.

Also, there is a social worker who conducts home visits, a school psychologist on staff to

lessen the barriers to truancy, and a counselor who works with these youngsters. There

are a variety of reasons why students are absent from school. Unless we find ways to

lessen those barriers, the percentage of graduation rates will continue to dwindle for this

population. Moreover, our school is considered a criteria school, and/or artistic school.

There are pros and cons that go along with attending an artistic school. For example, this

school attracts students who possess certain artistic characteristics (singing, dance,

theatre), and retain students because of the study of arts, which consume his/her artistic

work. Sometimes, their academic work will slip. Thus, there is a need to find a balance

(arts and academics), and to redirect academics, especially now due to New York State

common core testing."

Interview question #8: Do you have any stakeholders in the building who's focus

is on the at-risk student? Yes. We have Liberty Partnerships, Academic Talent Search

and the Upward Bound Programs. As a matter of fact, the Upward Bound Program will

be recruiting 8th graders this week so that they can begin early in the program.

Interview question: #9 Do you solicit the input of the stakeholders in decisions?

"Yes, we hold monthly site-based management meetings. It consists of the review of the

comprehensive academic plan, academics, student attendance, and supportive Services.

The meetings comprise of school administrators, teachers, parents, and stakeholders, and

facilitated by me or the assistant principal. The aim of the meetings is to set goals around

student achievement. The input from all stakeholders is valuable.

Interview question #10: What leadership strategies do you use to underscore the significance to subordinates for maintaining the at risk student in school? "At risk youth appreciate structure, high expectations, and genuine caring adults who are consistent. When they sense a caring adult that appreciate their background and where they come from; students will receive it and are open to it. We need adults in this building who are setting clear examples of high expectations. If students are not coming in, there is a need to develop some type of out reach to check them out. It could be due to low self-esteem, lack of connection, and a need for flexible caring adults. When students can come to a school environment with caring adults, who provide structure and support for them to become successful, they feel engaged. On the other hand, if they sense adults who do not have a caring spirit, they "check out" resulting in disengagement from the educational environment. As the school leader, I set the tone for this process (caring) to take place throughout the building."

Interview question #11: Do you have an active parent involvement group? Other parent activities that is visible and useful in the building? Yes, first, it is critical to have staff that possess a caring spirit, understand student needs, and reach out to parents. A partnership with parents is wonderful, as we get greater success when that happens. When parents and schools are on same page, students are successful. When they are at odds, there is a downward spiral effect. Moreover, when parents are visible children get on track. Children are bringing in so much stuff into the school. It's against the law not to send your children to school. I have not found a parent who does not want to have their child be successful, they just don't know how. We have a parent facilitator who is

provided a small stipend during the year. Her main task is to reach out to parents in various student departments, i.e. arts, music, theater maintenance, etc., to explore their interest in supporting teachers/students during a play production, teacher-parent night, or chaperone on a field trip. The facilitator keep parents informed about activities, upcoming ventures/or and concerns that may affect their child. We also have a parent representative in the Parent-Teacher-Student-Organization (PTSO). This individual is the president of the group who works with the parent facilitator to discern what issues are important, how to disseminate that information throughout the parent body, and continually involve parents in school activities throughout the year. The president conducts monthly meetings with parent, teacher and student representatives during the academic year.

Finally, a monthly school newsletter is sent to parents It keeps them informed about the various activities going on in the school (parent facilitator and president of parent-student-teacher association also post information in the newsletter), reminding them of the graduation requirements for students, and college readiness information.

Interview question #12: "What barriers do you face daily as the leader?"
The barriers continue to grow. Years ago, the job of teachers (schools) was to educate children. Now we are "the haven" for most things. The effects of the community come into the school with the child whether it is crime, violence, socio-economic factors, and others we have to deal with it. If the community does their job, it will help schools. It is no longer just educating children. Now with the state mandates and common Core subjects and testing, children must obtain 22 credits to graduate including passing the New York State regents exams. We want our children to become critical thinkers, and

having them become efficient leaders. The unemployment is high, poor conditions in community triage with the school environment. We are now fighting with a system that is not ready to support schools. Children are bringing in so much stuff into the school. There is an attendance issue; it's against the law not to send your children to school. I have not found a parent who does not want to have their child be successful, they just don't know how. Partnerships with parents is wonderful, we get greater success when that happens. Lastly, systems have to work together as allies and not adversaries"

Interview question #13: Who makes the key decisions for curriculum change, development, or infusion of needed services for students, particularly the at-risk youth? "Curriculum design, and framework, and how they are implemented comes from the District level. However, there is some flexibility within the teacher's domain and within the administrative domain. We make sure that it is meeting the needs of the children. We have the ability to be creative with some planning and provisions for professional framework input."

Interview question #14: Do you feel that your leadership team appreciate and value your vision for the school? "My vision is really simple, to graduate children on time-youngsters who are proficient, have thinking skills, and character. It's a real simple angle and approach for me. Everyone who knows me realize that my vision for this school is to see that our children are successful. Every educator in this building wants to see our children successful. How we get there may involve some differences due to: (a) various levels of proficiencies; (b) different mindsets; and (c) ethnic backgrounds; and (d) experience backgrounds, but we will get there."

Leader 2—Matt, Principal at Prosperous High School (Pseudonym)

Interview question #1: How many years have you worked as a school administrator or program director (pre-college/dropout prevention program)? I have been in school administrator for 14 years. I have been the principal at this school for 4 years.

Interview question #2: What is your leadership style? My leadership style is dominant distributive. It is more so dominant. I like to believe that my leadership style is considered "shared leadership". It involves delegation of workload.

Interview question #3: Do you make it your business to be visible in the school building? If so, why? If not, why? Yes. It is important for students and staff to see me navigating throughout the building. If a crisis occurs, they know you and begin to trust you to handle the situation. You are there on the scene.

Interview question #4: Do you think employees should be involved in decisions specific to their jobs? Yes, if I have a teacher who is a solid thinker, is solution driven, who can think through problems, then I want that person on my team. On the other hand, if I have a individual who is just waiting for retirement, who are naysayers, non-thinkers, then I would not want them on my team. There's not many around, very few, however, they exist, they should quit, but they don't. I do not have many in this building, but they exist.

Interview question #5: How do you involve employees in decisions of the organization? Faculty/Staff are pretty much involved in everything. When a problem comes our way, you have to meet it with solutions. We spend quite a bit of time in team meetings. There is a faculty and administrative team, site-based team, leadership team,

student support team. Each team meets at least one time a week. All team meetings focus on student outcomes.

Interview question #6: Briefly explain any dropout prevention practices that you utilize in your school? What we try to do is keep kids motivated and engaged in school until graduation. So we don't focus on dropout prevention. Once we assess that a student could be a potential dropout, we keep the students on track by talking to them; conduct a series of home visits; and telephone conversations. Our focus is not "if you keep this up, you're going to dropout"; it's more of "this is what you need to do to graduate." I conduct most of the home visits, followed by the social worker, and the attendance officer. I get to know students and families on a personal level. I believe that you can always pull something good out of all students. I plan to scale back on the home visits. I am getting tired.

Interview question #7: How does your leadership team identify at risk students? We review attendance and chronic absenteeism. The district has an automated telephone system that calls the home of students who are absent. However, as mentioned, I believe that using the "holistic" approach (getting to know the at-risk student and family on a personal level have shown significant gains) helps us to monitor the student's progress both academically and personally. Our job is to keep the student engaged in the educational process.

Interview question #8: Do you have any stakeholders in the building whose focus is on the at risk student? We have a student support team, which includes: Say Yes to Education; Liberty Partnerships Program; Upward Bound Program; and CastleUniversity.

All of these entities are critical for the at risk student. Because our school has been designated as a "persistently low performing school" in the district (at the verge of closing due to low test scores and graduation rates of 37%) at the time I became principal, Castle University oversaw this school. Thus, I have great a superintendent that I report to; although, we are still part of the Castle school district.

Interview question #9: Do you solicit the input of the stakeholders in decisions? Yes. Everyone brings something to the table. We meet monthly depending on what they are bringing to the table. Some folks may attend a meeting once per month; some may attend twice per month. Again, we have a student support team, leadership team, site-based management team, and school-based curriculum team, with a focus on student achievement and success.

Interview question #10: What leadership strategies do you use to underscore the significance to subordinates for maintaining the at risk student in school? I think that open lines of communication are critical. There is a need for teachers to pay attention to kids. If for example, a teacher sees a student who has challenges beyond the academics, I want them to contact me. If they want to get involved and take the lead, that's fine. However, we will take that issue off their hands. We have begun to establish some informal mentorship relationships within the school and externally with the community. We have developed a process of check in and check out with students who are failing, getting into trouble or have chronic absenteeism issues.

Interview question #11: Do you have an active parent involvement group? Other

parent activities that is visible and useful in the building? Yes, membership numbers are low. You know what is interesting and this is a real disconnect; high schools at large are having low numbers of parent participation. It is not that you do not want parents coming in all the time, but that does not necessary constitute parent involvement. For me, it is more important for a mom to talk with their child every day about school at dinner, than to come into the school once a week. Despite the fact that the district defines parent involvement as a parent physically coming into the building, that second layer of parent involvement comes into play and is just as important. For example, I make sure that my own kid's homework is done; we talk about college; I have not been in my child's school at all this year, but I am an involved parent. There is a disconnect.. To me, if parents call the school to discuss their child's progress, etc. that is parent involvement.

Interview question #12: What barriers do you face daily as the leader? Currently, there is a completely incompetent leadership team for the most part, and an incompetent school board. The incompetent leadership has become a barrier lately for me. There is a lack of parent involvement (those who do not talk to their children about school). I do not get the resources for my building. There is a lot of politics involved when you can't partner with this group because of your relationship with that group. Accessing grant money is meaningful for us when dealing with poverty issues among our population, mental health, and other social ills that spill over into the school environment. It is difficult to continue to fight when you have a board who openly and admittedly say that they will not work with you. My immediate supervisor from Castle University

supports me, but when you continue to fight, will be labeled the "bad guy". However, there appears to be ineffective leadership at the district level.

Interview question #13: Who makes the key decisions for curriculum change or development? It is at the district level. However, we have some flexibility at the school level.

Interview question #14: Do you feel that your leadership team appreciate and value your vision for the school? Yes. I have a great team. As I noted, there are a few who need to retire. For the most part, shared leadership is our standard in this building. The staff here is 98% Caucasian, and the student population is 98% minority (African American, Hispanic). I believe that my team value my vision for the school, which is to graduate youngsters and reduce dropout rates.

Research question #3: What are the leadership "practices" in Tru-Tech Academy, and Prosperous High School that are "beating the odds" for reduced dropout and graduating disproportionate minority students from high school?

According to Jane, principal at Tru-Tech Academy, being visible in the building for students and staff is important. Despite the fact that the district has an automated telephone system that calls the students home when absent; her teacher's assistant also follow-up with students who fail to report to school. In addition, a school social worker conducts home visits to high risk students with chronic absenteeism. Moreover, there is a school psychologist on staff at the school three times per week. Lastly, there are a number of stakeholders involved with at-risk students such as Liberty Partnerships and the Upward Bound Programs. Thus, monthly site-based management meetings are held

that consists of: (a) review of the comprehensive academic plan; (b) academics; (c) student attendance; (d) and supportive services. The meetings comprise of school administrators, teachers, parents, and stakeholders, and facilitated by the principal or the assistant principal. The aim of the meetings is to set goals around student achievement. Jane also indicated the following as it relates to Research Question 3:

At risk youth appreciate structure, high expectations, and genuine caring adults who are consistent. When they sense a caring adult that appreciate their background and where they come from; students will receive it and are open to it. We need adults in this building who are setting clear examples of high expectations. If students are not coming in, there is a need to develop some type of outreach to check them out. It could be due to low self-esteem, lack of connection, and a need for flexible caring adults. When students can come to an school environment with caring adults, who provide structure and support for them to become successful, they feel engaged. On the other hand, if they sense adults who do not have a caring spirit, they "check out" resulting in disengagement from the educational environment. As the school leader, I set the tone for this process to take place throughout the building.

According to Matt, principal at Prosperous High School he makes it his business to be visible in the school building. Despite the fact that he has a social worker and a counselor on staff, he conducts several home visits to students homes who are chronically absent from school. Moreover, he noted that he plans to scale back in the area of home visits during the next school year. He believes that by conducting home visits, he gets an

opportunity to meet the student in his/her environment, gets to know the parent (s) and

engage them in the importance of student attendance, and explores significant resources

in the home, as well as resources in the community. Matt also identified various teams in

the school building critical to student success such as: the faculty and administrative

team; site-based team; leadership team; and a student support team. Each team meets at

least one time a week. All team meetings are focused on student outcomes. Matt also

noted the following:

> What we try to do is keep kids motivated and engaged in school until graduation.
>
> So we don't focus on dropout prevention. Once we assess that a student could be
>
> a potential dropout, we keep the students on track by talking to them; conduct a
>
> series of home visits; and telephone conversations. Our focus is not "if you keep
>
> this up, you're going to dropout"; it's more of "this is what you need to do to
>
> graduate". I conduct most of the home visits, followed by the social worker, and
>
> the attendance officer. I get to know students and families on a personal level. I
>
> believe that you can always pull something good out of all students. I plan to scale
>
> back on the home visits. I am getting tired. However, I believe that using the
>
> "holistic" approach (getting to know the at-risk student and family on a personal
>
> level have shown significant gains) helps us to monitor the student's progress
>
> both academically and personally. Our job is to keep the student engaged in the
>
> educational process. We have a student support team that includes: Say Yes to
>
> Education, Liberty Partnerships Program, Upward Bound Program, and John
>
> Hopkins University. All of these entities are critical for the at risk student.

Because our school has been designated as a "persistently low performing school" in the district (at the verge of closing and/or revamped due to low test scores and previous graduation rates of 37%) at the time I became principal, John Hopkins University oversees this school. Thus, I have great a superintendent that I report to. Although, we are still considered part of the Castle school district.

Research question #4: How do the leadership practices of Tru-Tech Academy and Prosperous High School compare and contrast with one another?

Both Jane and Matt concurred that visibility is critical in the facility. They contend that students, staff, parents and other stakeholders need to see them at times, and identify the principal of the school building. Other similarities consisted of having a district wide automated telephone system that calls the student's home when absent from school; providing home visits to the home, having a social worker and counselor on staff, and conducting various team meetings on a regular basis with the goal of student success.

Moreover, Jane seemed to have a strong mindset in the area of parental involvement. She indicated the following as it related to parent involvement:

Partnerships with parents is wonderful, and we get greater success when that happens. When parents and schools are on same page, students are successful. When they are at odds, there is a downward spiral effect. Moreover, when parents are visible children get on track. Children are bringing in so much stuff into the school. It's against the law not to send your children to school. I have not found a parent who does not want to have their child be successful, they just don't know how. We have a parent facilitator who is provided a small stipend during the year.

Her main task is to reach out to parents in various student departments, i.e. arts, music, theater maintenance, etc. to explore their interest in supporting teachers/students during a play production, teacher-parent night, or chaperone on a field trip. The facilitator keep parents informed about activities, upcoming ventures/or and concerns that may affect their child. We also have a parent representative in the Parent-Teacher-Student-Organization (PTSO). This individual is the president of the group who works with the parent facilitator to discern what issues are important, how to disseminate that information throughout the parent body, and continually involve parents in school activities throughout the year. The president conducts monthly meetings with parent, teacher and student representatives during the academic year. There is a monthly newsletter that I send out to parents that keep them informed about the various activities of the school, and reminding them of the graduation requirements for students, and college readiness information.

In contrast, Matt explained that parent involvement is very scarce at his school. He noted that if parents at least make sure that the student homework is done, if they talk to their child about attending school, call the teacher when needed, and support the child throughout the year These attributes should be considered as parent involvement. However, the school district defines parent involvement as "a parent physically coming into the school building, and being involved in school/district lead activities". Matt indicated the following as further discussion as it relates to parent involvement:

You know what is interesting and this is a real disconnect, high schools at large are having low numbers of parent participation. It is not that you don't want parents coming in all the time, but that does not necessary constitute parent involvement. For me, it is more important for a mom to talk with their child every day about school at dinner, than to come into the school once a week. Despite the fact that the district defines parent involvement as a parent physically coming into the building, that second layer of parent involvement comes into play and is just as important. For example, I make sure that my own kid's homework is done; we talk about college; I have not been in my child's school at all this year, but I am an involved parent. There is a real disconnect. To me, if parents call the school to discuss their child's progress, etc. that is parent involvement.

Lastly, Matt noted that he personally conduct home visits to students' home, especially, students who have chronic absenteeism issues. In contrast, Jane indicated that her social worker and attendance officer conducts home visits.

Moreover, the following research question was specific to the directors of the participating dropout prevention/pre-college programs participating in this study:

Research question #5: What are the leadership "practices" in precollege /dropout prevention programs (Liberty Partnerships, and Upward Bound) that are "beating the odds" and influencing minority students (Liberty Partnerships, & Upward Bound Programs are involved in both schools) to stay in school?

Leader 3—Ryan, Director of Liberty Partnerships Program at University at Castle (Pseudonym)

Interview question #1: How long have you been an administrator or program director? I have been a program director for 4 years. Prior to this role, I worked as the Assistant Director of UB's Liberty Partnership Program.

Interview question #2: What is your leadership style? "My leadership style is democratic. I like to gain a consensus from my staff/team on issues or concerns and consider it to be more diplomatic"

Interview question #3: Do you make it your business to visible in the building? If so, why? If not, why not? My role in the last 4 years has changed over time. It use to be more of a priority 4 years ago. Initially, it was important for me to be visible for staff, students and external entities. However, as time evolved, I like for my staff/team to be empowered. Thus, I have removed myself somewhat so that there is no ambiguity as to who is in charge. I want my staff/team to feel empowered and that they are "in charge of decisions, especially since they are in direct contact with students. Also, some of my staff is housed in the schools; therefore it is important for them to be visible so that students, teachers and administrators know who they are and what contributions they are making in the academic arena.

Interview question #4: Do you think employees should be involved in decisions specific to their jobs? Yes. I think this is an area that is critical for why employees perform to the maximum. I recently went to a professional development seminar, and one of the things that resonated with me was the fact that the reason why employees do not

perform was based on their lack of clarity of their jobs, and not knowing how their role

ties into the vision of the organization. It seemed that employees were going around

completing tasks and not knowing how their roles fit into the overall mission of the

program. It's been my practice lately when I conduct performance appraisals that I

include the aforementioned factors. Thus, I make it my business to cater individual

performance goals to what the expectations are, and relate it to the mission and the

overall goals of the organization.

Interview question #5: How do you involve employees in decisions of the

organization? I conduct individual performance appraisals on every staff member on a

yearly basis. The process provides an opportunity for me as a leader to clearly delineate

individual performance to the overall goals of the organization. It is a tool that assists me

to show employees where there is a need for improvement, as well as what impacts or

contributions that effected change in the organization. Employees are able to discuss any

barriers that they may be faced with in doing their jobs effectively.

Interview question #6: How does your leadership team identify at risk students?

We do not have a formalized structured way to identify at-risk students. And, there are a

couple of reasons for this. Our partner schools have already been designated as "at-risk",

by the State Education Department; therefore, the kids are referred to us. In other words,

all of our participating schools have a New York State designation of persistently low-

performing. Thus, the majority of our students come from urban poverty, and roughly

90% are eligible for free or reduced breakfast and lunch programs. Because our kids

come from urban concentrated poverty, the at risk factors are more than academics

among this population. For example, economic factors, community conditions, poverty, low academic performance, multiple suspensions from school, and peer pressure. For me, if a kid is interested and engaged and want to be part of the program, I let them in. In addition, at one of our school sites, there is a 21st Century program administered by Child and Adolescence Treatment Services (CATS). They offer a credit recovery program for seniors. They are now setting up services such as a mental health clinic for students with mental health problems. This is an area of concern among the at-risk population. Moreover, they have stated that many of the students are not attending follow-up appointments at the mental health clinics and it makes sense to bring the services to the students enrolled at Prosperous High School. Recently, there was an article published in the paper, as it relate to parents who are not satisfied with kids being in low performing schools, can complete an application to transfer their child to a school in good standing. Unfortunately, there are not many options. There are only nine schools in the Castle school district that are in good standing and enrollment is based on admission factors.

Interview question #8: Do you have any stakeholders in the building whose focus is on the at-risk student? All of the precollege/dropout programs housed on the University campus focus is "getting kids out of high school". Currently, we have Liberty Partnerships, Upward Bound, and other initiatives going on within the college. Moreover, all programs have admissions criteria, and must follow the guidelines set forth by funding entities. I meet monthly with the various stakeholders to discern how we can collaborate, share resources, and/or increase retention rates for students.

Interview question #9: Do you solicit the input of the stakeholders in decisions?

So, yes, every late August or early September, I meet with each administrator in the school buildings to go over things that worked, or did not work. I knew that we did not have the capacity to provide what our partner schools wanted. They continued to want additional tutors/ academic coaches in the school buildings. Thus I proposed to the school administrators a proposal that we could function as an extension to guidance for high school students, i.e., help them search for a college, provide career exploration…same things to the middle school students. I got a little pushed back because most of the administrators wanted the academic support. However, research has shown that to take a student one grade level to another reading level; it takes hours of reading support over the course of the year to move them to the next grade level. Frankly, I just don't have the academic support capacity or the number of tutors that they want to serve the kids and move them to a full grade level when they are so far behind academically. The administration was amenable to my proposal as far as assisting the guidance department. Thus, it would free up counselor time. The counselor ratio to student is 1:250 students. Because of this high number, some students may not meet a counselor until their junior year. Moreover, we are one unit under the Graduate School of Education. In the summer, we program services on the north campus in the computer lab, support for financial services. The other stakeholders in place with Liberty Partnerships include Castle Employment and Training Workforce Program. They provide workshops such as completing employment applications, developing a resume, present financial literacy workshops, and a six-week job readiness program, as well as provide employment stipends for our students during the summer. Currently, the students come in after school

for workshops that include: interviewing skills, writing a cover letter, and cultural competency, among others.

Interview question #10: "What leadership strategies do you use to underscore the significance to subordinates for maintaining the at risk student in school? I look at it as creativity. We are constantly looking at ways to retain these kids. The whole career piece, college tours, career exploration, etc. …I think it works for some students. For some, college tours work, for some, my basketball program works, for some the guy who pilots and own his airplane works, it's creativity, open-mindedness and literally meeting kids where they are. There is "no cookie cutter effect". I have to draw strengths from each staff person. For example, I have a staff member who is into yoga. She started a yoga class that attracted and retained some students.

Interview question #11: Do you have an active parent involvement group? Other parent activities that is visible and useful in the building? No we kind of started one and restarted. We got a small grant from the Youth Bureau, which we used the money to develop "Liberty Leaders". It culminated into a parent-youth leader group, a round table community group. We brought in a facilitator and that whole process culminated into an art project, and resulted in an anti-violence piece that the group agreed upon. A video was also produced by the "Liberty Leaders" that was shared in our partner schools. The "Liberty Leaders" is still vibrant and on-going, and we still have a small group of parents involved and committed in that initiative. However, I am still working on a true parent involvement component for our program.

Interview question #12: What barriers do you face daily as the leader? It is a constant challenge to communicate effectively. I know the staff. I make their responsibilities clear, the mission of the program is clear, but it seems that there is a continual challenge in the area of student retention. It seems to be a daunting task to have kids endure and persist in the academic arena; and maintain them in our program. We scratch our heads and wonder why kids do not stay? Thus, we designed a parent involvement initiative that consisted of a series of parent dinners. The first dinner, two parents attended; the second time, one parent attended. I actually stopped the mailings because we were getting them returned with inaccurate addresses, and the turnout was not good for various scheduled activities. For example, I generally text parents for basketball team activities. Moreover, I just hired a person to update our face book and web…it's a social media person to engage the program in Instagram, letting folks know what's going on, and for informing them of upcoming events, engaging parents, and for report card review nights. We plan to begin to call parents with good information. Often, they only hear from schools/program when kids are misbehaving. Finally, each year with our 12 "Liberty Leaders" begin the year introducing a premier of the non-violence video developed by them at the downtown Market Arcade. Many of our parents come out to that event.

Interview question #13: Who makes the key decisions for curriculum change, development, or infusion of needed services for students, particularly the at-risk youth? I take the lead for this for my program. It consists of constant creativity, and meeting kids where they are. When there is a need to change curriculum, I meet with stakeholders

once a year. Because the student's school schedule is tight, i.e. no study hall, staff meets with teacher to see if a student can be pulled from special class for academic help. Often, the challenge is that they may not be in the study hall. The student has been found to be roaming the hall, skipping or not in the building. At one time, I met with school stakeholders and suggested that Liberty Partnerships work with guidance counselors. For example, a senior may be taking a half year of government. I suggested that instead of going to a study hall (for the other half year), allow the seniors to attend Liberty Partnerships and earn a half credit for college readiness, completing college applications, financial aid packages, etc. While the curriculum sounded worthwhile, we were told that the process will need to pass the union folks, and then go through the District's curriculum development office, and that process could take forever. Another opportunity came up in which we had access to 500 licenses for the preparation course for the SAT exam on-line. We met with administrators, discussed who will supervise the course, again in lieu of the student attending a study hall We would give them the licenses, and the District decided that the aforementioned is considered "non-instructional time" (union issues), and wanted us to staff it. I did not have the resources or the staff to do it. Thus, they turned that suggestion down as well.

Interview question#14: Do you feel that your leadership team appreciate and value your vision for the school? I like to think so. I get the support from the school administrators, i.e., when we need student transcripts, report cards, etc. Currently, I have 2 operational coordinators, 1 counselor, (who go into schools), and three academic coaches (tutors), who go into the partner schools, a budget coordinator and an

administrative assistant. I also get teaching assistants from the Graduate School of Education who may need to fulfill academic and field work experience hours. Overall, I believe that my staff appreciate my vision for the program and the challenges that come along with it.

Leader 4—Morgan, Director of Upward Bound Program at University at Castle (Pseudonym)

Interview question #1: How long have you been an administrator or program director? Overall, I have been in leadership for 22 years. I have been the Project Director of Upward Bound for 12 years. My other leadership experiences included directing a young women's program at a middle school for many years.

Interview question #2: What is your leadership style? I look at leadership as " lead by example", and "being very inclusive". I include the students and staff in every aspect of the project from objectives and goals, budget, and funding. I find that staff and students work better when they understand the objectives. I try to operate with complete transparency. I explain to my staff why I am asking for something. I do not ever want to blindside my staff with information that they are not aware of. I feel that I demonstrate a proactive style of leadership.

Interview question #3: Do you make it your business to visible in the building? If so, why? If not, why not? Unequivocally, I am visible for both students and staff in this building. As a matter of fact, I took a student home yesterday that had no means to get there. I am very involved with both my students and staff. Because of our six week

summer program, it is extremely important that I am available for staff. Our students sleep in the college dorms and are entrusted to us during this timeframe.

Interview question #4: Do you think employees should be involved in decisions specific to their jobs? Yes. To a certain degree, because staff is the stakeholders invested in doing their jobs. Staff involvement in decisions creates a level of accountability. However some things are non-negotiable. We have regularly scheduled morning meetings. This allows time for debriefing, i.e. what has happened during the day or evening in the program, and gives us focus on who's doing what. As the director, I tend to delegate work and responsibilities to those I know will get the job done. I also conduct job appraisals on an annual basis. This process allows me to provide feedback to staff on their job performance. Another type of evaluation occurs when the summer program is over. We get together on a formal basis to discuss the overall summer program. It helps us to debrief and learn from one another what can be done better the next summer, which the summer program is an integral portion of the Upward Bound Program.

Interview question #5: How do you involve employees in decisions of the organization? During the summer, we get together every morning to discuss activities for the day, concerns/problems encountered during the evening hours, or to address issues that staff may have. I am generally open to ideas that may be worthy of implementation as we continue to address student success. Also as mentioned, I conduct annual job appraisals providing staff with an evaluation of their performance during the year. I give feedback from those evaluations. I use a "strength based" approach since the majority of my staff have been employed for several years with the Upward Bound Program.

Interview question #6: How does your leadership team identify at risk students? We conduct a quarterly review of report cards. This process can tell us how students are doing academically as well as glean their attendance patterns. We also have counselors and tutors in the schools. In addition, we develop academic action plans, with a prescriptive measure to address participants' short comings. When we recognize a drop in grades/academics, we give them extra curricula activity sheets, which is a process that makes the student aware of our concerns. It is important because some of these kids are "overtaxed" with sports, and other extra curricula activities. For example, some attend Tru-Tech Academy, which is an artistic school where they have to study and/or prepare for a performance; although that's good, they are being "tugged" both ways, academic and their specialty. In addition, we give our students "participation stipends", thus, tracking their attendance and participation is huge. We are always here, so if a consistent student is not showing up, and all of a sudden he/she shows up to pick up a bus pass, it provides for an opportunity to discuss their absence. Our kids are low income, first generation kids, so we provide incentives such as a food treat, gift card, recognizing academic improvement, highest GPA during a marking period, etc. We had a student who went from a 55 GPA to a 65 GPA during one marking period. Moreover, we found that poor attendance is in direct correlation with dropping out of school. In fact, I think since the work rules changed, some of these kids are working upwards to 11:00 pm.

Interview question #8: Do you have any stakeholders in the building whose focus is on the at-risk student? We have a diverse student population that now that includes: Tai, Somali, Lebanese, and Liberian students. Subsequently, they have language barriers

and other ethnic differences than the former Upward Bound participants. All of the pre-college programs in the building (Liberty Partnerships, Upward Bound) has some focus of at-risk students in mind. As mentioned, attendance is huge since we provide participation stipends. Thus, I can tell when a student has been missing a lot of time. I'm here. All of our kids are income eligible and we use the term "urban scholars". We have to "incentivize" everything. We have "food treats", "gift cards", review report cards, etc. If for example, we have a student who goes from a 50 to a 65, that student is recognized with an incentive. When we write our grant to the federal government, we found a direct correlation between chronic absenteeism and poor attendance and dropout rates. As mentioned, I also think that because the Department of Labor has changed the labor laws, many of our kids work upwards to 11:00 pm at night.

Interview question #9: Do you solicit the input of the stakeholders in decisions? We have University collaboration as well as community collaboration. The University at Castle supports our program, i.e., Teacher's Institute, Graduate School of Education, Curriculum and Development to discern if what we have is the most current. They provide academic tutoring; and real community based learning. The community stakeholders tell us what they are mostly in need of. We begin enrolling students as young as age 13 who are arising 8th graders going into Grade 9 to involve them in the dorms during the summer for 6 weeks.

Interview question #10: "What leadership strategies do you use to underscore the significance to subordinates for maintaining the at risk student in school? The majority of enrolled students are minority. We are enrolling a huge number of immigrants/refugees

such as: Somali, Liberian, and Burmese, that are migrating into the area. There tends to be a language barrier. We are now finding that at-risk is defined different. Consequently, there is extreme poverty among this population. All of our involved schools are persistently low-performing public schools. 80% of enrolled students in these schools are eligible for free or reduced lunch program, as four of our schools had a graduation rate under 60%. We call our students "Urban Scholars" because we want them to feel a sense of success, and for them to understand that we believe in them despite their deficiencies. We have a student contract that students must honor, and specific behaviors, i.e. attendance, academics, involving parents, etc. Our retention rate has been successful somewhere around 100%, which starts from the date of entry until they graduate. We must enroll 66% first generation college attendee's and low income; and the others can meet either one or both of the aforementioned criteria. We have 104 students enrolled in our Upward Bound Program.

Interview question #11: Do you have an active parent involvement group? Other parent activities that is visible and useful in the building? No we do not. We have tried on several occasions to formulate one. However, in our unique paradigm, formulating a parent involvement group appears to be one of the most difficult things to do. They are not active until something is at stake, i.e. student at risk of being dropped from the program; college tour; etc. Parent involvement is a challenge. However, we do have a core group of active parents. Our goal is getting kids out of school and for them to go to college.

Interview question #12: What barriers do you face daily as the leader? There are

many barriers that I face daily especially now with increased technology, social media, the issue of bullying and relationships, and the high cost of education that our kids are faced with. Moreover, it seems hard for parents to see investing the money in education when it can cost more than their homes. Thus, people who work in pre-college programs are not doing it for the money. The Upward Bound Program is approaching 50 years old, and we are planning a celebration in August that will include a weekend of alumni, students and parents and university and community stakeholders.

Interview question #13: Who makes the key decisions for curriculum change, development, or infusion of needed services for students, particularly the at-risk youth? I have been given the leadership role to assess what is working and what is not working. As mentioned earlier, my staffs are in the schools so they get the opportunity to connect with some of the teachers on behalf of students as well as parents. The process allows for us to ensure that we are on the same page to assist the students in areas where they may be falling short.

Interview question#14: Do you feel that your leadership team appreciate and value your vision for the school? Without a doubt, we believe that every student can succeed. We are committed for all of them to graduate and go on to postsecondary education. My staff and I have the same vision for these kids. We are not here to supplant the public school education. Our job is to provide the academic support for the gaps that exist with these kids.

Leader 5—Jerome, Director of Upward Bound Program at Castle State University (Pseudonym)

Interview question #1: How long have you been an administrator or program director? I have been a program director for 13years. However, my leadership experience spans over a 20 year period.

Interview question #2: What is your leadership style? I consider my leadership style as a "coach", "distributive", and/or "transformational". Prior to formally leading an organization, I was a boxing coach for young people.

Interview question #3: Do you make it your business to visible in the building? If so, why? If not, why not? I think it is important to be visible as a leader. Staff seems to look for you to be visible and available. They like to know that you believe in them, and they believe in you. I want to know what goes on in the classroom. Most of my staff has been with me for the last 13 years. Some of whom transitioned with me from my previous employer. They are loyal, which lends itself to success. As a leader, you want to be seen.

Interview question #4: Do you think employees should be involved in decisions specific to their jobs? Yes. I think that everyone's personality may be different from what you are used to, but I allow people to be autonomous.

Interview question #5: How do you involve employees in decisions of the organization? We know what the objectives are, where we want our population to end up. Once we know the mission, what we want to deliver, we deliver the services effectively and have staff to "buy-in" and believe in the students and in themselves. It is important to have confidence in your staff.

Interview question #6: How does your leadership team identify at risk students? I try to keep the lines of communication open at all times with the students. For example, in the summer, our 6 week summer program consists of students living in dorms on campus. This allows them to connect, not only with one another, but with staff. It is also important in keeping the lines of communication open with parents. If something occurs, a relationship is already built, and if you need to be intrusive, you can. Our staff always check in on students in the schools. In particular, we pay attention to students who have chronic absenteeism. We conduct home visits, call parents, and involve them in community activities. That way, parents will not find out too late. The school may not always reach out and contact parents, but we design activities such as college tours out of town, and other enrichment activities in which we have support from parents, and another opportunity to talk with them. Other ways of connecting and retaining students is done through sports, i.e. community basketball, boxing, etc. Our counselors are assigned to designated schools. The Upward Bound program is going through a transition with an

increased immigrant population. 85% of the student population in our summer program is

from: Burma, Africa, and Arab. It appears that African Americans are not taking

advantage of the program as they have in the past. There is a language barrier. I have to

take a look at the overall program as to what courses we offer. I have to make a shift. I'm

working now on finding translators for the various languages. Last year, I had from 12-15

immigrants, which has tripled in number this year. 85% of the enrolled students speak

English as a second language. One of the biggest challenges is constantly explaining the

benefits of the Upward Bound Program to teachers in the school. One teacher told me

that she was familiar with "Say Yes to Education" program, but not the Upward Bound

Program and she felt that her kids were fine without it. She noted that she wished that she

could pick and choose what kids she could work with. On Wednesdays, our kids conduct

a community panel. One of our graduates, a law student at Morehouse Law School is

working with us during the summer spearheads the panel. It consists of a panel of

students, and a selected professional who comes out and talk about their own experiences

from high school through college and developing a career. Being a kid period puts you at

risk. In addition, it is difficult to find the appropriate staff to work with these students

who reside in poverty stricken neighborhoods.

Interview question #8: Do you have any stakeholders in the building whose focus

is on the at-risk student? We have tremendous support from the Vice President, Hal

Payne, who was a former Upward Bound Director. He also wrote legislation for these

programs. We started the Hal Payne achievement award, as well as the Lou Stokes and

Shirley Chisholm leadership award. Moreover, we now have a new African American

President of the College. In addition, our Assistant Vice President was a student support director in New England. I am excited to know that they get it, they understand that it takes non-traditional activities, appropriate staff, incentives such as tours to retain these kids. Thus, we have a lot of support from the college administrators. In order to recruit and engage students from Prosperous High School, I invited the principal to come out to talk to our kids. "Once he spoke to our kids, he got it".

Interview question #9: Do you solicit the input of the stakeholders in decisions? The college admissions department has an interest in what we do. Because their objective is enrollment, which turns into dollars; they are very supportive and realize that our program can be a pipeline to college admissions.

Interview question #10: "What leadership strategies do you use to underscore the significance to subordinates for maintaining the at risk student in school?
I really enjoy what I do. My dream ended when I saw that I wasn't going to be a boxing champion. I didn't know what I was going to do as far as a career. I had no idea where my life was going to lead me. I connected with African American students in my first job as a counselor in a precollege program, and they connected with me. During that time, I was working in one of the private high schools that had a 95% African American student enrollment. During one of the graduation years, a young lady who I worked with gave me a picture of her and thanked me. Later on, I read the back of that picture and it said "thank you Mr. P. for showing me what a real man is supposed to be". That's when I realized that these kids are looking at you. I didn't realize that they had negative opinions about fathers, and that most had not been exposed to fathers. It was the first time, that I

heard young people say "who the sperm donor?", when a discussion arose about

"fathers". None of these girls had a positive opinion of men. I had no idea how many kids

are looking at you. I realized at that time how relevant that what you do is important.

Interview question #11: Do you have an active parent involvement group? Other

parent activities that is visible and useful in the building? We do have an active parent

group. We have a core of five active parents who speaks on behalf of the program, i.e.

lobbying. Our program offers enrollment to first- time college generation recipients.

Consequently, I am convinced that children do not choose to live in poverty conditions.

We teach them the importance of graduating from high school as a stepping stone to

obtain a bachelor's degree and that economically they will be better off when that

happens. If you compare that to the alarming prison statistics for this population in this

country, a program that support and embrace these kids is a fantastic investment.

Interview question #12: What barriers do you face daily as the leader?

There are still questions and perceptions on campus about what we do. We constantly

have to justify what we do. Thus, location is important. For example, we are located in

the front-loop of the campus, across from admissions, in the same quad as the student

union, which brings visibility and attention to our program. Thus, other initiatives include

soliciting actors for speaking engagements; there has been media coverage; newsletters;

and other coverage about various activities that has brought positive attention to Upward

Bound and further understanding of the program. Besides, we are in our 5th year of

programming. Famous people have benefitted from the Upward Bound Program such as

Oprah Winfrey and others. As you know, Lyndon B. Johnson enacted federal legislation

50 years ago for the Upward Bound program.

Interview question #13: Who makes the key decisions for curriculum change,

development, or infusion of needed services for students, particularly the at-risk youth?

This is primarily the Director's decision. Our teachers return year after year. They have

told me that they feel a part of something good. Last year we had 21 seniors in our

program, 21 seniors graduated from high school. There is a need to make changes as I

noted earlier about the language barrier. We have 5 different languages, so the challenge

now is to hire translators, which is a complex issue and it will depend on if the program

budget can afford it, and available resources.

Interview question#14: Do you feel that your leadership team appreciate and

value your vision for the school? Yes, as mentioned our teachers return year after year. I

have a core group of staff who have worked under my leadership for the past 13 years.

They are loyal, believe in the goals and mission of the program and understand the

challenges of the population. The program is forever evolving with the times, the

complexity of the student body and with budgetary constraints.

Quantitative Data Analysis

For the quantitative phase of this study, I collected data from seven leaders (two

principals, two assistant principals, and three directors of dropout prevention/pre-college

programs) who completed a leader survey (Appendix I), and 195 high school students

who were purposefully selected from the participating schools that completed a student

survey questionnaire (Appendix J). Table 6 depicted the demographics of the leaders

involved in this study. It displayed the name of the participant (pseudonym), the name of

the school (pseudonym) and the program association (pseudonym), his/her ethnicity and

age. Appendix I reflected the Leadership Questionnaire used with the seven leaders in

this study. Appendix P showed the results of the responses that were analyzed as it

related to leadership practices. Thus, they showed the responses to the various questions,

and the varying differences among the leaders as it related to leadership practices.

Moreover, Tables 7 & 8 and 9 & 10 depicted the survey demographics of the student

participants. These tables provide information as it related to the number of participants

in this study that were involved in dropout prevention programs, the number of

participants that were not involved in dropout prevention programs, the schools

associated with participants, gender, ethnicity and grade levels. Lastly, I included the

categories that emerged from analyzing these tables in Appendices Q & R, along with

student responses that addressed Research Question #1: What influences young people to

stay in school? Lastly, Table 11 described the graduation rate of the Castle School

District, and the graduation rates of both participating schools in this study.

Table 6

Survey Demographics of Leader Participants

Name of Participant	Role/Name of School/Program	Ethnicity	Age
Jane	Principal at Tru-Tech Academy	African American	36-45
Matt	Principal at Prosperous High School	Caucasian	36-45
Sharon	Ass't Principal Tru-Tech Academy	Caucasian	Over 45
Becca	Ass't Principal Prosperous High School	Caucasian	31-35
Ryan	Director of Liberty Partnerships	African American	36-45
Morgan	Director of Upward Bound-University at Castle	African American	36-45
Jerome	Director of Upward Bound Castle State College	African American	Over 45

As mentioned, the following Tables 7 & 8 and 9 & 10 depicted survey demographics of the student participants. These tables provide information as it related to the number of participants in this study that were involved in dropout prevention programs, the number of participants that were not involved in dropout prevention programs, the schools associated with the participants, gender, ethnicity and grade levels. Moreover, each table is followed by the survey responses of the student participants to the Student Questionnaire Survey (Appendix J) in this study.

Table 7

Survey Demographics of Student Participants at Prosperous High School (Pseudonym)—Involved in a Dropout Prevention Program

Number of Participants	Gender	Ethnicity	Grade
40	Female 24	Afr. Am/Black 36	Freshman 10
	Male 16	Caucasian/White 0	Accelerated Freshman 2
		American Indian 0	Sophomore 10
		Hispanic 3	Accelerated Sophomore 0
		Other 1	Junior 11
		Prefer not to answer 0	Senior 7

Table 7 reflected a total of 40 Prosperous High School student participants reporting involvement in a dropout prevention program. As mentioned, the participants were asked to complete a survey questionnaire, which was based on a Likert scale from: 4-strongly agree; 3-agree; 2-strongly agree; and 1-disagree (Appendix J). Question 1 asked the participants: After a tough day at school, I have thought about dropping out and never returning on more than one occasion? 13% of the participants strongly agreed, 15% of the participants agreed, 43% strongly disagreed, and 29% disagreed. Question 2 asked: I stay in school because I know the importance of obtaining a high school diploma? 93% of the participants strongly agreed with this statement, 3% agreed, 2% strongly disagreed, and 2% disagreed. Question 3 asked: I know the names of my principal and assistant principals? 63% of the participants indicated that they strongly agreed with this statement; 29% agreed; and 8% of the participants disagreed. Question 4 asked: I get along with my teachers? 23% of the participants strongly agreed; 67% agreed; 2% strongly disagree; and 8% disagreed. Question 5 asked participants: My school offers a caring, safe and trusting environment? 27% strongly agreed; 63% agreed; 8% strongly agreed; and 2% disagreed with this question. Questions 6, 7, and 8 asked participants to

identify which dropout prevention/precollege program they were associated with? 68% indicated that they were associated with the Liberty Partnerships Program, 18% indicated an association with the Upward Bound Program; and 14% noted an association with the Academic Talent Search Program. Question 9 asked the following: Graduating from high school is important to my family? 90% indicated a strongly agree; 3% noted agreed; 3% strongly disagreed, and 4% of the participants disagreed. Question 10 asked: I know teenagers who have dropped out of school? 88% indicated yes and 12% indicated no. Question 11 asked: I have a job afterschool? 29% indicated yes and 71% of the participants indicated no. Question 12 asked the following: I am a parent? 5% of the participants indicated yes and 95% indicated no. Question 13 asked: My parents are involved in my high school career? 53% of the participants strongly agreed, 23% agreed, 10% strongly disagreed, and 14% of the participants disagreed. Question 14 asked: My parent(s) attend parent-teacher nights most of the time? 8% strongly agreed; 25% agreed; 23% strongly disagreed, and 44% disagreed. Question 15 asked: My parent(s) cannot attend meetings at the school because the times conflict with their work schedule? 36% strongly agreed; 23% agreed; 22% strongly disagreed; and 19% disagreed. Question 16 asked: I can go to an adult (counselor, teacher or assistant principal, principal or program staff) to discuss personal matters and/or about academic concerns? 34% of the participants strongly agreed; 50% agreed with this statement; 8% strongly disagreed; and 8% disagreed. Question 17 asked: I go to school because my parent(s) make sure that I go? 45% indicated that they strongly agreed; 26% agreed; 10% indicated strongly disagreed; and 19% disagreed. Question 18 asked: I stay in school because it keeps me

out of trouble? 37% indicated that they strongly agreed with this statement, 43% agreed, 10% strongly disagreed, and 10% disagreed. Question 19 asked: I stay in school because I want to go to college? 88% of the participants strongly agreed with this statement; 10% agreed; and 2% disagreed. Question 20 asked: I am familiar with the "Say Yes to Education" program, which will pay for my college education once I complete high school and get accepted to a college in New York State? 88% indicated yes and 12% indicated no. Question 21 asked: I am involved in leadership activities at the school (i.e., yearbook, student organizations, debate team, theater, etc.)? 63% indicated yes and 37% indicated no. Question 22 asked: I am involved in extracurricular activities at my school (basketball, cheerleading, volleyball, football, lacrosse, soccer, chorus, band, etc.)? 81% indicated yes and 19% indicated no. Question 23 asked: If I am having difficulties in any academic subject, or personal issues, I am comfortable asking for help from an adult in the school? 37% strongly agreed; 45% agreed; 3% strongly disagreed; and 15% disagreed. Question 24 asked: Overall, I like going to school? 32% of the participants strongly agreed; 45% agreed; 15% strongly disagreed; and 8% disagreed with this statement. Finally, question 25 asked the participants: If I could change one factor about school, it would be… (Please write your response to this question in the section provided at the end of questionnaire)? A myriad of responses emerged from this question. I have highlighted a few as follows:

- "longer gym classes"
- "reduce homework load so that more students can be more engaged in learning the subject material in order to understand it"

- "get rid of pointless classes, it's a waste of time"

- "improved lunches"

- "I would like to see every student do well and move on to the next grade"

- "need for more engaged activities"

- "add security guards"

- "I would change some teachers attitudes"

- "some teachers tend to belittle students, instead, they should encourage them, not force them"

- "teachers respect for students need improvement"

- "more interactive learning"

Table 8

Survey Demographics of Student Participants at Prosperous High School (Pseudonym)—
Not Involved in Dropout Prevention Program

Number of Participants	Gender	Ethnicity	Grade
48	Female 19	Afr. Am/Black 39	Freshman 9
	Male 29	Caucasian/White 1	Accelerated Freshman 2
		American Indian 2	Sophomore 9
		Hispanic 1	Accelerated Sophomore 1
		Other 2	Junior 12
		Prefer not to answer 2	Senior 15

Table 8 reflected a total of 48 Prosperous High School student participants

reporting no involvement in a dropout prevention program. As mentioned, the

participants were asked to complete a survey questionnaire, which was based on a Likert

scale from: 4-strongly agree; 3-agree; 2-strongly disagree; and 1-disagree (Appendix J).

Question 1 asked the participants: After a tough day at school, I have thought about

dropping out and never returning on more than one occasion? 5% of the participants

strongly agreed, 4% of the participants agreed, 27% strongly disagreed, and 64%

disagreed. Question 2 asked: I stay in school because I know the importance of obtaining

a high school diploma? 88% of the participants strongly agreed with this statement, and

12% agreed. Question 3 asked: I know the names of my principal and assistant

principals? 71% of the participants indicated that they strongly agreed with this

statement; 21% agreed; 6% strongly disagreed, and 2% of the participants disagreed.

Question 4 asked: I get along with my teachers? 38% of the participants strongly agreed;

52% agreed; 7% strongly disagree; and 3% disagreed. Question 5 asked participants: My

school offers a caring, safe and trusting environment? 33% strongly agreed, 59% agreed,

and 8% strongly disagreed with this question. Questions 6, 7, and 8 asked participants to

identify which dropout prevention/pre-college program they were associated with? The participants did not respond as no one indicated an association with a dropout prevention/pre-college program. Question 9 asked the following: Graduating from high school is important to my family? 43% indicated a strongly agree; 53% noted agreement with this statement, and 4% of the participants disagreed. Question 10 asked: I know teenagers who have dropped out of school? 90% indicated yes and 10% indicated no. Question 11 asked: I have a job afterschool? 11% indicated yes and 89% of the participants indicated no. Question 12 asked the following: I am a parent? 8% of the participants indicated yes and 92% indicated no. Question 13 asked: My parents are involved in my high school career? 54% of the participants strongly agreed, 33 % agreed, 6% of the participants strongly disagreed and 7% disagreed. Question 14 asked: My parent(s) attend parent-teacher nights most of the time? 13% strongly agreed; 20% agreed; 17% strongly disagreed, and 50% disagreed. Question 15 asked: My parent(s) cannot attend meetings at the school because the times conflicts with his/her work schedule? 17% strongly agreed; 38% agreed; 10% strongly disagreed; and 35% disagreed. Question 16 asked: I can go to an adult (counselor, teacher or assistant principal, principal or program staff) to discuss personal matters and/or about academic concerns? 35% of the participants strongly agreed; 46% agreed with this statement; 6% strongly disagreed; and 13% disagreed. Question 17 asked: I go to school because my parent(s) make sure that I go? 60% indicated that they strongly agreed; 31% agreed; 4% indicated strongly agree; and 5% disagreed. Question 18 asked: I stay in school because it keeps me out of trouble? 35% strongly agreed with this question, 27% agreed, 17%

strongly disagreed, and 21% disagreed. Question 19 asked: I stay in school because I want to go to college? 80% of the participants strongly agreed with this statement; and 20% agreed. Question 20 asked: I am familiar with the "Say Yes to Education" program, which will pay for my college education once I complete high school and get accepted to a college in New York State? 90% indicated yes and 10% indicated no. Question 21 asked: I am involved in leadership activities at the school (i.e. yearbook, student organizations, debate team, theater, etc.)? 25% indicated yes and 75% indicated no. Question 22 asked: I am involved in extracurricular activities at my school (basketball, cheerleading, volleyball, football, lacrosse, soccer, chorus, band, etc.)? 54% indicated yes and 46% indicated no. Question 23 asked: If I am having difficulties in any academic subject, or personal issues, I am comfortable asking for help from an adult in the school? 33% strongly agreed; 29% agreed; 13% strongly disagreed; and 25% disagreed. Question 24 asked: Overall, I like going to school? 31% of the participants strongly agreed; 46% agreed; 15% strongly disagreed; and 8% disagreed with this statement. Finally, question 25 asked the participants: If I could change one factor about school, it would be… (please write your response to this question in the section provided at the end of questionnaire)? A myriad of responses emerged from this question. I have highlighted a few as follows:

- "start school at a later time in day, i.e. 10:30 am"
- "Provide a daycare in the school for all teen moms so that they won't have to miss school"
- "develop more activities for students to be involved in"
- "eliminate homework"

- "get rid of certain kids who don't want to be here"

- "eliminate testing at the end of year"

- "reduce bullying and make sure that the school environment is a safer place"

- "reduce the drama that goes on in the school building"

- "there is a need for harsher rules"

- "have kids who want to learn in the same class, and those who don't want to learn in the same class"

- "relax the suspensions"

- "I would like to get academic help to boost my grades"

- "design regents exams so that everyone can pass them"

In summary, after analyzing Tables 7 and 8 as they related to Prosperous High School participants involved in dropout prevention programs compared to participants not involved in a dropout prevention program, there were a variety of themes and categories that emerged from the process. Thus, I have included the findings in Appendix Q as they related to Research Question #1: What influences young people to stay in school?

Table 9

Survey Demographics of Student Participants at Tru-Tech Academy (Pseudonym)—Involved in Dropout Prevention Program

Number of Participants	Gender	Ethnicity	Grade
70	Female 38	Afr. Am/Black 52	Freshman 9
	Male 32	Caucasian/White 5	Accelerated Freshman 2
		American Indian 0	Sophomore 25
		Hispanic 9	Accelerated Sophomore 8
		Other 4	Junior 12
		Prefer not to answer 0	Senior 14

Table 9 reflected a total of 70 Tru-Tech Academy student participants reporting involvement in a dropout prevention program. As mentioned, the participants were asked to complete a survey questionnaire, which was based on a Likert scale from: 4-strongly agree; 3-agree; 2-strongly disagree; and 1-disagree (Appendix J). Question 1 asked the participants: After a tough day at school, I have thought about dropping out and never returning on more than one occasion? 6% of the participants strongly agreed, 43% of the participants agreed, and 51% disagreed. Question 2 asked: I stay in school because I know the importance of obtaining a high school diploma? 74% of the participants strongly agreed with this statement, and 26% agreed. Question 3 asked: I know the names of my principal and assistant principals? 66% of the participants indicated that they strongly agreed with this statement; 23% agreed; and 11% of the participants disagreed. Question 4 asked: I get along with my teachers? 21% of the participants strongly agreed; 54% agreed; 8% strongly disagree; and 17% disagreed. Question 5 asked participants: My school offers a caring, safe and trusting environment? 21% strongly agreed; 57% agreed; 11% strongly agreed; and 11% disagreed with this question. Questions 6, 7, and 8 asked participants to identify which dropout prevention/precollege program they were

associated with? 56% indicated that they were associated with the Liberty Partnerships Program, 40% indicated an association with the Upward Bound Program; and 4% noted an associated with Academic Talent Search Program. Question 9 asked the following: Graduating from high school is important to my family? 93% indicated a strongly agree; 3% noted agreed; and 4% of the participants disagreed. Question 10 asked: I know teenagers who have dropped out of school? 71% indicated yes and 29% indicated no. Question 11 asked: I have a job afterschool? 9% indicated yes and 91% of the participants indicated no. Question 12 asked the following: I am a parent? 3% of the participants indicated yes and 97% indicated no. Question 13 asked: My parents are involved in my high school career? 39% of the participants strongly agreed, 43% agreed, and 18% of the participants disagreed. Question 14 asked: My parent(s) attend parent-teacher nights most of the time? 10% strongly agreed; 27% agreed; 19% strongly disagreed, and 44% disagreed. Question 15 asked: My parent(s) cannot attend meetings at the school because the times conflicts with their work schedule? 33% strongly agreed; 37% agreed; 7% strongly disagreed; and 23% disagreed. Question 16 asked: I can go to an adult (counselor, teacher or assistant principal, principal or program staff) to discuss personal matters and/or about academic concerns? 37% of the participants strongly agreed; 43% agreed with this statement; 2% strongly disagreed; and 18% disagreed. Question 17 asked: I go to school because my parent(s) make sure that I go? 40% indicated that they strongly agreed; 33% agreed; 7% indicated strongly agree; and 20% disagreed. Question 18 asked: I stay in school because it keeps me out of trouble? Question 19 asked: I stay in school because I want to go to college? 96% of the

participants strongly agreed with this statement; 3% agreed; and 1% strongly disagreed. Question 20 asked: I am familiar with the "Say Yes to Education" program, which will pay for my college education once I complete high school and get accepted to a college in New York State? 91% indicated yes and 9% indicated no. Question 21 asked: I am involved in leadership activities at the school (i.e. yearbook, student organizations, debate team, theater, etc.)? 46% indicated yes and 54% indicated no. Question 22 asked: I am involved in extracurricular activities at my school (basketball, cheerleading, volleyball, football, lacrosse, soccer, chorus, band, etc.)? 81% indicated yes and 19% indicated no. Question 23 asked: If I am having difficulties in any academic subject, or personal issues, I am comfortable asking for help from an adult in the school? 46% strongly agreed; 30% agreed; 8% strongly disagreed; and 16% disagreed. Question 24 asked: Overall, I like going to school? 30% of the participants strongly agreed; 46% agreed; 10% strongly disagreed; and 14% disagreed with this statement. Finally, question 25 asked the participants: If I could change one factor about school, it would be… (Please write your response to this question in the section provided at the end of questionnaire)? A myriad of responses emerged from this question. I have highlighted a few as follows:

- "Class size is too big"

- "Dress code need to change"

- "We need extra help in "all classes"

- "Need for personal tutors"

- "I hate school entirely, poorly operated, need to pay more attention to the arts"

- "Need for more caring teachers"

- "Change the time that school starts, later time in day"

- "Change the way teachers and administrators handle students in trouble"

- "If staff were kinder the students would be more cooperative"

- "Teachers and administrators don't care about complaints given by students"

- "Change 6 hour school day"

- "The lack of work ethic of the teachers because everyone do not learn the same way"

- "Administrators need to understand the students rather than talking at us and treating us like children"

- "reduce the amount of homework"

- "I believe that there is a need to reduce the amount of power that adults have in the school. They exploit the fact that they are in control. They are sometimes unreasonable and do not acknowledge how some students may feel"

Table 10

Survey Demographics of Student Participants at Tru-Tech Academy (Pseudonym)—Not Involved in Dropout Prevention Program

Number of Participants	Gender	Ethnicity	Grade
37	Female 27	Afr. Am/Black 18	Freshman 1
	Male 10	Caucasian/White 13	Accelerated Freshman 0
		American Indian 2	Sophomore 21
		Hispanic 4	Accelerated Sophomore 4
		Other 0	Junior 7
		Prefer not to answer 0	Senior 4

Table 10 reflected a total of 37 Tru-Tech Academy student participants reporting no involvement in a dropout prevention program. Again, the participants were asked to complete a survey questionnaire, which was based on a Likert scale from: 4-strongly agree; 3-agree; 2-strongly disagree; and 1-disagree (Appendix J). Question 1 asked the participants: After a tough day at school, I have thought about dropping out and never returning on more than one occasion? 24% of the participants strongly agreed, 14% of the participants agreed, 24% strongly disagreed, and 38% disagreed. Question 2 asked: I stay in school because I know the importance of obtaining a high school diploma? 51% of the participants strongly agreed with this statement, 41% agreed; 5% strongly disagreed; and 3% disagree. Question 3 asked: I know the names of my principal and assistant principals? 62% of the participants indicated that they strongly agreed with this statement; 35% agreed; and 3% of the participants disagreed. Question 4 asked: I get along with my teachers? 17% of the participants strongly agreed; 59% agreed; 5% strongly disagreed; and 19% disagreed. Question 5 asked participants: My school offers a caring, safe and trusting environment? 11% strongly agreed; 70% agreed; 11% strongly agreed; and 8% disagreed with this question. Questions 6, 7, and 8 asked participants to identify which dropout prevention/pre-college program they were associated with? None of the 37 student participants identified any association with any of the pre-college/dropout prevention programs. Question 9 asked the following: Graduating from high school is important to my family? 92% indicated a strongly agree; 7% noted agreement; and 1% noted strong disagreement. Question 10 asked: I know teenagers who have dropped out of school? 86% indicated yes and 14% indicated no. Question 11

asked: I have a job afterschool? 41% indicated yes and 59% of the participants indicated no. Question 12 asked the following: I am a parent? 0% of the participants indicated yes and 100% indicated no. Question 13 asked: My parents are involved in my high school career? 41% of the participants strongly agreed, 35% agreed, and 8% of the participants strongly disagreed; and 16% disagreed. Question 14 asked: My parent(s) attend parent-teacher nights most of the time? 8% strongly agreed; 24% agreed; 27% strongly disagreed, and 41% disagreed. Question 15 asked: My parent(s) cannot attend meetings at the school because the times conflicts with his/her work schedule? 22% strongly agreed; 35% agreed; 8% strongly disagreed; and 35% disagreed. Question 16 asked: I can go to an adult (counselor, teacher or assistant principal, principal or program staff) to discuss personal matters and/or about academic concerns? 30% of the participants strongly agreed; 35% agreed with this statement; 16% strongly disagreed; and 19% disagreed. Question 17 asked: I go to school because my parent(s) make sure that I go? 43% indicated that they strongly agreed; 40% agreed; and 17% disagreed. Question 18 asked: I stay in school because it keeps me out of trouble? 22% strongly agreed; 24% agreed with this statement; 19% strongly disagreed; and 35% disagreed. Question 19 asked: I stay in school because I want to go to college? 84% of the participants strongly agreed with this statement; 11% agreed; and 3% strongly disagreed; and 2% disagreed. Question 20 asked: I am familiar with the "Say Yes to Education" program, which will pay for my college education once I complete high school and get accepted to a college in New York State? 89% indicated yes and 11% indicated no. Question 21 asked: I am involved in leadership activities at the school (i.e., yearbook, student organizations, debate team,

theater, etc.)? 35% indicated yes and 65% indicated no. Question 22 asked: I am involved

in extracurricular activities at my school (basketball, cheerleading, volleyball, football,

lacrosse, soccer, chorus, band, etc.)? 54% indicated yes and 46% indicated no. Question

23 asked: If I am having difficulties in any academic subject, or personal issues, I am

comfortable asking for help from an adult in the school? 19% strongly agreed; 54%

agreed; 14% strongly disagreed; and 13% disagreed. Question 24 asked: Overall, I like

going to school? 11% of the participants strongly agreed; 46% agreed; 21% strongly

disagreed; and 22% disagreed with this statement. Finally, question 25 asked the

participants: If I could change one factor about school, it would be… (please write your

response to this question in the section provided at the end of questionnaire)? A myriad

of responses emerged from this question. I have highlighted a few as follows:

- "I wish more teachers would stay afterschool"

- "My say means nothing and goes nowhere"

- "The way teachers teach"

- "The level of respect for us"

- "Better lunches"

- "I would reduce class size to be able to learn more"

- "More interactive learning"

- "Better organized teachers"

- "Get rid of all the testing"

In summary, after analyzing Tables 9 and 10 as they related to Tru-Tech

Academy participants involved in dropout prevention programs compared to participants

not involved in a dropout prevention program, a variety of themes and categories

emerged from the process. Thus, I have included the findings in Appendix R as they

related to Research Question #1: What influences young people to stay in school?

Lastly, Table 11 depicted the overall graduation rate for the 2011-12 school year

of the Castle School District and graduation rates for the two participating schools in this

study. This graduation data was based on the latest data posted for the Castle School

District.

Table 11

*Castle School District (Pseudonym) School Accountability (New York State Report Card
as It Related to Graduation Rates for Tru-Tech Academy [Pseudonym] and Prosperous
High School [Pseudonym] for 2011-2012)*

Castle School District Graduation Rate	Tru-Tech Academy Graduation Rate	Prosperous High School Graduation Rate
54%	69%	47%

According to the New York State Education Department, there are "Standards for

Graduation Rate" that are expected from Districts and schools along with secondary-level

grades that are also held to certain standards for the percentage of students who

graduated. Further, they noted the following:

To make Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) in graduation rate, every accountability

group with 30 or more members must make AYP. For a group to make AYP, the

graduation rate of the 4-year graduation-rate total cohort or the 5-year graduation-

rate total cohort must equal or exceed the Graduation-Rate Standard of 80% or the

group's Progress Target. A cohort is a group of students who entered grade 9

anywhere in a particular school year. Graduation rates for these cohorts are then

determined 4 and 5 years after the students first enter grade 9 (Understanding

Accountability in New York State at:

http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/accountability).

Thus, the Castle School District or neither of the two participating schools in this study met the graduation rate standard of 80% set by the New York State Education Department.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

This study included multiple sources of evidence, which included the case study component consisting of interviews with leaders (high school principal and directors of pre-college/dropout prevention programs), survey questionnaire completion by student participants, and the administrators involved in this study, as well as providing a detailed description of the setting in which the study took place. Thus, to increase the dependability of the study, I developed letters of cooperation and consent, which are included in the appendices of this dissertation, a proposal request to the Castle school district in order to obtain approval to conduct this study in the district (Appendix O), as well as maintaining a log/journal of activity throughout my study. Moreover, I reviewed each participating school's (Tru-Tech Academy & Prosperous High School state report card and constructed Table 11 to depict the comparison of students who graduated from the district in 2011-12-latest data available for the district). Finally, throughout this study, I reflected on my own bias and stayed focused and objective in the interpretation of the findings.

Moreover, triangulation was an essential process in the analysis of this study. Singleton and Straights (2010) noted that triangulation occurs when multiple methods are

applied to the same setting. It is a mixed methods approach to testing hypothesis/questions that enhances the quality and confidence of the information and answers sought. When using one or more methods, the rate of confidence increases (p. 36). Thus, I improved the credibility, transferability, and dependability of this study by the use of triangulation. I informed the participants that confidentiality would be upheld throughout the study. Completed questionnaires would be held in a locked safe cabinet, which is in compliance with Walden's IRB guidelines and ethical standards. Moreover, Creswell (2007) believed that innovation to data collection procedures allows the reader and editor to be curious and engaged in examining the researcher's study.

For the quantitative phase of this study, as noted earlier, I developed the survey questionnaires for this study. They were designed based on a Likert scale from: 4-strongly agree, 3-agree, 2-strongly disagree, or 1-disagree. Each participant had to rate their level of agreement to each question based on the aforementioned in order to obtain a measure of reasonable responses. The survey was administered the same way to all participants, whether they were student participants or leader participants. All survey questionnaires were coded with pseudo names, and participating schools and programs were given pseudo names. This process allowed for confidentiality, anonymity and provided additional trustworthiness of the study.

Summary

In summary, Chapter 4 included the results of this mixed method study that

incorporated a variety of processes (pilot study, data collection, review of archival data,

case study interviews, and survey questionnaires) and research questions that directed this

study. I included the setting, the participant demographics, the data collection, and the

data analysis process. I constructed a number of tables throughout this study that reflected

the demographics of the participants and the administrators, as well as the responses of

the participants and the administrative leaders in this mixed-method research study.

Moreover, there were numerous categories and themes that emerged from the participant

responses (qualitatively and quantitatively), as well as developments and outcomes that

derived from the two research questions, and three sub-research questions in this study.

Specifically, for the qualitative phase, I referred to NVivo software, which assisted me

with coding interviews and categorizing surveys and I discussed how the coding was

performed with each leader participant. As mentioned earlier, the interview analysis

began by transcribing each interview verbatim with accuracy from the individual

recorded interview sessions. According to Charmaz (2006), line-by-line coding is

essential for written data. I constructed the interview analysis based on leader responses

and emerging themes. Thus, for the quantitative phase, I coded the questionnaires as it

related to school, and participants involvement in dropout prevention programs, and/or

participants not involved in dropout prevention programs. Again, tables were constructed

to delineate those responses. Thus, I categorized themes that derived from the analysis

with those responses. Concurrently, during this phase, I also coded the completed

leadership questionnaires using the same analysis process as that of the student

participants. Again, I constructed a number of tables reflective of the 23 questions posed

to them with their responses. Specifically, the research questions included #1: What

influences at risk youth to stay in school? Here, the research study found that there are a

number of factors that participants' indicated that influenced them to stay in school.

Namely, the students stressed having an adult in their lives whether in the home, and/or

in the school that they can go to if they are having personal or academic concerns.

Student participants also alluded to the fact that having an association with a dropout

prevention program; knowing who the leaders are in the school was helpful; parental

involvement seemed to be an emerging theme; the importance of obtaining a high school

diploma; and socialization in the school as well as safety in the school; and the

importance for obtaining a high school diploma influenced their continuity. Moreover, as

it related to question #2: What is the relationship between school leadership and reduced

high school dropout rates? Principal leaders concur that being visible in the building,

providing a school-home connection, and shared leadership in the facility is critical for

the continued engagement and continuity for at risk students staying in school. Thus, they

assert that student-teacher engagement is critical for this population. Moreover, both

principal leaders had similar and contrasting views in the area of parental involvement.

One believed in "pure parent involvement", i.e., parents coming into the school; being

visible, and physically involved in school activities; and attending parent-teacher

conferences. On the other hand, the other principal leader believe that if parents talked to

their child and supported them in overseeing homework; call into the school every now

and then that the process is another "layer of parental involvement." Research question #3 asked what are the leadership "practices" in Tru-Tech Academy, and Prosperous High School that are "beating the odds" for reduced dropout and graduating disproportionate minority students from high school? Here, the common theme that emerged included the importance of various committees developed at the schools surrounding student outcomes for success. For example, parent-teacher-student association; site-based teams (leader/teacher specific teams); and school-stakeholder committees (dropout prevention programs, Say Yes to Education, Truancy Committee, and Mental Health Clinic housed in school).

In terms of research question #4: How do the leadership practices of Tru-Tech Academy and Prosperous High School compare and contrast with one another? Both school leaders believed that students were coming into the schools with layers of problems from home and community. Both principal leaders developed a number of teams in their school that address student engagement and measureable outcomes for successful graduation from high school. They also stressed that "shared leadership" is critical in the school and program environments. Thus, the majority of leaders in this study alluded to involving staff in decisions concerning their roles, student engagement, behavioral issues, and other factors. In terms of the various stakeholders, collaboration with various dropout prevention programs, the use of home visits (counselors & social workers), and community and social services programs are useful in their leadership practices as a viable resource for at risk youth and families. Moreover, the principal leaders alluded to the fact that an automated calling system is in place that calls the home

of students with high absenteeism. Both leaders have a process in place that provides

follow up to the at risk student who has chronic absences. Consequently, Matt (principal

of Prosperous High School) indicated that he has conducted home visits to student homes

who has excessive absences. He asserts that the process provide an opportunity to meet

the parent/guardian and re-engage the student in the academic environment. Thus, both

principals concur that the lack of financial resources (i.e. staff, funding) to urban schools,

coupled by "a dysfunctional upper management team on the school board and the

superintendent" does not help to combat the complexity and issues that urban youth face.

Finally, research question #5: What are the leadership "practices" in precollege /dropout

prevention programs (Liberty Partnerships, and Upward Bound) that are "beating the

odds" and influencing minority students (Liberty Partnerships & Upward Bound

Programs are involved in both schools) to stay in school? All of the program leaders

concurred that at risk youth were more vulnerable than other students. For example, they

come from high poverty and poverty stricken neighborhoods and are more apt to be

influenced negatively by peer pressure and crime. They indicated that they have to

"incentivize" most things to keep this population engaged in the academic scene. Thus,

they are consistently creating program change to embrace these students to ensure that

they stay in school and graduate. These leaders indicated that the "majority of our

participants are first generation high school graduates and/or future first time college

attendee's". Moreover, the program leaders noted that they have staff in the schools as

well as on college-based campuses to embrace and support these participants in various

ways to complete high school. Thus, the precollege/dropout prevention program leaders

revealed that they have experienced a 95% graduation rate in 2011-12 among the senior

class of students enrolled the programs. Lastly, the leader participants indicated that they

are continuing to look at ways to increase precollege/dropout prevention program's

presence in the schools; continually using strategies and being creative to retain students

in the dropout prevention programs; educating teachers/school personnel and college

educators about the significance of the programs; and to increase parental and community

involvement to support their efforts in the area of at risk youth and reduced high school

dropout rates.

Chapter 5: Discussions, Recommendations, and Conclusions

The purpose of this mixed-method research study was to explore the link between leadership and reduced high school dropout rates. Specifically, this research study drew from the current literature by empirically testing the linkages between leaders and followers and their respective successes in the area of reduced high school dropout of at-risk youth. The overall importance of this study was in its effort to identify leadership practices associated with reduced dropout rates. Consequently, I described how school leaders and directors of dropout prevention programs strategize ways to retain at-risk students in school. A compilation of interventions that could increase attendance and ultimately reduce dropout rates was developed and used in this study. The research reviewed other factors that contributed to reduced dropout rates, such as parent and community involvement, school-based dropout prevention programs, students' connectedness to adults and the school, and the importance of the involvement of public stakeholders. Thus, the research assessed the dropout prevention efforts of two urban schools. The study explored the link between effective leadership and students staying in school, and whether urban public schools can be effective with the right leadership. Moreover, the schools selected for this study were both similar and very unique in various ways. For example, both schools were among the majority of "low performing high schools" in the Castle School District, meaning that the schools either had the greatest number or the greatest percentage of nonproficient students on New York State assessments in identified subgroups or a low graduation rate.

To accomplish this purpose, I described how leaders (two principals of two urban schools and three directors of three precollege/dropout prevention programs) worked with at-risk students to stay in school and provided various interventions to encourage their continuity in school. For these reasons, I used a purposeful sample of students (students involved in dropout prevention programs, and students not involved in dropout prevention programs) to obtain their views surrounding factors that influenced them to stay in school.

The mixed-methods study had qualitative and quantitative components. The qualitative phase of this research study included a case study of five leaders (two principals of urban schools and three directors of precollege/dropout prevention programs). Thus, I conducted individual semistructured interviews with each leader. I transcribed each interview verbatim with accuracy from the recorded interview sessions, to which the leaders agreed and for which they provided approval. I analyzed the interview responses through the analytic techniques of coding and categorization, referring to Charmaz (2006), who indicated that line by line coding is essential for written data. In addition, fresh data and line-by-line coding provide allowances to remain open to the data and to see nuances in data. Charmaz indicated that coding early in-depth interview data, provides a close look at what participants say and likely struggle with (p. 50). Lastly, to support the interview data, I analyzed archival data from the New York State Education Department's school report card for each participating school in this study (Table 11). These data reflected the graduation rate for each participating school as it related to the state's benchmark of an 80% graduation rate for the Castle School

District (pseudonym). The quantitative phase of this research study included a survey. As mentioned earlier in this paper, a purposeful sample of student participants (students involved in dropout prevention programs and students not involved in dropout prevention programs) and administrative leaders (two principals, two assistant principals, and three directors) were asked to complete a survey questionnaire. The two assistant principals were asked to participate in the survey questionnaire portion of this study only. They did not participate in the case study portion of this study. Lastly, I coded each survey with pseudonyms, coded the participating schools with pseudonyms, and referred to NVivo software to assist me with the examination of survey responses and for emerging themes and categorization to interpret the survey data. Thus, I constructed a number of tables throughout this study that reflected the demographics of the participants and the administrators, as well as the responses of the participants and the administrative leaders (Appendices P, Q, & R) in this mixed-method research study. There were various categories and themes that emerged from the participant responses (qualitatively and quantitatively), as well as developments and outcomes that derived from the two research questions and three research subquestions in this study.

Researchers have continued to question whether leadership contributes to reducing high school dropout rates (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010, 2013; The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2009; Chapman, Laird, & KewalRamani, 2010). Thus, despite the fact that the literature is scarce in this area, Schargel et al. (2007) recognized the importance of the principal as a manager/leader and the importance of parental and community involvement. This was equated to pure collaboration on behalf of students'

success. They contend that school leaders can directly influence factors associated with

the school climate and culture, school connectedness, school safety, attendance, and

school achievement. Similarly, a body of research has shown that the leadership style of

the school principal can strongly influence various elements of the school environment,

including teacher and staff attitudes, student learning, and academic achievement

(Shatzer, Caldarella, Hallam, & Brown, 2013, p. 445). Thus, the development of

leadership profiles, practices, and strategies that assist in the area of reduced high school

dropout of at-risk youth and their ability to graduate seemed critical. Moreover, effective

leadership is critical in urban public education with a student population that has high

rates of poverty and diversity. Effective leadership could have a role in promoting

retention and in turn reduce high school dropout rates. According to Printy (2008),

> Researchers, practitioners, and policy makers want to know if school leaders can
>
> make a difference in how teachers think about their work and in the quality of
>
> their instruction in classrooms. Such influence could explain important links in
>
> the causal chain between leadership and student achievement. (p. 188)

Moreover, Klar and Brewer (2013) concurred that decades of research have

determined that principal leadership can have a significant, if indirect, effect on student

learning. Klar and Brewer stressed the challenges and complexities of leading schools

with high levels of poverty, diversity, and student/family mobility. Often, students from

high-poverty areas move multiple times during the school year. Thus, despite widespread

agreement among scholars that school leadership is influenced by context, relatively little

research has focused on this critical aspect of leadership practice (p. 769). Moreover,

over the past 20 years, research in the United States and elsewhere has consistently

shown that school leaders, by exercising instructional and transformational leadership

practices, have a positive but indirect influence on school and student outcomes

(Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Hoy et al., 2002; Jacobson & Bezzina, 2008; Leithwood &

Jantzi, 2008; Marzano et al., 2005; Robinson et al., 2008, as cited in Orphanos & Orr,

2013).

This research study addressed the significant gap in the literature concerning

leadership as it relates to reduced dropout rates. Specifically, it addressed (a) how school

leaders and leaders of dropout prevention programs described their work with at-risk

youth; (b) continuously engaging students in the educational process; (c) bridging a

connection from the school, home, and community; (d) and strategies/ interventions in

place for preventing students from dropping out of high school. In addition, the study

addressed how these leaders educate and convey the key characteristics and behaviors of

students at risk of dropping out to subordinate staff, and to the urgency of this

phenomenon. Leaders could be essential in educating subordinate staff in specific

procedures for referring at-risk students who consistently display significant

behavior/emotional problems, and/or have chronic absenteeism, to school-based teams.

Moreover, these school-based teams help students to get back on track academically and

re-engage them in the school environment, with a goal of preventing them from dropping

out of high school.

Summary of Findings

The findings for this study were derived from the various categories and themes that emerged from the data depicted in the various Appendices (P, Q, & R) constructed in Chapter 4. The first research question asked "What influences young people to stay in school? As mentioned earlier in this report, researchers are discovering how student voices in educational leadership and research practices are important to more fully understand what students are actually experiencing in transformative learning spaces, and to determine what we might learn from them in terms of how to improve both leadership practice and research efforts (Bertrand, 2014; Mansfield-Cummings, 2013, p.392; Zion, 2009)). I administered a survey questionnaire to a purposeful sample of 195 students in Grades 9-12 (107 involved in a dropout prevention program, 85 not involved in a dropout prevention program) in two urban schools. Key findings that emerged from the survey questionnaire were:

- Students believed that obtaining a high school diploma was important to them and their parent(s)

- Students felt that it was important that they could identify the administrators in the building

- Students believed that having a connection with an adult in school was critical

- Students believed that parental influence in his/her education was essential

- Students believed that getting along with teachers played an important role in his/her academic career and engagement process

- Students felt a need to obtain "extra tutorial and support services" by being connected to a pre-college/dropout prevention program(a small percentage of students not connected to a pre-college/dropout prevention program, indicated a need for tutorial services)

- Students recognized the importance of safety in school; and

- Students cited socialization opportunities in school as critical (Appendices Q & R).

Moreover, it was interesting to visualize other outcomes of the data as follows:(a) it appeared that a larger percentage of participants involved in dropout prevention programs indicated that they would drop out of school at a higher rate than those not involved in a dropout prevention program; (b) it appeared that a higher percentage of participants involved in dropout prevention programs enjoyed going to school than participants not involved in a dropout prevention program. This could be attributed to the fact that students involved in dropout prevention programs were exposed to additional resources and staff (i.e., tutors, counselors, and enrichment activities offered by the programs), and after school campus based activities (classes, computer assisted learning, living in the dorms during the summer) offered by dropout prevention programs. Thus, these aforementioned resources provided innovative engagement activities for at risk youth' ability to stay in school and graduate.

Another interesting outcome from the data indicated that participants involved in dropout prevention programs were more likely to go to an adult in the school building to discuss personal and academic concerns than participants not involved in dropout

prevention programs. This could be attributed to the fact that dropout prevention staffs were also available in the participating schools. Thus, participants have developed relationships with them in addition to the traditional school staff, i.e., teachers, administrators. Also, it appeared that a larger number of parents of students involved in dropout prevention programs attended parent-teacher nights most of the time, as compared to parents of students not involved in dropout prevention programs. Despite the fact that both student groups (involved in dropout prevention programs, not involved in dropout prevention programs) reported that his/her parents were involved in their high school career, a slightly higher percentage of students involved in dropout prevention programs reported increased parent involvement in their schooling. Consequently, students involved in a dropout prevention program reported a higher percentage of conflict in his/her parent's work schedule for not attending meetings. Moreover, it appeared that students not involved in dropout prevention programs held jobs afterschool at a higher rate than students involved in dropout prevention programs. Lastly, it appeared that a larger number of parents of students involved in dropout prevention programs attended parent-teacher nights most of the time, as compared to parents of students not involved in dropout prevention programs (See Appendices Q & R).

The aforementioned student responses seemed to be in line with various research that have used different ways of measuring leadership and school effectiveness as well as students' perception of teacher support; a general view of the impact of belonging; encouragement; and warmth/caring; and achievement was directly and significantly related (Booker, 2006). Booker concluded that the likelihood of students dropping out of

school was decreased when students perceived their teachers to be supportive and encouraging of their academic success (p. 2).

In addition, student responses were in line with results from Leithwood et al. (2010) study that trust had an impact on student learning and achievement; organizational path had the least influence on student learning; and family path improved student achievement; but was the recipient of essentially no leadership influence. Children from low-income and minority families had the most to gain when schools involved parents. Leithwood et al. asserted that most individual empirical studies aimed at identifying significant leadership mediators since the aforementioned review have examined only a single or a very small number of mediators (p. 672). Finally, it appeared that schools are essential to the education of all children because they spend many hours in these buildings during the day. Thus, it is important for teachers and leaders to build relationships with students (besides the academics) to enhance trust, and recognize students' families and their communities as critical to their educational outcomes.

The second research question asked: What is the relationship between school leadership and reduced high school dropout rates? I conducted semi-structured interview (case study) with leaders (two principals, three directors), and administered a leader survey questionnaire. A series of 14 open-ended questions (Appendix K) were asked, specifically, how long have you worked in leadership with at-risk youth? The leaders in this study had from 1 year to 22 years of experience working with at risk youth. I asked this question to explore the leaders' knowledge base as it related to understanding characteristics and behaviors, disengagement issues, chronic absenteeism, and other

factors; as many youth "fall through the cracks" without notice. Thus, the experience of the leaders was critical as they are important allies for subordinates. A common theme that emerged from the principals was that the district implemented an automated system that telephones the student's home anytime an absence occurs. Another common theme among the principal leaders was that follow-up is performed by designated school staff once chronic absenteeism continues with the student. Other common themes included: the importance of being visible in the building; providing a school-home connection; and shared leadership in the facility was critical for the continued engagement: and continuity for at risk students staying in school. The leaders concurred that student-teacher engagement is critical for this population. Moreover, both principals had similar and contrasting views in the area of parental involvement. One believed in "pure parent involvement" (i.e., parents coming into the school; being physically involved in school activities; and attending parent-teacher conferences. The other principal believed that if parents talked to his/her child about schooling; supported them in overseeing homework; called into the school every now and then; the process could be another "layer of parental involvement", that should be considered. They stressed the importance for embracing the students when they come onto campus grounds and/or schools because of their vulnerabilities. Finally, the program leaders agreed that they had to "incentivize" most things for this population; whether it is recognizing an increase in grades in a subject; reducing their time being late to school and/or absent from school; or making it to class on time.

Some the outcomes that derived from analyzing the data as it related to the leader survey (See Appendices I & P) were that the majority of leaders described either a strong agreement or agreement that the school provided an atmosphere where students can learn. However, based on Ryan's response to that question of strongly disagree; he did not believe that the administrators at his facility created an environment that helped children learn. This could be attributed to the fact that he did not believe enough classroom space was available on campus for his program and students. Another interesting outcome from the leader survey questioned the effectiveness of his/her superiors. Again, the majority of leaders described either a strong agreement or agreement with this question. However, based on Ryan's response of strongly disagree, he did not believe in the effectiveness of his superiors. Moreover, all of the participating leaders in this study considered parent involvement as critical to student success. Only two out of the six leader participants agreed with the question of satisfaction with the level of appropriate resources available to them to effect positive change in his/her jobs. Other outcomes of the survey included the fact that none of the leader participants had a positive response as it related to the support and direction of upper school management, i. e., school board leaders, and the superintendent.. Thus, the leaders reported that they were knowledgeable and familiar with dropout prevention programs available for at risk students. They concurred that they would be instrumental in assisting teachers and other school support staff in the navigation of referral services for at-risk youth. Moreover, the leaders reported that they were informed about the various dropout prevention programs, and the resources available to them to effect change in their jobs with at risk students. Lastly, all leaders in

this study acknowledged his/her knowledge-base about identifying struggling students at risk, and how to initiate an action plan for them. Again, all leaders believed that their supervisor valued him/her in the area of decision making.

The third research question asked: What are the leadership "practices" in Tru-Tech Academy, and Prosperous High School that are "beating the odds" for reduced dropout and graduating disproportionate minority students from high school? Here, the common theme that emerged included the importance of various committees and site-based teams developed at the schools surrounding student outcomes for success. For example, parent-teacher-student association; site-based teams (leader/teacher specific teams); and school-stakeholder committees (dropout prevention programs, Say Yes to Education, Truancy committee, Credit Recovery, and Mental Health Clinic housed in school). Both school leaders concurred that "reaching out" to students with chronic absenteeism was critical. Matt noted that he conducts home visits in an effort to re-engage the student. Home visits allows him to meet with parents/guardians and families as necessary for the sake of finding out why the student is not attending school. The principals also indicated the importance for personally getting involved with high risk students and families in an attempt to retain them. Lastly, the aforementioned efforts described as "reaching out" to students could be attributed to increased scrutiny of urban schools with high concentrations of minorities dropping out of school.

The fourth research question asked: How do the leadership practices of Tru-Tech Academy and Prosperous High School compare and contrast with one another? A common theme that emerged from this question was that both school leaders believed

that students are coming into the schools with layers of problems from home and community. In addition, both principals developed a number of teams in the school that address student engagement and measureable outcomes for successful graduation from high school (i.e., Credit Recovery). They also stressed that "shared leadership" was critical in the school and program environments, which included the input from teachers, students, parents, counselors, and stakeholders. In other words, the majority of leaders in this study eluded to involving staff in decisions concerning his/her role, student engagement, behavioral issues, and other factors. In terms of the various stakeholders, collaboration with various dropout prevention programs, the use of home visits (counselors & social workers), and community and social services programs were useful in their leadership practices as a viable resource for at risk youth and families. Moreover, the principal leaders alluded to the fact that an automated calling system is in place that telephones the home of students who are absent. Both leaders have a process in place that include follow up by a staff person to at-risk youth homes who have excessive absences. Consequently, Matt (principal of Prosperous High School) indicate that he conducts home visits to student homes that have excessive absences. He believes that the process provide an opportunity to meet the parent/guardian and re-engage the student in the academic environment. Thus, both principals concur that the lack of financial resources (i.e., staff, funding) to urban schools, coupled by "a dysfunctional upper management team on the school board and the superintendent" did not help to combat the complexities and issues that urban youth face.

Finally, research question five asked: What are the leadership "practices" in precollege /dropout prevention programs (Liberty Partnerships, and Upward Bound) that are "beating the odds" and influencing minority students (Liberty Partnerships & Upward Bound Programs are involved in both schools) to stay in school? A common theme that emerged was that all of the program leaders concurred that at risk youth were more vulnerable than other students. For example, they come from high poverty and poverty stricken neighborhoods and are more apt to be influenced negatively by peer pressure and crime. Another common theme that emerged among the program leaders were the incentives offered to the students. For example, the leaders noted that they had to "incentivize" most things to keep this population engaged in the academic scene. As noted earlier, the majority of these students are minority, come from high poverty, high crime ridden neighborhoods and are eligible for free, and/or reduced lunch programs. Thus, the program leaders indicated that they are consistently creating programs to embrace these students to ensure that they stay in school and graduate. Other common themes that emerged included that the "majority of our participants are first generation high school graduates and/or first time future college attendee's". Moreover, the program leaders noted that they have staff in the schools as well as on college-based campuses to embrace and support these participants in various ways to complete high school. Thus, the precollege/dropout prevention program leaders revealed that they have experienced a 95% graduation rate in 2011-12 among the senior class of students enrolled their programs. Lastly, the leader participants indicated that they continually look at ways to increase precollege/dropout prevention program's presence in the schools; being creative

to retain students in their program; educate teachers/school personnel and college educators about the significance of their programs; and increase parental and community involvement to support their efforts in the area of at risk youth and reduced high school dropout rates. Thus, only one of the program leaders indicated that he did not receive genuine support for his program from upper management, Despite these odds, the program leader noted that he continues to maintain integrity of the program for the students, and other stakeholders who support him and the program.

Interpretation of Findings

The interpretation of findings as it related to the theoretical framework and the review of the literature from Chapter 2 is presented in this section. I drew from Marzano et al. (2005); Senge (1990, 2000, 2006); Schargel et al. (2007); and Rice (2006) as the theoretical framework for this study. Specifically, I provided research literature that supported or disputed each finding. Moreover, I used the two research questions and three subquestions as the basis for the interpretation of the findings.

Researchers often hypothesize that a disproportionate number of minority children fail to graduate from America's high schools due to: (a) unequal access to key educational resources; (b) ethnic differences in academic achievement; (c) inexperienced teachers working in urban schools; (d) student disengagement from the academic scene; (e) deficiencies in academic achievement gaps; the lack of parental involvement; and (f) the lack of leaders and teachers of color in the educational arena. Consequently, Klar and Brewer (2013) stressed the challenges and complexities of leading schools with high levels of poverty, diversity, and student/family mobility. Often, students from high

poverty areas tend to move multiple times during the school year. Despite widespread agreement among scholars that school leadership is influenced by context, relatively little research has focused on this critical aspect of leadership practice (p. 769). As mentioned earlier, I drew from Marzano et al. (2005) that focused on 21 leadership responsibilities that could impact student achievement; and help principals develop new leadership strategies and new vision(s) for change; Senge (1990, 2000, 2006) systems thinking and learning organizations; and Schargel et al. (2007) informed leadership as a critical factor in ensuring the success of dropout prevention efforts. Finally, I included Rice (2006) who stressed the importance of shared leadership (principal, teacher, school and program personnel) as critical to the success of working with at-risk students, which has become the norm in school buildings.

The first research question pertains to the student participants in this study (107 students involved in dropout prevention programs and 85 students not involved in dropout prevention programs) were asked **"*What influences young people to stay in school*?"** The students concurred that (a) obtaining a high school diploma; (b) having parental influence in his/her academic career; (c) getting along with teachers; (d) being able to go to an adult in the school; (e) feeling safe in the school; (f) having an association with a dropout prevention program; and (g) having socialization opportunities in the school impacted their continuity for completing high school. The research supported these aforementioned assertions. For example, researchers are discovering how student voices in educational leadership and research practices are important to more fully understand what students are actually experiencing in transformative learning

spaces; and to determine what we might learn from them in terms of how to improve both leadership practice and research efforts (Mansfield-Cummings, 2013, p. 392). Zion (2009) conducted an earlier study for the importance of students having a voice in educational reform that impacted their futures. Issues of schooling and school reform were discussed. The students in the study did not feel that the adults involved them in discussions or decisions. The study concluded with an emphasis on the need to have "buy-in" from all stakeholders including the principal leader, teachers, school board members, and policy makers to ensure that student voices do not go unheard. Thus, a key finding in my study was that parental influence and support is essential for continuity in school for the majority of the student participants. In other words, having an adult in their lives whether in the home, and/or in the school that they can go to when they are having personal or academic concerns was critical. Student participants also alluded to the fact that having an association with a dropout prevention program; knowing who the leaders were in the school was helpful; and parental involvement seemed to be an emerging theme. Moreover, research showed that parents of at- risk children did not have positive experiences in school themselves. However, by including parents in the educational process, i.e., monthly breakfast, and teacher-parent meet greet sessions could influence the conversation about academics in their homes (Schargel et al., 2007). Extensive research has been conducted on the direct positive relations between parents' education and children's academic attainment (Cohen-Vogel, Goldring, & Smrekar, 2010, Cram-Hauser, 2009, Ziomek-Daigle, 2010). Cram-Hauser (2009) noted that those associations are so closely aligned with one another. He noted that researchers assumed that parent

education is often considered a control variable. While other researchers believed that parent educational attainment could have an effect on student educational achievement. Thus, there appeared to be strong associations between teachers' expectations for student performance and parental behavior. Cram-Hauser postulated that it was hard to find a study on children's educational achievement that does not build parents' education or some other proxy for socioeconomic status (SES) into the analytic frame. They suggest a strong relation between parents' educational success and children's academic success. Moreover, Ziomek-Daigle (2010) concurred and supported the notion that the involvement from families influence reduced dropout rates. Students are less likely to dropout when parents provide supervision, monitoring, and are more involved in their schooling. Thus, research indicates that parent involvement enhanc parents' attitudes about themselves and the school their child attend. It also builds an understanding among parents and educators about the role each plays in the development of the child. With that increased understanding promoted greater cooperation, commitment, and trust (Cohen-Vogel et al., 2010).

Lastly, stressing the key findings as it related to research question one was:

- Students believed that obtaining a high school diploma was important to them and their parent(s)

- Students felt that it was important that they could identify the administrators in the building

- Students believed that getting along with teachers played an important role in their academic career and engagement process

- Students felt a need to obtain "extra tutorial and support services" and being connected to a pre-college/dropout prevention program

- Students recognized safety in school as important; and

- Students cited socialization opportunities in school as critical.

The student responses seemed to be in line with various research that have used different ways of measuring leadership and school effectiveness. It also includes the following: (a) students' perception of teacher support; (b) a general view of the impact of belonging; (c) encouragement; (d) warmth/caring; and (e) achievement is directly and significantly related (Booker, 2006). Booker concluded that the likelihood of students dropping out of school was decreased when students perceived their teachers to be supportive and encouraging of their academic success (p. 2).

Moreover, the student responses were in line with results from Leithwood et al. (2010) study that trust had an impact on student learning and achievement; organizational path had the least influence on student learning; and family path improved student achievement; but was the recipient of essentially no leadership influence. Children from low-income and minority families had the most to gain when schools involved parents. Consequently, Leithwood et al. asserted that most individual empirical studies aimed at identifying significant leadership mediators since the aforementioned review examined only a single or a very small number of mediators (p. 672).

Finally, a study by Tillman (2008) included an empirical review from an interdisciplinary approach, including work from the fields of history, education, leadership, and supervision. Her study included 58 Black principals, with the emphasis

on the importance of cultural proficiency, implications for the preparation of school leaders, and how school leaders can impact the education of African American students. Further, she included references and studies by Hilliard (1999), a renowned professor and researcher who was concerned about school leadership, particularly among the minority student population. Accordingly, Tillman asserted the following:

> Evidence from this review of the literature on Black principals suggested that interpersonal caring in educational leadership can be effective in creating socially just learning environments that are conducive to promoting student success. Thus, interpersonal caring is a critical element of leadership in schools with predominantly Black student populations because it is often the case that many of these students have been subjected to external and internal factors that can contribute to low self-esteem and underachievement (p. 590).

Lastly, Tillman believed that the relationship between teachers and students and principals and students was a critical factor in the social, emotional, and academic development of students.

Question two asked *"What is the relationship between school leadership and reduced high school dropout rates?"* A growing body of research has shown that the leadership style of the school principal can strongly influence various elements of the school environment, including teacher and staff attitudes, student learning, and academic achievement (Shatzer, Caldarella, Hallam & Brown, 2013, p. 445). Thus, the development of leadership profiles, practices, and strategies that assist in the area of reduced high school dropout of at risk youth and his/her ability to graduate is critical.

Moreover, effective leadership is critical in urban public education with a student

population that has high rates of poverty and diversity (Klar & Brewer, 2013, Tillman,

2008, Valenzuela, Copeland, & Huaqing, 2006). Effective leadership could have a

relationship in promoting retention, and in turn reduce the high school dropout rates. The

leaders in this study had from 1 year to 22 years of experience working with at risk youth.

One of the questions that I asked during the semistructured interview was "How long

have you worked in leadership with at-risk youth?" I asked this question to explore the

leaders' knowledge base as it relates to understanding characteristics and behaviors, and

other factors of atrisk youth that impede their ability to graduate. The experience of the

leaders is critical as they are important allies for subordinates in the areas of training and

appropriate referral sources for at risk youth. A common theme that emerged from the

principals is that the district has an automated system that telephones the student's home

anytime an absence occurs. Another common theme is that follow-up is performed by

designated school staff once chronic absenteeism continues with the student. Other

common themes that emerged included: (a) the importance of being visible in the

building; (b) providing a school-home connection; and (c) shared leadership in the

facility was critical for the continued engagement and continuity for at risk students

staying in school. The leaders believed that student-teacher engagement is critical for

this population. A study by Urick and Bowers (2014) examined the independent direct

effects of student and principal perceptions of academic climate on student achievement

in high school. They noted that principals influence student outcomes through the

school's academic climate (Heck, 2000; Heck, Larsen, & Marcoulides, 1990; Hoy &

Hannum, 1997; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008; Supovitz, & May, 2010 as cited in

Urick & Bowers, 2014). More important, academic climate has been found to mediate

the influence of socioeconomic status on achievement, which can promote increased

equity in student success and influence overall growth in school performance (p. 387).

Both principals had similar and contrasting views in the area of parental involvement.

One believed in "pure parent involvement", i.e., parents coming into the school; being

physically involved in school activities; and attending parent-teacher conferences. The

other principal leader asserts that if parents talked to their child and supported them in

overseeing homework; call into the school every now and then; that the process is another

"layer of parental involvement."

The research supports this key finding of parent involvement, and suggest a

strong relation between parent's educational success and children's academic success.

Moreover, Ziomek-Daigle (2010) concur and support the notion that the involvement

from families can influence the dropout rate. Students are less likely to dropout when

parents provide supervision, monitoring, and are more involved in their schooling.

Research indicated that parent involvement enhanced parents' attitudes about themselves

and the school their child attends. It also builds an understanding among parents and

educators about the role each plays in the development of the child. With that increased

understanding promote greater cooperation, commitment, and trust (Cohen-Vogel et al.,

2010). Similarly, in a study by Johnson (2014) posits that aligning the notion of parental

"engagement" rather than "involvement" is a way to acknowledge issues of inequality

that affect minority parents, while valuing bicultural parents' perspectives and

contributions (Auebach, 2009; M. Johnson, 2011; Olivos, 2012 as cited in Johnson, 2014, p. 361). Lastly, Johnson asserts that educators should be encouraged to envision school-home relationships in terms of family and community partnerships. In addition, to recognize that parents, educators, and others in the community share responsibility for students' learning and development. In other words, when viewing the aforementioned collaboration, it would enhance the educational process in a positive and productive way.

In the past 30 years, research supported using models in which the relationship between leadership in schools and outcomes at the student level was measured as a direct causal link. However, "researchers are using mediated-effects models, which hypothesize that leaders achieve their effect on school outcomes through indirect paths" (Bruggencate, Luyten, Scheerens & Sieegers, 2012, p. 700).

Today, schools are being scrutinized more due to the increased failure of minority students not meeting minimum benchmark criteria determined by New York State Department of Education. In addition, schools are graded for their accountability for student academic outcomes, and graduation rates via the New York State Report Card. The Report Card reflects student test scores, which measures student learning, and in turn marks the effectiveness of the school's success. Research showed that there are other indicators for measuring school success. At the high school level, school effectiveness is measured by two related indicators: dropout rates, (which indicate the percentage of students who quit school before completion), and graduation rates, (which indicate the percentage of students who remain in school and earn a high school diploma)

(Leithwood, Patten, & Jantzi, 2010). The need is great for strong leaders in urban schools who understand the complex lives of all students, particularly minority students and families. Leaders are critical in these areas who recognize and understand the cultural differences of students. It is important to train and support school personnel in their roles. Leaders need to develop collaborations and partnerships with parents, community stakeholders, and social service agencies in order to provide "wrap around" services to at risk youth and their families. Despite the fact that principals are in authoritarian roles, they need to recognize that they cannot do it alone. Another key finding as it related to question two was that both principal leaders believed in shared leadership in the organization. Research supports the area of shared leadership and recognized it as a process of developing others (teachers, parents, and school and program staff) to become leaders in efforts to support their role. Senge (2006) asserts that shared leadership in a learning environment is essential for success in school environments. Many scholars supports the notion that leaders are the central key to organizational success, and "top down management" is no longer effective. Thus, the 21 leadership responsibilities that Waters et al. identified in Chapter 2 are significantly associated with student achievement. This is a result from their 30 years of empirical assessment of research in the area of school leadership and student behaviors. As noted in the literature review, race continues to play a factor in urban school environments. Teacher expectations of inner city youth seem to underscore their perceptions of inferiority. However, this agreement is not true with the majority of teachers and staffs in the school system.

Moreover, effective leadership plays a vital role in the success and outcomes of organizations, which include the impact that it has on employees, students, families, product, community, business, and nonprofit organizations. Research has shown that successful organizations, corporations and public educational institutions are successful due to the leadership of the leader (Jacobson et al., 2007; Marzano et al., 2005; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003).

Consequently, effective leaders possess the following attributes once they become familiar with their role:

- Think through what results are wanted in organizations-then define objectives

- Responsible for thinking through the theory of business

- Think through strategies, which the goals of the organization become performance

- Define the values of the organization, its system of rewards and punishments, its spirit and its culture

- Knowledge and understanding of the organization; its purposes, its value, its environment and markets, its core competency (Allix & Gronn, 2005, p. 18).

Likewise, Rice (2006) posited that shared leadership has become the norm in school buildings today. She cited Lambert (2002) definition of shared leadership as follows:

The days of the principal as the lone instructional leader are over. The old model of formal, one-person leadership leaves the substantial talents of teachers largely

untapped. Improvements achieved under this model are not easily sustainable. Leadership is the professional work of everyone in the school (p. 37).

Shared leadership was further described as teachers being encouraged to take on leadership roles, and involve themselves in school wide goals based on their areas of expertise and interest. Shared leadership also include the functions of counselors and social workers and other ancillary school and program personnel, parent/guardian and community involved in students' lives as they progress through their academic careers. This process further assist the principal with the "buy-in" concept for improving, identifying, and retaining at risk youth (Rice, 2006, Senge, 2009).

A study by Jacobson et al. (2007) asserts that principals can exert a measurable positive influence on student achievement, especially in schools serving low socioeconomic communities. They examined the influence various leadership styles have on student achievement as well as teachers support. Three high poverty middle schools were examined, each having a principal with at least a master's degree; and one ~~principal had~~ with a doctorate degree. One school was on the State Education Department's list for "low performing school." Jacobson et al. noted that despite the fact that there is a growing body of qualified leaders to select from, they are generally reluctant to go into high poverty school buildings due to extreme accountability and scrutiny. There were transition issues of children who came in and out of classrooms and school buildings. It appeared that there was a high transient rate of minority children who moved multiple times throughout the school year. These moves had an impact on the child's academic

performance and impacted a high absenteeism rate. The authors described the necessary practices for principals to be successful in high poverty schools:

- Setting directions

- Developing people

- Redesigning the organization

Overall, the study concluded with positive results indicating: (a) that all principals had unique leadership capabilities; (b) they had the ability to engage teachers in their mission; and (c) they were responsive to student needs as well as parents. It was noted in this study that the principal of the lowest performing school mentored under the principal with the Doctorate degree as an assistant principal.

A rich body of evidence has shown that the principal is key to all activities that go on in the building. The principal sets the tone for leadership in the school. Moreover, Kimball and Sirotnik (2000) argued that there wais always a political agenda when it comes to blaming fault for disproportionate concentrations of minorities' school failure. Schargel et al. (2007) pointed out that businesses and military are the only professions that train their leaders. They noted that principals are selected from the ranks of good teachers, good classroom managers, or superior teacher mentors. Schargel et al. contend that the skills, attitudes, and characteristics are essential to effective leadership, especially instructional leadership. Schargel et al. posited that successful schools with evidence-based practices include schools that truly believe all students can learn. They argue for the importance of shared vision, parent involvement, community stakeholder collaboration and the principal's contribution to staff as vital factors to student success.

Thus, the traditions surrounding leadership are vital to the effectiveness of a school (Marzano, 2003). Marzano (2003) indicates that an effective principal is thought to be a precondition for an effective school. Consequently, school leaders are capable of having significant positive effects on student learning and other outcomes (Klar & Brewer, 2013; Robinson et al. 2009; Silins & Mulford, 2002; Walters et al., 2003 as cited in Leithwood et al., 2010; Marzano, 2003; Schargel et al., 2007). Printy (2008), questions if school leaders can make a difference in how teachers think about their work with students in the classroom. She believes that it could explain important links in the causal chain between leadership and student achievement. Leithwood et al. posits that enough evidence is now at hand to justify claims about significant leadership effects on students. Leadership researchers question how those effects occur. They believe that the effects of school leadership on students are largely indirect.

Moreover, Klar and Brewer (2013) concur that decades of research have determined that principal leadership have a significant, if indirect, effect on student learning. Klar and Brewer stress the challenges and complexities of leading schools with high levels of poverty, diversity, and student/family mobility. Often, students from high poverty areas tend to move multiple times during the school year. Thus, despite widespread agreement among scholars that school leadership is influenced by context, relatively little research has focused on this critical aspect of leadership practice (p. 769).

Thus, the structure of urban schools with predominately Black urban schools with primarily Black populations often do not provide an atmosphere that is conductive to leadership practices that include commitment to students, compassion for students and

their families, and confidence in student's abilities (Tillman, 2008, p. 597). Tillman

conducted an empirical review for a study from an interdisciplinary approach, including

work from the fields of history, education, leadership, and supervision. Her study

included 58 Black principals, with emphasis on the importance of cultural proficiency,

implications for the preparation of school leaders, and how school leaders can impact the

education of African American students. Further, she included references and studies by

~~Dr. Asa~~ Hilliard (1999), a renowned professor and researcher who was concerned about

school leadership, particularly among the minority student population. Accordingly,

Tillman asserts the following:

> Evidence from this review of the literature on Black principals suggests that
>
> interpersonal caring in educational leadership can be effective in creating socially
>
> just learning environments that are conducive to promoting student success.
>
> Thus, interpersonal caring is a critical element of leadership in schools with
>
> predominantly Black student populations because it is often the case that many of
>
> these students have been subjected to external and internal factors that can
>
> contribute to low self-esteem and underachievement (p. 590).

 Finally, Tillman believes that the relationship between teachers and students and

principals and students is a critical factor in the social, emotional, and academic

development of students. She also emphasized the fact that Black principals may not be

the best fit for some schools because they may be "out of touch" with the community

where the students reside. Likewise, Tillman alluded to Hilliard (1999) who insisted that

teachers and leaders must know, understand, and acknowledge the cultural history of

students; and acknowledged the fact that "Master Leaders" can lead in any environment, despite their background and ethnicity. In other words, the leadership style of the school principal can strongly influence various elements of the school environment including teacher and staff attitudes, student learning, and academic achievement (Shatzer et al., 2013, p. 445).

Research question three asked "*What are the leadership "practices" in Tru-Tech Academy (pseudonym), and Properous High School (pseudonym) that are "beating the odds" for reduced dropout and graduating disproportionate minority students from high school?"* During my semistructured interview, each principal identified what they believed his/her leadership style and practice was for success. For example, Jane considered her leadership style as "collaborative" and "shared leadership". Matt on the other hand, considered his leadership style and practice as "distributive" and "shared leadership". Thus, both agreed upon the importance to include staff (teachers, counselors, guidance counselors, dropout prevention programs) in decisions surrounding student engagement and success. The research supports the notion of "shared leadership" as described and researched by both Rice (2006), and Senge (2006, 2009) in Chapter 2. Moreover, shared leadership was further described as teachers being encouraged to take on leadership roles, and involve themselves in school wide goals based on their areas of expertise and interest. Shared leadership also include the functions of counselors and social workers and other ancillary school and program personnel, parent/guardian and community involved in students' lives as they progress through their academic careers.

This process further assists the principal with the "buy-in" concept for improving, identifying, and retaining at risk youth (Rice, 2006, Senge, 2009).

In addition, research supports the importance of leadership style and practice in organizations that affect positive change in organizations. For example, Gilley, McMillan, and Gilley (2009) explored leadership behaviors and their effect on organizational changes. The study explored leaders' efforts and effectiveness in implementing change from their subordinates perspectives. Results of the study contributes to the research on leadership and organizational change in three areas:

- 74% of respondents reported that their leaders never, rarely, or sometimes were effective in implementing change.

- Certain leader skills and abilities have been positively associated with successfully implementing change, including the abilities to coach, communicate, involve others, motivate, reward, and build teams.

- Positive relationships were identified between certain leader behaviors and rates of success with change.

Gilley et al. focused on why change in organizations is difficult to achieve. They believe that leaders lack a clear understanding of change. They viewed change as evolutionary in organizations as: transitional, transformational or developmental. How and when the change is accepted relied largely on the methods of communication used and their perceived appropriateness by the individual. The stages of change acceptance were noted as: awareness, interest, trial, the decision to continue or quit, and adoption. Thus, during my research review, it appeared that transformational leadership is the

favored style of leadership. Moreover, research supports that multiple styles of leadership (i.e., transformational & democratic) are most common to effect change in complex environments.

A study by Bruggencate et al. (2012) research entitled the so-called LOLSO (leadership for organizational learning and student outcomes), consisted of a complex casual model. According to this model, transformational and distributive school leadership influenced student engagement and student school participation via organizational learning and teachers' work. Thus, the LOLSO model, heightened student engagement and student participation in school leading to higher retention rates (lower drop-out rates) and a better academic performance (p. 703).

Moreover, a common theme that emerged during the data analysis include the importance for the development of various committees established at the schools specific to student outcomes for success. For example, parent-teacher-student association; site-based teams (leader/teacher specific teams); credit recovery (assisting students who fell behind to obtain needed credits to graduate), and school-stakeholder committees (dropout prevention programs, Say Yes to Education, Truancy committee, and Mental Health Clinic housed in school).

In terms of research question #4: *How do the leadership practices of Tru-Tech Academy (pseudonym) and Properous High School (pseudonym) compare and contrast with one another?* Both school leaders asserts that students are coming into the schools with layers of problems from home and community. As mentioned in research question #3, both principal leaders have developed a number of teams in the school that address

student engagement and measureable outcomes for successful graduation from high school. They also stressed how "shared leadership" is critical in school and program environments. Thus, all of leaders in this study eluded to the importance for involving staff in decisions concerning their roles, student engagement, behavioral issues, and other factors as it relates to at risk youth. In terms of the various stakeholders, collaboration with various dropout prevention programs, the use of home visits (counselors & social workers), and community and social services programs are useful in their leadership practices as a viable resource for at risk youth and families. According to Jane, principal at Tru-Tech Academy:

> At risk youth appreciate structure, high expectations, and genuine caring adults who are consistent. When they sense a caring adult that appreciate their background and where they come from; students will receive it and are open to it. We need adults in this building who are setting clear examples of high expectations. If students are not coming in, there is a need to develop some type of outreach to check them out. It could be due to low self-esteem, lack of connection, and a need for flexible caring adults. When students can come to a school environment with caring adults, who provide structure and support for them to become successful, they feel engaged. On the other hand, if they sense adults who do not have a caring spirit, they "check out" resulting in disengagement from the educational environment. As the school leader, I set the tone for this process (caring) to take place throughout the building.

Thus, this statement seem to be in line with a study conducted earlier by

Monroe (2005), who posits that when students perceive that their lives and experiences are valued, they are less likely to engage in behaviors that express resistance against alienating school forces. In contrast, Matt, the principal of Prosperous High School stated the following:

> You know what is interesting and it seemed to be a real disconnect, high schools at large are having low numbers of parent participation. It is not that you don't want parents coming in all the time, but that does not necessary constitute parent involvement. For me, it is more important for a mom to talk with his/her child every day about school at dinner, than to come into the school once a week. Despite the fact that the district defines parent involvement as a parent physically coming into the building, that second layer of parent involvement comes into play and is just as important. For example, I make sure that my own kid's homework is done; we talk about college; I have not been in my child's school at all this year, but I am an involved parent. To me, if parents called the school to discuss their child's progress, attendance, etc. that seems to be parent involvement.

Another key finding is that the principal leaders noted that an automated calling system is in place that calls the home of students who are absent. Both leaders have a process in place to follow up on at risk youth by a staff person who have   excessive absences. Consequently, Matt (principal of Prosperous High School) indicated that he conducts home visits to student homes who have excessive absences. He asserts that the process provides an opportunity to meet the parent/guardian and re-engage the student in the academic environment. Thus, both principals concur that the lack of financial

resources (i.e., staff, funding) to urban schools, coupled by "a dysfunctional upper management team on the school board and the superintendent" did not help to combat the complexity and issues that urban youth face.

The research supports the aforementioned finding as it related to home visits and engaging students back into the educational arena. In a study by Ziomek-Daigle (2010) the "Graduation Coach Program" (GC) was conducted in the state of Georgia. The initiative was to assign a GC to every public high school to curb the state's 41% dropout rate. One individual at each school was dedicated to identify students at risk of dropping out of high school. The coaches' engaged parents and concerned adults and recruited organizations and government agencies to serve in a variety of ancillary roles. The GC was seen as the liaison between the school, community and the home. In 2008, it was reported that Georgia's graduation rate was at its highest ever at 75.4%. The Governor believed in the program and allocated appropriate funding of $15,400,000 to assign the graduation coaches. The results of this study showed how collaboration of systems has a positive impact on student high school completion. It also showed the importance of shared responsibility among significant systems in a student's life including school, family, and community. Similarly, in a study by Johnson (2014) posits that aligning the notion of parental "engagement" rather than "involvement" is a way to acknowledge issues of inequality that affect minority parents, while valuing bicultural parents' perspectives and contributions (Auebach, 2009; M. Johnson, 2011; Olivos, 2012 as cited in Johnson, 2014, p. 361). Lastly, Johnson believe that educators should be encouraged to envision school-home relationships in terms of family and community

partnerships and to recognize that "parents, educators, and others in the community share responsibility for students' learning and development".

Finally, research question #5: *What are the leadership "practices" in Pre-College /dropout prevention programs (Liberty Partnerships, and Upward Bound) that are "beating the odds" and influencing minority students (Liberty Partnerships & Upward Bound Programs are involved in both schools) to stay in school?* All of the program leaders concur that at risk youth are more vulnerable than other students. The majority of students are minority (Black, Hispanic), they come from high poverty and poverty stricken neighborhoods, and are more apt to be influenced negatively by peer pressure and crime. They indicated that they "incentivize" most things to keep this population engaged in the academic scene.

In contrast, the research supported a study by Carpenter and Ramirez (2007) concluded that race/ethnicity generally proved not to be a predictor for dropping out. They cited Darling-Hammond's (2007) study that concluded outcomes for students of color were much more a function of their unequal access to key educational resources, including skilled teachers and quality curriculum (p. 57). There are on-going studies of ethnic differences in academic achievement, which assume the intellectual and social inferiority of many minority group students and their families. The results are not favorable, and ended up in the generation of "deficit models" to explain the achievement gap. Students enrolled in America's urban inner-city schools represent an increasingly diverse student population with greater academic, economic, and social needs. Thus, there continues to be a need for more teachers who are skilled to work with these

youngsters in high risk schools. Moreover, there is a need for increased parental and community involvement as well as after school programs and other effective interventions for the success of urban students. Consequently, research conducted in this study has shown that pedagogy used in inner-city schools promote low rates of student engagement (Cole & Boykin, 2008).

Moreover, Jozefowicz-Simbeni (2008), as cited in Ziomek-Daigle (2010), suggest that dropout prevention takes a "multi-systemic, integrative services approach", and that six components are necessary for dropout prevention success:

- early identification and intervention

- individualized attention

- involvement of peers

- involvement of families

- involvement of community, and

- community-wide multiagency collaboration.

Ziomek-Daigle (2010) asserts that results of theoretical saturation: systemic influences, and accountabilities to school dropout should include the following components:

- At the School District level

  1. Awareness & Outreach

  2. Identification of student

  3. Development of graduation team

  4. Testing/tutoring

5. Academic supervision

6. Credit recovery (School or online)

7. Individual counseling

- At the community level:

8. Housing

9. Transportation

10. Health care

11. Individual counseling

12. Employment

13. Tutoring

- At the family level:

14. Basic needs

15. Support & supervision

16. Day care

17. Interpretation/Translation

18. Support & supervision

19. Mentoring (Ziomek-Daigle, 2010).

The above-mentioned components are important to stress because of the complex nature for providing a holistic approach to services to the at-risk student. Finally, the program leaders indicates that they are consistently creating program change to embrace these students to ensure that they stay in school and graduate. These leaders indicate that the "majority of the participants are first generation high school graduates and/or future

262

first time college attendee's." The program leaders noted that staff are in the schools as well as on college-based campuses to embrace and support these participants in various ways to complete high school. Thus, the precollege/dropout prevention program leaders revealed that they have experienced a higher graduation rate (95%) than the Castle School District (56%) in 2011-12 among the senior class of students enrolled the programs. Lastly, the leader participants indicated that they are continuing to look at ways to increase pre-college/dropout prevention program's presence in the schools; continually using strategies and being creative to retain students in the dropout prevention programs; educating teachers/school personnel and college educators about the significance of the programs; and to increase parental and community involvement to support their efforts in the area of at risk youth and reduced high school dropout rates.

<h3 align="center">Limitations of the Study</h3>

In Chapter one, I presented some potential limitations of the study. The first one included the methodological limitations as it related to the value and validity of the questionnaire instruments developed, and the method of collecting data. After researching various databases and resources for surveys that could be used in my study, I did not discover any that were appropriate. Thus, I developed the survey questionnaires for both student participants and leader participants for this study. I was cognizant of the types of questions that were posed to the respondents and made sure that they were clear, precise, and meaningful. I was the sole researcher for the administration of the surveys (including collecting them, and providing the $2 stipend to participating students); conducted the pilot study; conducted the semistructured interviews; and analyzed all the data for both

the qualitative and quantitative phases of this mixed method study. Another

methodological limitation could have included my bias and potential lack of objectivity

in the interpretation of data due to my personal experience with dropout prevention

programs as a former director of the Liberty Partnerships Program in the 1990's at the

University at Castle (pseudonym). However, I minimized the potential bias by using

various strategies to enhance the reliability and validity of my study by the use of

triangulation. Thus, the process enabled me to stay focused specifically on the data. A

key finding in the area of dropout prevention programs was that the leaders and staff of

these programs worked tireless to keep at risk youth in school. I reflected on my own

experiences as a program director as I was coding and analyzing the data. I knew from

experience that there were many challenges that program leaders and principal leaders

faced as it related to having the appropriate resources (staffing, funding) to realize the

necessary "holistic approaches" (i.e., case management activities, tracking, advocacy, and

inclusion of stakeholder involvement) for students' success. Moreover, there seemed to

be a constant need for reiteration by program leaders of the value of dropout prevention

programs to school personnel and teachers. Thus, the programs were designed to assist

schools in their dropout prevention efforts, not to supplant educational services. Often,

administrators of schools as well as educators perceived dropout prevention programs as

only additional educational support in the schools. In many ways, that was partly accurate

due to the tutorial component of the programs. However, the main focus of dropout

prevention programs are student engagement, and providing "innovative approaches to

learning" (i.e., tutoring, case management, career awareness, college tours to historically

Black Colleges, classes on campus, and college readiness) in a non-traditional setting

(campus based) to ensure that they stay in school and graduate. Consequently, the

program leaders worked closely with the students, school leaders, the students' parents,

stakeholders and community entities to keep them in school. Moreover, it was interesting

to visualize the outcome of some of the data in this study. For example, it appeared that a

higher percentage of participants involved in dropout prevention programs enjoyed going

to school than participants not involved in a dropout prevention program. This could be

attributed to the fact that students involved in dropout prevention programs were exposed

to additional resources and staff (i.e., tutors, counselors, and enrichment activities offered

by the programs), and after school campus based activities (classes, computer assisted

learning, living in the dorms during the summer) offered by dropout prevention

programs. Thus, these aforementioned resources provided innovative engagement

activities for at risk youth' ability to stay in school and graduate.

Another interesting outcome from the data indicated that participants involved in

dropout prevention programs were more likely to go to an adult in the school building to

discuss personal and academic concerns than participants not involved in dropout

prevention programs. This could be attributed to the fact that dropout prevention staff is

also housed in the participating schools and participants have developed a relationship

with them in addition to the traditional school staff, i.e., teachers, administrators. Lastly, I

included other outcomes from analyzing the student data in Appendices Q & R.

The third limitation concerned the instruments that I designed for this study.

Some of the questions that I asked on the leader questionnaire survey could have been

revised. At times during the semistructured interviews, I found myself "veering off "somewhat from asking the specific questions on the survey. This could have been attributed to my limited experience in the area of conducting research. Thus, instead of combining both leader surveys (principal, program director), it may have been practical to design two separate ones, which may have shown specific feedback from the leader types, i.e. program leader or principal leader.

The final limitation in this study included the conflict that was occurring in the Castle School District between the superintendent, and some of the school board members. Thus, as CEO's of school districts, superintendents provide leadership that is critical to student success. Moreover, superintendent leadership generally was positively correlated with student achievement in a large meta-analysis study (Marzano & Waters, 2009 as cited in Hough, 2014). In this study, Marzano & Waters found a relationship between superintendent leadership and student achievement that was based on 14 studies conducted over 35 years, including data from 1,210 districts, and provided strong support for the importance of superintendent effectiveness to outcomes for students (p. 33). Moreover, Castle's superintendent was hired unanimously by the majority school board (all female African Americans) in 2012 after a National Search by the school district, after a "fall out" from the previous superintendent (an African American male who they brought out his contract). The new superintendent was a qualified, African American female with credentials and experiences overseeing large school districts in other major urban areas. However, she was not well received by the minority White male board. It appeared that they had other plans for the interim superintendent to stay on board on a

permanent basis. Moreover, the interim superintendent lacked the necessary credentials and experience to oversee a large school district such as the Castle School district (pseudonym). Thus, that was the culmination of an "on-going battle "of the school board members, which included newly elected board members (the minority became the majority), and the subsequent forced resignation of the newly hired superintendent. Thus, due to the conflict that existed as mentioned; coupled with the fact that the teachers employed by the district has not had a contract in 11 years; affected my decision to select only two out of the 17 high schools in the district for involvement in this study.

Recommendations

The recommendations related to both the findings from this study as well as from the literature review. First, there is a need to explore perceptions of parents/guardians and family members as it related to why students drop out of school. Research showed that students began to think about dropping out and/or become disengaged from the academic scene as early as the second grade. Dropping out of school is not something that happened overnight. It is a thought process that had been there for some time. Moreover, the Alliance for Excellent Education (2014) stress how early warning signs in the data may identify students at risk of dropping out. Some of these signs include attendance history; class performance and socioeconomic status are the most accurate predictors of future dropout risks (p. 3). Understanding this process could assist leaders, educators, school board members, superintendents, and lawmakers to assess the underlying reasons for students dropping out of school. In turn, the process could provide an argument for

lawmakers to channel additional funding to schools, and dropout prevention programs to obtain the necessary resources and/or interventions to assist students to stay in school.

Thus, as stakeholders look at their student data to determine which students may be at-risk for high school dropout, it is important to consider social indicators, like family and student homelessness, alongside academic indicators (e.g., GPA, course credits). Social indicators are among the red flags that a student may be at risk for dropping out, especially when combined with other signs, such as repeating a grade and/or changing schools. Thus, leaders and education stakeholders should take steps to understand the entire context of a potential dropout's situation so they can help provide the right strategies to get them back on-track for success (NHSC, 2013, p. 1). Thus, the data in this study reflected the importance of students' knowledge-base of who the leaders are in the building, his/her relationship with teachers, and/or other adults in the school or home, and their association with dropout prevention programs.

Another recommendation concerned the evaluation of precollege/dropout prevention programs. The leaders reported that funding to their programs had been reduced over the years, resulting in the reduction of staff and other resources. It would be critical for leaders to report the graduation statistics of their programs to the school district to show the continued success of these programs. Moreover, program leaders should attend on-going school board meetings throughout the year, as well as attend administrative/faculty meetings at the participating schools to discuss successful findings and challenges faced in providing dropout prevention services to at risk youth.

Another recommendation involved the increased diversity in the student population in the Castle school district. Despite the fact that the Castle school district had an approximate 80% diverse student population, between 2003 and 2013, nearly 10,000 refugees fleeing war, genocide and political attacks arrived in Castle, New York. Moreover, there was a large influx of people from Blutan, Burma, Iraq, Nepal, Somalia and Sudan as well as from other countries. Generally, they have difficulties with English and American culture. According to Relief agencies, they placed them according to various criteria, including services available, affordability and friends or family in an area. Thus, Castle, New York is expecting another 2,000 refugees this year. Currently, refugee students were immersed in the school district, and were counted in the district's graduation/dropout rate. Thus, compromising slight gains made in the overall dropout rates in the district. Perhaps, the district needs to find a way to exclude those refugee students' until another method is sought.

Another recommendation is for increased cultural diversity seminars be implemented in the Castle school district. This should be an integral mandatory component in the district's staff development plans throughout the year. This recommendation is based on the fact that the district had an approximate 80% student diverse population, and an approximate 87% Caucasian teacher/staffing in the schools. Administrators and teachers need to build relationships with diverse students and parents. Moreover, in a study by Johnson (2014), it showed that even in school contexts where external assistance was provided from the partnership with the comprehensive school reform model, America's choice, some middle schools teachers struggled with how to

deal with the academic diversity of their students. "These teachers" low expectations were dominated by implicit racialized and class-based deficit beliefs where the onus for change was placed on students rather than on teacher practices" (p. 358). Thus, based on the student data generated in this study, a high percentage of students reported a need to develop better relationships with teachers, and teachers to develop relationships with diverse parents, and so on. As mentioned earlier in this paper, parent influence and connectedness to the school and in the student's education increases student performance.

Lastly, this research study lacked the input from parents. It is recommended that in future qualitative and quantitative studies that parent voices and their views related to dropout issues, and connectedness to school and teachers could be worthwhile exploring and should be included in similar studies. Research has shown that children from low-income and minority families had the most to gain when schools involved parents.

Implications for Social Change

There were numerous implications for social change in leadership and education that emerged from this study. The first implication was the high cost of dropping out on a personal level and to society. The cost of dropping out of high school has always been high but it appears to be greater today. According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2009), over the past three decades, individuals without a high school diploma have had a severe decline in their income. They noted that the result was a pattern of severe economic marginalization.

According to the National High School Center-NHSC (2007), the following indicators were discovered that identify who is most likely to drop out. Schools need to identify students who:

- receive poor grades in core subjects,

- possess low attendance rates,

- fail to be promoted to the next grade, and

- are disengaged in the classroom.

These were considered better predictors of dropout than fixed status indicators such as gender, race, and poverty, although background factors were indeed often associated with dropout, including being born male, economically disadvantaged, African American, or Latino (p. 2).

Moreover, the NHSC posited the following:

About 1.3 million students did not graduate from United States high schools in 2004, costing more than $325 billion in lost wages, taxes, and productivity. The

more than 12 million students who will drop out over the next decade will cost the nation about $3 trillion (p. 2).

However, a study by the NCES (2011) indicates that the potential benefits of increasing the graduation rates would be alarming. For example, an 8.1 billion in increased annual earnings, $6.1 billion in increased annual spending, $16.8 billion in increased home sales; $877 million in increased auto sales; and, 65,700 new jobs.

Taylor (2005) asserted that there is a need to encourage more youngsters to complete high school. A high school dropout earned about $260,000 less over a lifetime than a high school graduate. They paid about $60,000 less in taxes. Annual losses exceeded $50 billion in federal and state income taxes for all 23,000,000 U.S. high school dropouts ages 18 and over. Accordingly, increasing the high school completion rate by just 1% for all men ages 20 to 60 would save the U.S. up to $1.4 billion per year in reduced cost from crime. While there are a number of opportunities that students could take advantage of in their quest to graduate from high school, the focus should be for young people to become educated and mainstreamed into the workforce to enhance America's economy. Particularly, as more "baby boomers" are retiring, the need for additional revenue will be necessary. It is appalling to have such alarming numbers of high school dropouts in America's urban high schools.

The second implication for social change is for leaders, school board members, superintendents, and lawmakers to continue to address the learning and emotional needs, lack of role models (specifically men of color) for urban at risk youth in urban schools. Many of these at risk youth face challenges that warrant them to dropout based on

absentee parents, neglectful parents, and abuse of alcohol and drug abuse of parents/guardians. Many of these students do not fare well in traditional school settings. This is in line with the student survey administered in this study (Appendix J). The data suggest that changing the school day to a later start time, from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. would be beneficial. Students also recommended other changes such as improved lunches, longer gym classes, and the need for tutoring. The dropout prevention programs seemed to use innovative programs such as tracking students throughout their high school career and beyond. Thus, students who enroll in the dropout/precollege programs are generally consistent in their attendance, and attrition is low. As noted, the majority of students involved in the Upward Bound Program are first generation college students. According to the program leaders, a mandate by the Federal Government that funds the program js "tracking students" throughout high school and college is required. This process ensure that they follow students through their high school career.

National statistics surrounding high school dropouts highlight the far-reaching extent of the problem:

- 30 percent of students who enter high school this year will not graduate in four years, while roughly half of all African American and Latino students entering high school will not graduate in four years.

- Increasing the high school completion rate by just one percent for all men ages 20 to 60 would reduce costs in the criminal justice system by $1.4 billion a year.

- Globally, the United States ranks 17th in high school graduation rates and 14th in college graduation rates among developed nations. Concurrently, about 90 percent of the fastest growing jobs will require some post-secondary education (Kennelly & Monrad, 2007, p. 3).

These statistics revealed that there are important moral, social, and economic imperatives for resolving to turn around the dropout crisis. Dropout prevention strategies are important to the at risk population in school districts, particularly in urban schools where higher concentrations of minorities attend. The high school dropout rate among minority children is of particular concern because it is as high as 50% in some of the major urban cities across this Country (The Annie Casey Foundation, 2009, NCES, 2011). The characteristic risk factors of high school dropouts include: (a) being poor; (b) having a parent who has dropped out; (c) repeated grade retentions; (d) suspensions; and (e) high absenteeism and peer pressure associated with a student's propensity to drop out of high school. Consequently, at the same time, accountability measures, intense educational reform, and high stakes testing of the 21st Century related to No Child Left behind (NCLB), and Race to the Top are also critical factors in America's schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2000, U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

The final implication is the benefits of this research study to the Castle school district for: (a) the continued assessment (qualitative and quantitative studies) of the relationship of effective leadership on students staying in school (whether directly or indirectly); (b) the link to reduced dropout rates; (c) what support leaders/teachers need in their efforts to reach students who "at-risk" of dropping out of high school; and (d)

understanding the factors (i.e., being poor, negative peer pressure) that negatively impact at-risk students' ability to stay in school and graduate. The outcome of this study contributes to social and educational change by identifying effective leadership practices and strategies that collaborate (dropout prevention programs, parents, community, and other stakeholders) on behalf of students to keep them in school, and understanding the variety of factors that contribute to high school dropout among the at-risk population.

Reflections on the Research Process

After researching various databases and resources for surveys that could possibly be used in my study, I did not discover any that were pertinent or appropriate. Thus, I designed the survey questionnaires for both student participants and leader participants for this study. I was cognizant of the types of questions that were posed to the respondents and made sure that they were clear, precise, and meaningful. However, some of the questions that I asked on the leader questionnaire survey could have been revised. At times during the semistructured interviews, I found myself "veering off" at times from asking the specific questions on the survey. This could have been attributed to my limited experience in the area of conducting research. In addition, instead of combining both leader surveys (principal, program director); it may have been more practical to have designed two separate surveys. Moreover, I was the sole researcher for the administration of the surveys (including traveling to the schools & campus-based sites, introducing the study, collecting the surveys, and providing the $2 stipend to participating students); conducted the pilot study; conducted the semi-structured interviews; and analyzed data for both the qualitative and quantitative phases of this

mixed method study. I kept a journal throughout my study to maintain my focus for validation purposes; and used it as an instrument for reflection throughout this study. In many instances, I had to assess my bias and potential lack of objectivity in the interpretation of data due to my personal experience with dropout prevention programs as a former director of the Liberty Partnerships Program in the 1990s at the University at Castle. I minimized the potential bias by using a variety of strategies to enhance the reliability and validity of my study by the use of triangulation. Thus, the process enabled me to stay focused specifically on the data. A key finding in the area of dropout prevention programs was that the leaders and staff of these programs worked tireless with these students and their families to keep them in school. I reflected on my own experiences as a program director as I was coding and analyzing the data. I knew from experience that there were many challenges that program and principal leaders faced as it related to having the appropriate resources (staffing, funding & upper administrative support) to realize the necessary "holistic approaches" (i.e., case management activities, tracking, advocacy, and inclusion of stakeholder involvement) for students' success. Often, these students had chronic absences, and do not have "adult supervision" in the home. Many of these students are responsible for themselves due to their lack of "parental involvement or responsible adult" who monitors their whereabouts or attendance in school. Thus, there is a constant need for reiteration by program leaders for explaining the value of dropout prevention programs. The programs are designed to assist schools in their dropout prevention efforts, not to supplant educational services. Often, administrators of schools as well as educators perceive dropout prevention

programs as additional educational/staff supports (i.e., tutors, counselors) in the schools.

In many ways, that is partly accurate due to the tutorial component of the programs.

However, the main focus of dropout prevention programs is continuos student

engagement, and providing "innovative approaches to learning" (i.e., tutoring, case

management, student-family intervention, career awareness, college tours to historically

Black Colleges, classes on campus, and college readiness) in a non-traditional setting

(campus- based) to support schools in their dropout prevention efforts. Consequently, the

program leaders work closely with students, school leaders, parents, stakeholders and

community entities to keep at risk students in school. Moreover, it was interesting to

visualize the outcome of the data in this study that supported my research questions. It

was truly an "eye opener," Finally, I realize the importance for all students to have a

strong foundation of parental support and/or a "safety net", whether it is a positive

mentor in the home, school, church, or community that supports and encourage these at

risk youth.

Conclusion

The gaps in the research is clear that students' reason for high school dropout

vary. One noteworthy finding is that student dropout is not just academic failure, but also

the lack of support from families, schools, and communities. Moreover, the importance of

effective leadership in America's urban schools continues to be of significant value and

concern. This study contributes to social and educational change by providing leaders

(i.e., principals, directors) with the realization that a relationship exists, although indirect,

between leadership practices and reduced high school dropout of at-risk youth. Results

indicate that principals are influential in assisting teachers and staff in understanding

factors that contribute to high school dropout of at-risk youth. The use of multiple styles

of leadership (i.e., transformational, distributive) are recommended as critical in complex

environments. Likewise, the review of the literature suggest that relationship building

between student and adults is critical for continuity and connectedness to school. Clearly,

there is a need to hear what parents have to say about their views and involvement in the

education system. Until educational institutions communicate with parents, assess their

views in various areas as it relates to their child, and investigate how schools can partner

with parents; the possibilities for collaborating with parents is limited (Brock &

Edmunds, 2010, p. 49). Today, dropping out of school should not be an option for any

child. Particularly, due to the variety of initiatives available (i.e., precollege/dropout

prevention and after-school programs, credit recovery, student specific case management,

and advocacy activities, mental health services, and counselors available in the schools)

to combat this prevailing phenomenon. Thus, the days of blame for students dropping

out such as: (a) districts blaming the administrators; (b) parents blaming the schools; (c)

teachers blaming the parents; (d) students blaming the teachers; and so on are over. Each

entity must take some responsibility when a student dropout of school. Ultimately, it

affects all systems in one way or the other.

Finally, results of these data indicate that students dropping out of school, and

efforts to re-engage them was taken very seriously by the leaders in this study. It is not a

problem that can be ignored due to increased accountability issues, as well as the moral

issue, and the economic impact that dropout has on society. Moreover, as Mansfield-

Cumings (2013) indicates that student voices raise a level of engagement as well as trust. The students in this study are very optimistic about completing high school and viewed the value of obtaining a high school diploma as critical.

Lastly, communities, lawmakers, leaders, faith-based institutions, educators, and parents must continue to assess their role in the dropout phenomenon. Students currently enrolled in urban public schools want to be there; and, dropout should not be an option. Future qualitative and quantitative studies should include parent voices as it relates to high school dropout and connectedness to school. Research has shown that children from low income and minority families had the most to gain when schools involved parents.

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Appendix A: Letter of Cooperation From a Community Research Partner

Tru Tech Academy

Castle School District

March 5, 2014

Dear Kathy Evans Brown,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled <u>The Link Between Leadership and Reduced High School Drop Out Rates:</u> within the <u>Tru Tech Academy</u>. As part of this study, I authorize you to <u>purposively sample 140 students via survey questionnaire in grades 9-12 (70 students not involved in Liberty Partnerships, Upward Bound or Talent Search Programs; and 70 students who are involved in Liberty Partnerships, Upward Bound or Talent Search Programs), administer questionnaire to leaders, and interview specific leaders</u>. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: conversations/discussions with key administrators (principal, assistant principals & principal designated staff), provide a key individual to assist the researcher with the timeframes, location of study halls, and availability of participants, provide available space/room for interviews and for the completion of student survey questionnaires pertinent to the study, as well as supervision that the partner will provide. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting. I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the research team without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

Principal

Walden University policy on electronic signatures: An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically. Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Electronic signatures are only valid when the signer is either (a) the sender of the email, or (b) copied on the email containing the signed document. Legally an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. Walden University staff verify any electronic signatures that do not originate from a password-protected source (i.e., an email address officially on file with Walden).

IRB Approval#03-10-14-0047017
Expires on 1-15-2015

Appendix B: Letter of Cooperation From a Community Research Partner

Prosperous High School
Principal

March 5, 2014

Dear Kathy Evans Brown,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled <u>The Link Between Leadership and Reduced High School Drop Out Rates:</u> within <u>Prosperous High School</u>. As part of this study, I authorize you to <u>purposively sample 140 students via survey questionnaire in grades 9-12 (70 students not involved in Liberty Partnerships or Upward Bound ; and 70 students who are involved in Liberty Partnerships or Upward Bound), administer questionnaire to leaders, disseminate survey to students, interview specific leaders)</u>. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: conversations/discussions with key administrators (principal, assistant principals & principal designated staff), provide a key individual to assist the researcher with the timeframes, location of study halls, and availability of participants, provide available space/room for interviews and for the completion of student survey questionnaires pertinent to the study, as well as supervision that the partner will provide. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting. I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the research team without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

Principal

Walden University policy on electronic signatures: An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically. Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Electronic signatures are only valid when the signer is either (a) the sender of the email, or (b) copied on the email containing the signed document. Legally an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. Walden University staff verify any electronic signatures that do not originate from a password-protected source (i.e., an email address officially on file with Walden).

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Expires on 1-15-2015

Appendix C: Letter of Cooperation From a Community Research Partner

Liberty Partnerships Program

Director

March 5, 2014

Dear Kathy Evans Brown,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled <u>The Link Between Leadership and Reduced High School Drop Out Rates:</u> within the <u>University at Castle Liberty Partnerships Program</u>. As part of this study, I authorize you to <u>purposefully sample 50 students via survey questionnaire in grades 9-12 involved in Liberty Partnerships Program and enrolled at the Tru Tech Academy , and 50 students via survey questionnaire in grades 9-12 involved in Liberty Partnerships Program and enrolled at Prosperous High School, administer questionnaire to leader, interview leader, and disseminate survey to students.</u> Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: Conversations/discussions with key administrators (director & director's designated staff), provide available room/space for interviews & for completion of survey questionnaires, pertinent to the study, provide a key individual to assist the researcher with the timeframes, location of study halls, and availability of participants, and supervision that the partner will provide. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting. I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the research team without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

Director

Walden University policy on electronic signatures: An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically. Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Electronic signatures are only valid when the signer is either (a) the sender of the email, or (b) copied on the email containing the signed document. Legally an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. Walden University staff verify any electronic signatures that do not originate from a password-protected source (i.e., an email address officially on file with Walden).

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Expires on 1-15-2015

Appendix D: Letter of Cooperation From a Community Research Partner

Upward Bound Program

March 5, 2014

Dear Kathy Evans Brown,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled <u>The Link Between Leadership and Reduced High School Drop Out Rates:</u> within the <u>University at Castle Upward Bound Program</u>. As part of this study, I authorize you to <u>purposefully sample 50 students via survey questionnaire in grades 9-12 involved in the Upward Bound Program and enrolled at Tru Tech Academy , and 50 students via survey questionnaire in grades 9-12 involved in Upward Bound Program and enrolled at Prosperous High School, administer questionnaire to leader, disseminate survey to students, and interview leader</u>. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: Conversations/discussions with key administrators (director & director's designated staff), provide a key individual to assist the researcher with the timeframes, location of study halls, and availability of participants, provide available room for interviews with leader and for completion of survey questionnaire pertinent to the study, and supervision that the partner will provide. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting. I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the research team without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,
Director

Walden University policy on electronic signatures: An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically. Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Electronic signatures are only valid when the signer is either (a) the sender of the email, or (b) copied on the email containing the signed document. Legally an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. Walden University staff verify any electronic signatures that do not originate from a password-protected source (i.e., an email address officially on file with Walden).

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Expires on 1-15-201

Appendix E: Letter of Cooperation From a Community Research Partner

Upward Bound Program
 Director
Castle College
Buffalo, New York 14216

July 29, 2014

Dear Kathy Evans Brown,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled <u>The Link Between Leadership and Reduced High School Drop Out Rates:</u> within <u>the Upward Bound Program</u>. As part of this study, I authorize you to <u>purposefully sample 50 students via survey questionnaire in grades 9-12 involved in the Upward Bound Program and enrolled at ProsperousHigh School, administer questionnaire to leader, disseminate survey to students, and interview leaders,</u> and provide a key individual to assist the researcher with the timeframes, location of study halls, and availability of participants. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: conversations/discussions with key administrators (director & director's designated staff), provide available room/space for interview with leader, as well as space/room for participants to complete survey questionnaire pertinent to the study, and supervision that the partner will provide. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting. I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the research team without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

Director

Walden University policy on electronic signatures: An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically. Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Electronic signatures are only valid when the signer is either (a) the sender of the email, or (b) copied on the email containing the signed document. Legally an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. Walden University staff verify any electronic signatures that do not originate from a password-protected source (i.e., an email address officially on file with Walden).

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Expires on 1-15-2015

Appendix F: Consent Form for Students

Assent Form for Research

Student participants

Hello, my name is Kathy Evans Brown. My project title is "The Link Between Leadership and Reduced High School Dropout Rates". I want you to learn about the project before you decide if you want to be in it. I am doing a research study to learn the importance of leadership and its effect on students staying in school. I also want to discern why some students stay in school, and why a large proportion of students dropout.   You have been purposefully selected to participate in my study because you are in Grades 9-12 who attend one of the two schools participating in my study. The potential significance of the study is to determine the effects of leadership and reduced dropout rates in urban public schools. The benefits of the research study will assist leaders to help teachers' efforts to reach students who are "at-risk" of dropping out of high school.

Who I am:

I am a student at Walden University. I am working on my doctoral degree. I am currently conducting field work for data collection such as administering a survey questionnaire to you to obtain honest answers about the alarming dropout rates among students, particularly in urban areas throughout this country.

About the project:

If you agree to be in this project, you will be asked to:

Complete the survey questionnaire, which will take approximately 20 minutes. Each question will consist of a ranking such as: 4- Strongly agree 3-Agree   2- Strongly disagree   1- Disagree.

How you decide to answer is your business, just be honest. There is no right or wrong answers, just how YOU answer the question is important.

Here are some sample questions:

 I have thought about leaving school and never returning after a tough day on more than one occasion.
          4- Strongly agree 3-Agree   2- Strongly disagree   1- Disagree

I stay in school because I realize the importance of obtaining a high school diploma.
           4- Strongly agree 3-Agree   2- Strongly disagree   1- Disagree

I know the names of my principal and assistant principals
      4- Strongly agree 3-Agree   2- Strongly disagree   1- Disagree

It's your choice:

You don't have to be in this project if you don't want to. If you decide now that you want to join the project, you can still change your mind later. If you want to stop, you can.

Being in this project might make you tired or stressed, just like taking some type of exam. However, there are no risks associated in taking part in this study. But we are hoping this project might help others by proving that you have taken great lengths in providing your input to a worthwhile endeavor, encouraging other youth about the benefits of an education, and contributing to research and society.

Payment

Each participant will receive a gift card ($2) upon completion of the survey questionnaire as a thank you gift from the researcher.

Privacy:

Everything you tell me during this project will be kept private. That means that no one else will know your name or what answers you gave. I will not use your name at all in the research records. Instead, a pseudonym will be assigned. This will ensure anonymity and protect the confidentiality of participants. The only time I have to tell someone is if I learn about something that could hurt you or someone else. Lastly, you will be completing the survey in a designated room assigned for that purpose among other students who will be completing the same survey questionnaire.

Disclosure of potential conflict of interest:

The researcher has a son who attends one of the participating schools in this study. Also, I am a substitute teacher employed by the Castle School district. However, I have not worked at any of the participating schools in this study. Lastly, I have a professional relationship with two of the program directors involved in this study. I do not anticipate that any of these aforementioned citations will cause any harm in my subjectivity or objectivity during my research study.

Asking questions:

You can ask me any questions you want now. If you think of a question later, you or your parents can reach me at: or email Kathy.Evans-Brown@waldenu.edu. If you or your parents would like to ask my university a question, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. Her phone number is 1-800-925-3368, then dial 3121210.

Please sign your name below if you want to join this project. Thank you.

Name of student

Student Signature

Date

Researcher Signature

I will give you a copy of this form.

IRB Approval#03-10-14-0047017
Expires on 1-15-2015

Appendix G: Parent Consent Form

Your child is invited to take part in a research study: The Link Between Leadership and Reduced High School Dropout Rates, which will study the relationship of leadership and its effect on students staying in school and graduating. The researcher is inviting students who are enrolled at Tru Tech Academy and/or Prosperous High School to be in the study. The potential significance of this study is to determine the effects of leadership and reduced dropout rates in urban public schools. The benefits of the research study will assist leaders to help the teachers identify students who may be at risk of dropping out of school. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to allow your child to take part. This study is being conducted by a researcher named Kathy Evans-Brown, who is a <u>doctoral student </u>at Walden University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to explore factors that contribute to high school dropout rates in urban schools. The study will explore leadership characteristics that can contribute to reduced high school dropout and, in turn increase potential graduation rates among this population.

Procedures:

If you agree to allow your child to be in this study, your child will:

Complete a survey questionnaire, which will take approximately 20 minutes. It will be completed either in school or at the University/College site (if enrolled in LPP or Upward Bound)

Here are some sample questions:

I have thought about leaving school and never returning after a tough day on more than one occasion.
        4- Strongly agree 3-Agree   2- Strongly disagree   1- Disagree

I stay in school because I realize the importance of obtaining a high school diploma.
         4- Strongly agree 3-Agree   2- Strongly disagree   1- Disagree

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you want your child to be in the study. Of course, your child's decision is also an important factor. After obtaining parent consent, the researcher will explain the study and let each child decide if they wish to volunteer. No one at the school will treat you or your child differently if you or your child decides to not be in the study. If you decide to consent now, you or your child can still change your mind later. Any children who feel stressed during the study may stop at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that your child might encounter in daily life, such as taking a subject test. Being in this study would not pose risk to your child's safety or wellbeing. But we are hoping this project might help others by proving that you have taken great lengths in providing your input to a worthwhile endeavor and encouraging other youth about the benefits of an education, and providing input to research.

Disclosure of potential conflict of interest:

The researcher has a son who attends one of the participating schools in this study. Also, I am a substitute teacher employed by the Castle School district. However, I have not worked at any of the participating schools in this study. Lastly, I have a professional relationship with two of the program directors involved in this study. I do not anticipate that any of these aforementioned citations will cause any harm in my subjectivity or objectivity during my research study.

Payment:

Each student participant will receive a gift card ($2) upon completion of the survey questionnaire as a thank you gift from the researcher

Privacy:

Any information your child provides will be kept <u>confidential</u> or <u>anonymous</u> The researcher will not use your child's information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your child's name or anything else that could identify your child in any reports of the study. The only time the researcher would need to share your child's name or information would be if the researcher learns about possible harm to your child or someone else. All electronic data will be kept by a protected pass word on my personal computer. All of the collected surveys will be kept securely in a locked box by the researcher. Data will be kept for a period of 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via: or email <u>Kathy.Evans-Brown@waldenu.edu</u>. If you want to talk privately about your child's rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University staff member who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 1-800-925-3368, extension 3121210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **IRB approval #03-10-14-0047017** and it expires on **1-15-2015**.

Parent/Guardian signature _____

Name of your child(ren)_____

Grade level_____

Name of School child attend (check one below)

Buffalo Academy of Visual & Performing Arts   ___

East High School ___

Date _____

I will give you a copy of this form

IRB Approval#03-10-14-0047017
Expires on 1-15-2015

Appendix H: Invitation for Leaders to Participate in Study

You are invited to take part in a research study entitled "The Link between Leadership and Reduced High School Drop Out Rates". You were chosen for the study because you are an administrator and/or leader at the research site. Please read this form and ask any questions you have before agreeing to be part of the study. This study is being conducted by a researcher named Kathy Evans-Brown, a doctoral candidate at Walden University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to explore factors which contribute to reduced high school dropout rates, and increased student outcomes particularly among a disproportionate number of minority youth (African American, Hispanic, Native American and Asian) in urban schools. The study will explore leadership characteristics that can contribute to reduced high school dropout, and in turn increase potential graduation rates among this population. The potential significance of the study is to determine the effects of leadership and reduced dropout rates in urban public schools. The benefits of the research study will assess the relationship of effective leadership on students staying in school (whether directly or indirectly) and the link to reduced dropout rates; what support leaders/teachers need in their efforts to reach students who are "at-risk" of dropping out of high school; and factors that negatively impact at-risk students' ability to stay in school and graduate.

Disclosure of potential conflict of interest:

The researcher has a son who attends one of the participating schools in this study. Also, I am a substitute teacher employed by the Castle School district. However, I have not worked at any of the participating schools in this study. Lastly, I have a professional relationship with two of the program directors involved in this study. I do not anticipate that any of these aforementioned citations will cause any harm in my subjectivity or objectivity during my research study.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to complete a leadership survey questionnaire, which will take approximately 30 minutes to complete; and answer a series of questions that relate to your opinions and perspectives of leadership, identifying at risk youth, relationships with subordinates, common goals, and your view of dropout prevention interventions that are in place.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Your participation in this study is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you want to be in the study. No one will treat you differently if

you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. If you feel stressed during the study you may stop at any time. You may skip questions that you feel are too personal.

Risks and Benefits in the Study:

There are no risks associated with participating in this study. However, there may be minimal psychological risks for leaders during their participation in the interviews. Thus, in the event you experience stress or anxiety during your participation in this study you may terminate your participation at any time. You may refuse to answer any questions you consider invasive or stressful. The only benefits are the opportunity to state your perspectives and know that you are positively contributing to research.

Compensation:

There will be no compensation provided for your participation in this study. However, your participation in this study will positively contribute to social and educational reform as it relate to the students that we work with in the schools. Moreover, you will be providing your leadership expertise to the area of how teachers could identify at-risk characteristics among students, in efforts to reduce dropout rates in urban school districts.

Confidentiality:

Any information you provide will be kept anonymous. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any reports of the study. I will not use your name at all in the research records. Instead, a pseudonym will be assigned. This will ensure anonymity and protect the confidentiality of participants. All electronic data will be kept by a protected pass word on my personal computer. All of the collected surveys will be kept securely in a locked box by the researcher. Data will be kept for a period of 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher's name is Kathy Evans-Brown. The researcher's chair/advisor is Dr. Joseph Barbeau. You may ask any questions you may have now, or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher at Kathy.Evans-Brown@waldenu.edu or the chair/advisor at Joseph.Barbeau@waldenu.edu If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Director of the Research Center at Walden University. Her telephone number is 1-800-925-3368 extension 3121210.

<div align="center">

IRB Approval#03-10-14-0047017
Expires on 1-15-2015

</div>

Participant signature _____

Researcher's signature_____

I give you a copy of this form

IRB Approval#03-10-14-0047017
Expires on 1-15-2015

Appendix I: Leadership Questionnaire

LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

Please answer the following questions as frank and honest as you can. The researcher identifies the leaders in the study as principals (and those designated by the principal), assistant principals, and directors of precollege programs. Some questions may be specific to school leaders, and some may be specific to directors of precollege programs. Disregard the questions that you feel do not pertain to you as a leader. Indicate the level of leadership practice by checking below as follows: 4-Strongly agree; 3-Agree; 2-Disagree; 1-Strongly Disagree.

1. The administrators at my school/organization create a school environment that helps children learn.

4- Strongly agree___
3- Agree___
2- Disagree__
1-Strongly Disagree__

2. How effective is the leadership of your school's/program chair?
4- Strongly agree___
3- Agree___
2- Disagree__
1-Strongly Disagree__

3. My leadership orientation considers the input from stakeholders on all important issues

4- Strongly agree___
3- Agree___
2- Disagree__
1-Strongly Disagree__

4. My leadership orientation considers the inclusion of parent involvement as a prerequisite to student success.

4- Strongly agree___
3- Agree___
2- Disagree__
1-Strongly Disagree__

5. My satisfaction level with the resources available to me to affect change and to do my job is appropriate.

4- Strongly agree___
3- Agree___
2- Disagree__
1-Strongly Disagree__

6. My leadership style is respected by my peers and subordinates.

4- Strongly agree___
3- Agree___
2- Disagree__
1-Strongly Disagree__

7. The members of my team work together to reach common goals.

4- Strongly agree___
3- Agree___
2- Disagree__
1-Strongly Disagree__

8. The school district leaders (i.e. superintendent, associate superintendent, school board) provide direction and current accountability policies and changes in a timely fashion.

4- Strongly agree___
3- Agree___
2- Disagree__
1-Strongly Disagree__

9. The University/College leaders (vice-presidents, associates, etc.) provide direction and current accountability policies and changes in a timely fashion.

4- Strongly agree___
3- Agree___
2- Disagree__
1-Strongly Disagree__

10. I am knowledgeable about the various stakeholders in my school (i.e. Liberty Partnerships, Upward Bound, Talent Search, etc.) that could assist at risk students in academic areas that they struggle with.

4- Strongly agree___
3- Agree___
2- Disagree__

1-Strongly Disagree__

    11. I am knowledgeable about who the leaders are in school and the various roles that they have to influence change for at risk students

4- Strongly agree___
3- Agree___
2- Disagree__
1-Strongly Disagree__

    12. My supervisor values my input in the decision-making process.

4- Strongly agree___
3- Agree___
2- Disagree__
1-Strongly Disagree__

    13. Indicate to the extent to which you agree with the following statement. I feel that my supervisor respects me.

4- Strongly agree___
3- Agree___
2- Disagree__
1-Strongly Disagree__

    14. Indicate to the extent to which you agree with the following statement. I feel recognized and appreciated at work by my supervisor.

4- Strongly agree___
3- Agree___
2- Disagree__
1-Strongly Disagree__

    15. I am satisfied with the level of opportunities for professional development and learning in my current position.

4- Strongly agree___
3- Agree___
2- Disagree__
1-Strongly Disagree__

    16. I have a relationship with the Directors/staff of the various University/College programs and stakeholders in our building such as Liberty Partnerships, Upward Bound and Talent Search Programs.

4- Strongly agree___
3- Agree___
2- Disagree__
1-Strongly Disagree__

17. I believe that my leadership practices/strategies affect change with staff, students and parents in my work environment.

4- Strongly agree___
3- Agree___

2- Disagree__
1-Strongly Disagree__

18. I am comfortable working with a diverse student population and diverse teaching staff.

4- Strongly agree___
3- Agree___
2- Disagree__
1-Strongly Disagree__

19. My leadership practice includes the ability to identify struggling students at risk, and to initiate an action plan for them.

4- Strongly agree___
3- Agree___
2- Disagree__
1-Strongly Disagree__

20. I am committed to a long-term career at my school; however, I would consider a higher ranking appointment at another school if the opportunity is presented to me.

4- Strongly agree___
3- Agree___
2- Disagree__
1-Strongly Disagree__

21. My compensation is fair for the work that I do.

4- Strongly agree___
3- Agree___

2- Disagree__
1-Strongly Disagree__

22. On the whole, I am satisfied with the work that I do.

4- Strongly agree___
3- Agree___
2- Disagree__
1-Strongly Disagree__

23. Shared leadership has become the norm in school buildings today.

4- Strongly agree___
3- Agree___
2- Disagree__
1-Strongly Disagree__

Demographic questions

1. Select the job category that best describes your current position

   ___Senior Management
   ___Middle Management/Supervisory position
   ___Technical/Administrative

2. Race

   ___African American
   ___White
   ___Hispanic
   ___American Indian
   ___Pacific Islander/Asian
   ___Other

3. Age Range
   ___18-23
   ___24-30
   ___31-35
   ___36-45
   ___Over 45

4. Education
   ___Four-year college degree/B.A/B.S
   ___Some graduate work

___Completed Masters or professional degree
___Advanced Graduate work or Ph.D.
___Certifications held
(specify)_____

5. Years of service (in leadership/management role)
   ___Less than 1 year
   ___2-4
   ___5-8
   ___9-13
   ___14-18
   ___20+

6. Number of staff for which you provide leadership activities ___
   ___1
   ___2-4
   ___5-8
   ___9-13
   ___14-18
   ___20+

7. Gender
   ___Female
   ___Male
   ___Other

   Any additional
   comments_____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

Thank you so much for participating in my doctoral study! Kathy Evans-Brown

Appendix J: Student Questionnaire

Please complete the entire questionnaire as frank and honest as you can. The process will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Some questions ask you to indicate your level of agreement or disagreement by selecting either: 4- Strongly agree 3-Agree   2- Strongly disagree   1- Disagree or ask for a Yes or No response.

1.   After a tough day at school, I have thought about dropping out and never returning on more than one occasion.

   ___4- Strongly agree
   ___3-Agree
   ___2- Strongly disagree
   ___1- Disagree

2.   I stay in school because I know the importance of obtaining a high school diploma.

   ___4- Strongly agree
   ___3-Agree
   ___2- Strongly disagree
   ___1- Disagree

3.   I know the names of my principal and assistant principals

   ___4- Strongly agree
   ___3-Agree
   ___2- Strongly disagree
   ___1- Disagree

4.   I get along with my teachers

   ___4- Strongly agree
   ___3-Agree
   ___2- Strongly disagree
   ___1- Disagree

5.   My school offers a caring, safe and trusting environment.

   ___4- Strongly agree
   ___3-Agree
   ___2- Strongly disagree
   ___1- Disagree

6. I participate in the Liberty Partnerships Program.

   ___Yes   ___No

7. I participate in the Upward Bound Program.

   ___Yes   ___No

8. I participate in the Talent Search Program.

   ___Yes   ___No

9. Graduating from high school is important to my family

   ___4- Strongly agree
   ___3-Agree
   ___2- Strongly disagree
   ___1- Disagree

10. I know teenagers who have dropped out of school.

    ___Yes   ___No

11. I have a job afterschool.

    ___Yes   ___No

12. I am a parent.

    ___Yes   ___No

13. My parent(s) are involved in my high school career.

    ___4- Strongly agree
    ___3-Agree
    ___2- Strongly disagree

___1- Disagree

14. My parent(s) attend parent-teacher nights most of the time.

       ___4- Strongly agree
       ___3-Agree
       ___2- Strongly disagree
       ___1- Disagree

15. My parent(s) cannot attend meetings at the school because the times conflicts with their work schedule.

       __ 4- Strongly agree
       ___3-Agree
       ___2- Strongly disagree
       ___1- Disagree

16. I can go to an adult (counselor, teacher or assistant principal, principal or program staff) to discuss personal matters and/or about academic concerns.

       ___4- Strongly agree
       ___3-Agree
       ___2- Strongly disagree
       ___1- Disagree

17. I go to school because my parent(s) make sure that I go.

       ___4- Strongly agree
       ___3-Agree
       ___2- Strongly disagree
       ___1- Disagree

18. I stay in school because it keeps me out of trouble.

       ___4- Strongly agree
       ___3-Agree
       ___2- Strongly disagree
       ___1- Disagree

19. I stay in school because I want to go to college.

       ___4- Strongly agree
       ___3-Agree

___2- Strongly disagree
___1- Disagree

20. I am familiar with the "Say Yes to Education" program, which will pay for my college education once I complete high school and get accepted to a college in New York State.

___Yes ___No

21. I am involved in leadership activities at the school (i.e. yearbook, student organizations, debate team, theater, etc.).

___Yes ___No

22. I am involved in extracurricular activities at my school (basketball, cheerleading, volleyball, football, lacrosse, soccer, chorus, band, etc.).

___Yes ___No

23. If I am having difficulties in any academic subject, or personal issues, I am comfortable asking for help from an adult in the school.

___4- Strongly agree
___3-Agree
___2- Strongly disagree
___1- Disagree

24. Overall, I like going to school.

___4- Strongly agree
___3-Agree
___2- Strongly disagree
___1- Disagree

25. If I could change one factor about school, it would be… (please write your response to this question in the section provided at the end of questionnaire).

Demographic questions

8. Select your grade level

   ___Freshman   ___accelerated Freshman
   ___Sophomore   ___accelerated Sophomore
   ___Junior   ___accelerated Junior
   ___Senior
   ___Other (identify)_____

9. Race

   ___African American/Black
   ___White
   ___American Indian
   ___Pacific Islander/Asian
   ___Other

   ___Hispanic   ___Not Hispanic

   ___Prefer Not to Answer

10. Age
    ___13
    ___14
    ___15
    ___16
    ___17
    ___18
    ___Over 18

11. Years enrolled at current school
    ___Less than 1 year
    ___2-4
    ___5-8

12. Years enrolled in pre-college program (Liberty Partnerships, Upward Bound, Talent Search)
    ___1
    ___2
    ___3
    ___4

___ Not enrolled/Never enrolled

13. Gender
___Female
___Male
___Prefer not to answer

Please use this section to respond to question #26 and to include any other comments you may have.

_____

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING!

Appendix K: Interview Questions for Leaders

Interview Questions for Leader/Principal/Director

In the leadership literature, it has been discovered that a leader has 3 identifying characteristics: vision, communication and practices good judgment. According to the 2007 Educational Leadership Journal, approximately one-third of all high school students in the United States fail to graduate. For blacks and Hispanics the rate rises to 50 percent. In this article, there were various reasons cited by the students why they dropped out of school. A study conducted by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation examined views of these students. The top five included:

- They were bored with school (47 percent)
- Had missed too many days and could not catch up (43 percent)
- Spent time with people who were not interested in school (42 percent)
- Had too much freedom and not enough rules in their lives (38 percent)
- Were failing (35 percent)

Many students noted that earlier schooling had not prepared them for high school(45 percent) and/or they left school due to parenthood, having to care for family members or the need to get a job. Close to 71 percent of the students indicated that they were disinterested in school by the 9th and 10th grade, where they skipped classes, took longer lunches, got to school late or not come to school at all. They also did not connect with any adult in the school to discuss personal or academic issues. Parent involvement was minimum and they did not oversee their child's attendance. Overall, a large proportion of these students had regrets and wished that they had not dropped out of school (The prepared graduate, retrieved from: http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/apr07/vol64/num07/Why-Student) .

With that said,
1. How many years have you worked as a school administrator or program director (pre-college/dropout prevention program)?
2. What is your leadership style?
3. Do you make it your business to be visible in the school building? If so, why? If not, why?
4. Do you think employees should be involved in decisions specific to their jobs?
5. How do you involve employees in decisions of the organization?
6. Briefly explain any dropout prevention practices that you utilize in your school?
7. How does your leadership team identify at risk students?
8. Do you have any stakeholders in the building who's focus is on the at risk student?
9. Do you solicit the input of the stakeholders in decisions?

10. What leadership strategies do you use to underscore the significance to subordinates for maintaining the at risk student in school?
11. Do you have an active parent involvement group? Other parent activities that are visible and useful in the building?
12. What barriers do you face daily as the leader?
13. Who makes the key decisions for curriculum change, development, or infusion of needed services for students, particularly the at-risk youth?
14. Do you feel that your leadership team appreciate and value your vision for the school?

Demographic information
1. Female____ Male____
2. Race: African American___White____Hispanic____Pacific Islander/Asian___Other___
3. Age Range

___18-23
___24-30
___31=35
___36-45
___Over 45

4. Select the job category that best describes your current position

___Senior Management
___Middle Management
___Technical/Administrative

5. Education

___Four-year college degree/B.A/B.S.
___Some graduate work
___Completed Masters or professional degree
___Advanced Graduate work or Ph.D.
___Certifications_____Specify_____

6. Years of Service in current position

___Less than 1 year
___2-4
___5-8
___9-13
___14-18
___20+

Appendix L: Consent Form for Students Participating in Pilot Study

Assent form for Research

Student participants

Hello, my name is Kathy Evans Brown. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this pilot study for my research. My project title is "The Link Between Leadership and Reduced High School Dropout Rates". The purpose of the pilot is to confirm whether the materials are understandable and appropriate for my study.

Please review the following material to ensure that it clear, makes sense, and not too lengthy. You will then sign this consent form for your participation, and complete the survey questionnaire.

Student Participants

I want you to learn about the project before you decide if you want to be in it. I am doing a research study to learn the importance of leadership and its effect on students staying in school. I also want to discern why some students stay in school, and why a large proportion of students dropout. You have been purposefully selected to participate in my study because you are in Grades 9-12 who attend one of the two schools participating in my study. The potential significance of the study is to determine the effects of leadership and reduced dropout rates in urban public schools. The benefits of the research study will assist leaders to help teachers' efforts to reach students who are "at-risk" of dropping out of high school.

Who I am:

I am a student at Walden University. I am working on my doctoral degree. I am currently conducting field work for data collection such as administering a survey questionnaire to you to obtain honest answers about the alarming dropout rates among students, particularly in urban areas throughout this country.

About the project:

If you agree to be in this project, you will be asked to:

Complete the survey questionnaire, which will take approximately 20 minutes. Each question will consist of a ranking such as: 4- Strongly agree 3-Agree 2- Strongly disagree 1- Disagree.

How you decide to answer is your business, just be honest. There is no right or wrong answers, just how YOU answer the question is important.

Here are some sample questions:

 I have thought about leaving school and never returning after a tough day on more than one occasion.

      4- Strongly agree 3-Agree   2- Strongly disagree   1- Disagree

I stay in school because I realize the importance of obtaining a high school diploma.

      4- Strongly agree 3-Agree   2- Strongly disagree   1- Disagree

I know the names of my principal and assistant principals

      4- Strongly agree 3-Agree   2- Strongly disagree   1- Disagree

It's your choice:

You don't have to be in this project if you don't want to. If you decide now that you want to join the project, you can still change your mind later. If you want to stop, you can.

Being in this project might make you tired or stressed, just like taking some type of exam. However, there are no risks associated in taking part in this study. But we are hoping this project might help others by proving that you have taken great lengths in providing your input to a worthwhile endeavor, encouraging other youth about the benefits of an education, and contributing to research and society.

Each participant will receive a gift card ($2) upon completion of the survey questionnaire as a thank you gift from the researcher.

Privacy:

Everything you tell me during this project will be kept private. That means that no one else will know your name or what answers you gave. I will not use your name at all in the research records. Instead, a pseudonym will be assigned. This will ensure anonymity and protect the confidentiality of participants. The only time I have to tell someone is if I learn about something that could hurt you or someone else. Lastly, you will be completing the survey in a designated room assigned for that purpose among other students who will be completing the same survey questionnaire.

Disclosure of potential conflict of interest:

The researcher has a son who attends one of the participating schools in this study. Also, I am a substitute teacher employed by the Castle School district. However, I have not worked at any of the participating schools in this study. Lastly, I have a professional relationship with two of the program directors involved in this study. I do not anticipate

that any of these aforementioned citations will cause any harm in my subjectivity or objectivity during my research study.

Asking questions

You can ask me any questions you want now. If you think of a question later, you or your parents can reach me at: or email Kathy.Evans-Brown@waldenu.edu. If you or your parents would like to ask my university a question, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. Her phone number is 1-800-925-3368, then dial 3121210.

Please sign your name below if you want to join this project. Thank you.

Name of student

_____

Student Signature

_____

Date

_____

Researcher Signature

_____

I will give you a copy of this form.

IRB Approval#03-10-14-0047017
Expires on 1-15-2015

Appendix M: Invitation for Leaders to Participate in Pilot Study

Hello, my name is Kathy Evans Brown, a doctoral candidate at Walden University. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this pilot study for my research. My project title is "The Link Between Leadership and Reduced High School Dropout Rates". The purpose of the pilot is to confirm whether the materials are understandable and appropriate for my study.

Please review the following material to ensure that it clear, makes sense, and not too lengthy. You will then sign this consent form for your participation, complete the survey questionnaire, and review the leader interview questions.

Leader Participants

You are invited to take part in a research study entitled "The Link between Leadership and Reduced High School Drop Out Rates". You were chosen for the study because you are an administrator and/or leader at the research site. Please read this form and ask any questions you have before agreeing to be part of the study.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to explore factors which contribute to reduced high school dropout rates, and increased student outcomes particularly among a disproportionate number of minority youth (African American, Hispanic, Native American and Asian) in urban schools. The study will explore leadership characteristics that can contribute to reduced high school dropout, and in turn increase potential graduation rates among this population. The potential significance of the study is to determine the effects of leadership and reduced dropout rates in urban public schools. The benefits of the research study will assess the relationship of effective leadership on students staying in school (whether directly or indirectly) and the link to reduced dropout rates; what support leaders/teachers need in their efforts to reach students who are "at-risk" of dropping out of high school; and factors that negatively impact at-risk students' ability to stay in school and graduate.

Disclosure of potential conflict of interest:

The researcher has a son who attends one of the participating schools in this study. Also, I am a substitute teacher employed by the Castle School district. However, I have not worked at any of the participating schools in this study. Lastly, I have a professional relationship with two of the program directors involved in this study. I do not anticipate that any of these aforementioned citations will cause any harm in my subjectivity or objectivity during my research study.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to complete a leadership survey questionnaire, which will take approximately 30 minutes to complete; and answer a series of questions that relate to your opinions and perspectives of leadership, identifying at risk youth, relationships with subordinates, common goals, and your view of dropout prevention interventions that are in place.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this study is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you want to be in the study. No one will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. If you feel stressed during the study you may stop at any time. You may skip questions that you feel are too personal.

Risks and Benefits in the Study:

There are no risks associated with participating in this study. However, there may be minimal psychological risks for leaders during their participation in the interviews. Thus, in the event you experience stress or anxiety during your participation in this study you may terminate your participation at any time. You may refuse to answer any questions you consider invasive or stressful. The only benefits are the opportunity to state your perspectives and know that you are positively contributing to research.

Compensation:

There will be no compensation provided for your participation in this study. However, your participation in this study will positively contribute to social and educational reform as it relate to the students that we work with in the schools. Moreover, you will be providing your leadership expertise to the area of how teachers could identify at-risk characteristics among students, in efforts to reduce dropout rates in urban school districts.

Confidentiality:

Any information you provide will be kept anonymous. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any reports of the study. I will not use your name at all in the research records. Instead, a pseudonym will be assigned. This will ensure anonymity and protect the confidentiality of participants. All electronic data will be kept by a protected pass word on my personal computer. All of the collected surveys will be kept securely in a locked box by the researcher. Data will be kept for a period of 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher's name is Kathy Evans-Brown. The researcher's chair/advisor is Dr. Joseph Barbeau. You may ask any questions you may have now, or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher at Kathy.Evans-Brown@waldenu.edu or the chair/advisor at Joseph.Barbeau@waldenu.edu If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Director of the Research Center at Walden University. Her telephone number is 1-800-925-3368 extension 3121210.

Participant signature _____

Researcher's signature_____

I give you a copy of this form.

IRB Approval#03-10-14-0047017
Expires on 1-15-2015

Appendix N: Parent Consent Form for Student Participation in Pilot Study

Your child is invited to take part in a pilot study for my research entitled: The Link Between

Leadership and Reduced High School Dropout Rates, which will study the relationship of

leadership and its effect on students staying in school and graduating. The purpose of the pilot is

to confirm whether the materials are understandable and appropriate for my study.

This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study

before deciding whether to allow your child to take part in the pilot study.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Kathy Evans-Brown, who is a <u>doctoral</u>

<u>student </u>at Walden University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to explore factors that contribute to high school dropout rates in
urban schools. The study will explore leadership characteristics that can contribute to reduced
high school dropout and, in turn increase potential graduation rates among this population.

Procedures:

If you agree to allow your child to be in this study, your child will:

Complete a survey questionnaire, which will take approximately 20 minutes.

Here are some sample questions:

I have thought about leaving school and never returning after a tough day on more than one
occasion.
　　　　4- Strongly agree 3-Agree   2- Strongly disagree   1- Disagree

I stay in school because I realize the importance of obtaining a high school diploma.
　　　　4- Strongly agree 3-Agree   2- Strongly disagree   1- Disagree

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you want your
child to be in the study. Of course, your child's decision is also an important factor. After
obtaining parent consent, the researcher will explain the study and let each child decide if they
wish to volunteer. No one at the school will treat you or your child differently if you or your child

decides to not be in the study. If you decide to consent now, you or your child can still change your mind later. Any children who feel stressed during the study may stop at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that your child might encounter in daily life, such as taking a subject test. Being in this study would not pose risk to your child's safety or wellbeing. But we are hoping this project might help others by proving that you have taken great lengths in providing your input to a worthwhile endeavor and encouraging other youth about the benefits of an education, and providing input to research.

Disclosure of potential conflict of interest:

The researcher has a son who attends one of the participating schools in this study. Also, I am a substitute teacher employed by the Castle School district. However, I have not worked at any of the participating schools in this study. Lastly, I have a professional relationship with two of the program directors involved in this study. I do not anticipate that any of these aforementioned citations will cause any harm in my subjectivity or objectivity during my research study.

Payment:

Each student participant will receive a gift card ($2) upon completion of the survey questionnaire as a thank you gift from the researcher

Privacy:

Any information your child provides will be kept <u>confidential</u> or <u>anonymous</u> The researcher will not use your child's information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your child's name or anything else that could identify your child in any reports of the study. The only time the researcher would need to share your child's name or information would be if the researcher learns about possible harm to your child or someone else. All electronic data will be kept by a protected pass word on my personal computer. All of the collected surveys will be kept securely in a locked box by the researcher. Data will be kept for a period of 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via: or email <u>Kathy.Evans-Brown@waldenu.edu</u>. If you want to talk privately about your child's rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University staff member who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 1-800-925-3368, extension 3121210. Walden University's approval number for this study is 03-10-14-0047017 and it expires on1-15-2015.

Parent/Guardian signature _____

Name of your child(ren)_____

Grade level_____

Name of School child attend _____Date _____

I will give you a copy of this form. Thank you

IRB Approval#03-10-14-0047017
Expires on 1-15-2015

Appendix O: Approval Letter to Conduct Research in the Castle Public Schools

Dr. Pamela C. Brown,
Superintendent

Dr. Genelle Morris,
Assistant Superintendent/CIO

April 16, 2014

Mrs. Kathy Evans-Brown
243 Bakos Boulevard
Buffalo, NY 14211

Re: Request for Research Activity

Dear Mrs. Evans-Brown:

Congratulations! Your Research Request entitled "The Link Between Leadership and Reduced High School Drop Out Rates" has been approved.

Please make arrangements to meet with administration at the school you have been approved to work with before beginning your study. Remember that school participation is optional.

All approved documents relating to your study may be requested from my office by school administration if needed.

Sincerely,

Genelle Morris

Genelle Morris, Ed.D.

C: Jody Covington, Principal #192
        Casey Young, Principal #307

Office of Shared Accountability
Room 808 City Hall Buffalo, New York 14202
Phone: 716.816.3035   •   Fax: 716.851.3044   •   Email gmorris@buffaloschools.org

Putting children and families first to ensure high academic achievement for all

Appendix P: Survey Results of Leadership Questionnaire (Appendix I)

Question #1: The administrators at my school/organization create a school environment that helps children learn.

Name of Participant	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
Jane		x		
Matt		x		
Sharon	x			
Becca		x		
Ryan			x	
Morgan	x			
Jerome	x			

As noted, the majority of leaders described either a strong agreement or agreement with this question. However, based on Ryan's response of strongly disagree; he did not believe that the administrators at his facility created an environment that helps children learn.

Question #2: How effective is the leadership of your school's/program chair?

Name of Participant	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
Jane	x			
Matt		x		
Sharon	x			
Becca		x		
Ryan			x	
Morgan	x			
Jerome	x			

Again, the majority of leaders described either a strong agreement or agreement with this question. However, based on Ryan's response of strongly disagree, he did not believe in the effectiveness of his superiors.

Question #3 My leadership orientation considers the input from stakeholders on all important issues

Name of Participant	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
Jane	x			
Matt	x			
Sharon	x			
Becca	x			
Ryan		x		
Morgan		x		
Jerome	x			

The entire leader participant pool concurred that input from stakeholders on all important issues is highly regarded.

Question #4: My leadership orientation considers the inclusion of parent involvement as a prerequisite to student success.

Name of Participant	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
Jane	x			
Matt		x		
Sharon	x			
Becca	x			
Ryan	x			
Morgan	x			
Jerome	x			

All of the participating leaders in this study considered parent involvement as critical to student success.

Question #5 My satisfaction level with the resources available to me to affect change and to do my job is appropriate.

Name of Participant	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
Jane		x		
Matt				x
Sharon				
Becca				x
Ryan		x		
Morgan				x
Jerome				x

Only two out of the six leader participants agreed with this question, as the majority of the leaders disagreed that they were satisfied with the level of resources available to them, which impacted positive change in their jobs.

Question #6: My leadership style is respected by my peers and subordinates.

Name of Participant	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
Jane	x			
Matt	x			
Sharon		x		
Becca		x		
Ryan		x		
Morgan	x			
Jerome	x			

Question #7: The members of my team work together to reach common goals.

Name of Participant	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
Jane		x		
Matt	x			
Sharon	x			
Becca		x		
Ryan	x			
Morgan	x			
Jerome	x			

Question #8: The school board leaders (i.e. superintendent, associate superintendent, school board) provide direction and current accountability policies and changes in a timely fashion.

Name of Participant	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
Jane			x	
Matt			x	
Sharon				x
Becca				x
Ryan			x	
Morgan			x	
Jerome			x	

None of the leader participants had a positive response as it related to the support and

direction of upper school management, i. e. school board leaders, and the superintendent in the

areas of accountability policies and changes in a timely fashion.

Question #9: The University/College leaders (vice-presidents, associates, etc.) provide direction and current accountability policies and changes in a timely fashion.

Name of Participant	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
Jane		x		
Matt		x		
Sharon				x
Becca				
Ryan			x	
Morgan			x	
Jerome	x			

Question #10: I am knowledgeable about the various stakeholders in my school (i.e. Liberty Partnerships, Upward Bound, Talent Search, etc.) that could assist at risk students in academic areas that they struggle with.

Name of Participant	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
Jane		x		
Matt	x			
Sharon	x			
Becca	x			
Ryan	x			
Morgan	x			
Jerome	x			

The leaders reported that they were knowledgeable and familiar with dropout prevention programs available for at risk students. Thus, they would be instrumental in assisting teachers and other school support staff in the navigation of referral services available to them when the need arises to do so.

Question #11: I am knowledgeable about who the leaders are in school and the various roles that they have to influence change for at risk students.

Name of Participant	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
Jane	x			
Matt	x			
Sharon	x			
Becca	x			
Ryan	x			
Morgan		x		
Jerome	x			

The leaders reported that they were informed about the various leaders of dropout

prevention programs and resources available to them to effect change in their jobs with at risk

students.

Question #12: My supervisor values my input in the decision-making process.

Name of Participant	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
Jane	x			
Matt	x			
Sharon	x			
Becca	x			
Ryan	x			
Morgan		x		
Jerome	x			

It appeared that all leaders in this study believed that their supervisor valued them in the

area of decision making.

Question #13: Indicate to the extent to which you agree with the following statement. I feel that my supervisor respects me.

Name of Participant	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
Jane	x			
Matt	x			
Sharon	x			
Becca	x			
Ryan		x		
Morgan		x		
Jerome	x			

Question #14: Indicate to the extent to which you agree with the following statement. I feel recognized and appreciated at work by my supervisor.

Name of Participant	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
Jane		x		
Matt	x			
Sharon	x			
Becca	x			
Ryan	x			
Morgan		x		
Jerome	x			

Question #15: I am satisfied with the level of opportunities for professional development and learning in my current position.

Name of Participant	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
Jane	x			
Matt	x			
Sharon				x
Becca		x		
Ryan	x			
Morgan	x			
Jerome			x	

Question #16: I have a relationship with the Directors/staff of the various University/College programs and stakeholders in our building such as Liberty Partnerships, Upward Bound and Talent Search Programs.

Name of Participant	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
Jane	x			
Matt	x			
Sharon		x		
Becca		x		
Ryan		x		
Morgan	x			
Jerome	x			

Question #17: I believe that my leadership practices/strategies affect change with staff, students and parents in my work environment.

Name of Participant	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
Jane		x		
Matt		x		
Sharon		x		
Becca		x		
Ryan		x		
Morgan	x			
Jerome	x			

Question #18: I am comfortable working with a diverse student population and diverse teaching staff.

Name of Participant	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
Jane	x			
Matt	x			
Sharon	x			
Becca	x			
Ryan			x	
Morgan		x		
Jerome	x			

Question #19: My leadership practice includes the ability to identify struggling students at risk, and to initiate an action plan for them.

Name of Participant	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
Jane		x		
Matt		x		
Sharon		x		
Becca	x			
Ryan		x		
Morgan	x			
Jerome	x			

Question #20: I am committed to a long-term career at my school; however, I would consider a higher ranking appointment at another school if the opportunity is presented to me.

Name of Participant	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
Jane		x		
Matt		x		
Sharon				
Becca		x		
Ryan			x	
Morgan	x			
Jerome	x			

Question #21: My compensation is fair for the work that I do.

Name of Participant	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
Jane		x		
Matt		x		
Sharon		x		
Becca				x
Ryan			x	
Morgan	x			
Jerome	x			

Question #22: On the whole, I am satisfied with the work that I do.

Name of Participant	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
Jane		x		
Matt		x		
Sharon	x			
Becca	x			
Ryan	x			
Morgan	x			
Jerome	x			

Question #23: Shared leadership has become the norm in school buildings today.

Name of Participant	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
Jane		x		
Matt		x		
Sharon	x			
Becca	x			
Ryan			x	
Morgan	x			
Jerome	x			

As noted above, all leaders with the exception of Ryan believed that shared leadership has become the norm in school buildings today.

Appendix Q: Categories that Emerged From Analyzing Prosperous High School's Survey

Questionnaire Responses (Appendix J)

Research Question #1: What influences young people to stay in school?

Categories that emerged from analyzing Properous High School student participants involved in a dropout prevention program as compared to those who were not involved in dropout prevention program

Survey Question #1: After a tough day at school, I have thought about dropping out and never returning on more than one occasion.

Involved in dropout prevention program	Not involved in dropout prevention program
28% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this statement	9% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this statement

It appeared that a larger percentage of participants involved in dropout prevention programs indicated that they would have dropped out of school at a higher rate than participants not involved in a dropout prevention program.

Survey Question #2: I stay in school because I know the importance of obtaining a high school diploma.

Involved in dropout prevention program	Not involved in dropout prevention program
96% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question	100% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question

All participants seemed to recognize the importance of obtaining a high school diploma, whether they were involved in a dropout prevention program, or not involved in a dropout prevention program.

Survey Question #3: I know the names of my principal and assistant principals.

Involved in dropout prevention program	Not involved in dropout prevention program
92% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question	92% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question

Equally, participants in both groups (involved in dropout prevention programs or not) indicated that they knew the names of the building leaders.

Survey Question #11: I have a job afterschool.

Involved in dropout prevention program	Not involved in dropout prevention program
29% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question	11% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question

A higher percentage of participants involved in a dropout prevention program were employed afterschool compared to participants not involved in a dropout prevention program. This is in sharp contrast to Tru-Tech Academy's students; where students not involved in dropout prevention programs have jobs at a higher rate, than those involved in dropout prevention programs.

Survey Question #13: My parents are involved in my high school career.

Involved in dropout prevention program	Not involved in dropout prevention program
88% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question	87% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question

Equally, students involved in dropout prevention programs, and students not involved in dropout prevention programs indicated that his/her parents were influential in their decision to stay in school.

Survey Question #14: My parents attend parent-teacher nights most of the time.

Involved in dropout prevention program	Not involved in dropout prevention program
33% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question	33% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question

Here, there was no distinction between the two groups in their response to this question.

Survey Question #15: My parent(s) cannot attend meetings at the school because the times conflicts with their work schedule.

Involved in dropout prevention program	Not involved in dropout prevention program
31% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question	55% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question

There was a higher response among students not involved in a dropout prevention program as it related to why his/her parent(s) could not attend meetings at school based on their work schedule.

Survey Question #16: I can go to an adult (counselor, teacher or assistant principal, principal or program staff) to discuss personal matters and/or about academic concerns.

Involved in dropout prevention program	Not involved in dropout prevention program
84% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question	81% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question

Here, it appeared that equally both group of students would ask an adult for help for personal and/or academic concerns.

Survey Question #21: I am involved in leadership activities at the school (i.e. yearbook, student organizations, debate team, theater, etc.).

Involved in dropout prevention program	Not involved in dropout prevention program
63% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question	25% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question

It appeared that a larger percentage of participants involved in dropout prevention programs were involved in leadership activities at the school compared to participants not involved in a dropout prevention program.

Survey Question #22: I am involved in extracurricular activities at my school (basketball, cheerleading, volleyball, football, lacrosse, soccer, band, etc.).

Involved in dropout prevention program	Not involved in dropout prevention program
63% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question	54% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question

It appeared that a slightly larger number of students involved in dropout prevention programs were more likely to be involved in extracurricular activities, than students not involved in dropout prevention programs.

Survey Question #23: If I am having difficulties in any academic subject, or personal issues, I am comfortable asking for help from an adult in the school.

Involved in dropout prevention program	Not involved in dropout prevention program
71% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question	91% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question

The above responses reflected that a higher percentage of students not involved in a

dropout prevention program were more apt to ask for help from an adult in the school if faced

with academic or personal difficulties.

Survey Question #24: Overall, I like going to school.

Involved in dropout prevention program	Not involved in dropout prevention program
75% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question	65% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question

Participants involved in a dropout prevention program reported a slightly higher

percentage of enjoying going to school compared to participants not involved in a dropout

prevention program.

Appendix R**:** Categories That Emerged From Analyzing Tru-Tech Academy's Student

Survey Questionnaire Responses (Appendix J)

Research Question #1: What influences young people to stay in school?

Categories that emerged from analyzing Tru-Tech Academy's student participants involved in a dropout prevention program as compared to those who were not involved in dropout prevention program.

Survey Question #1: After a tough day at school, I have thought about dropping out and never returning on more than one occasion.

Involved in dropout prevention program	Not involved in dropout prevention program
46% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this statement	38% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this statement

It appeared that a higher percentage of participants involved in dropout prevention

programs indicated that they would have dropped out of school at a higher rate than participants

not involved in a dropout prevention program. This was similar to the responses from students at

Properous High School involved in a dropout prevention program.

Survey Question #2: I stay in school because I know the importance of obtaining a high school diploma.

Involved in dropout prevention program	Not involved in dropout prevention program
100% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question	92% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question

Despite the fact that students involved in a dropout prevention program and students not

involved involved in a dropout prevention program seemed to know the importance of obtaining a

high school diploma; a slightly higher percentage of students involved in a dropout prevention

program strongly agreed or agreed with this question. Moreover, students at Properous High

School not involved in dropout prevention programs answered this same question at a slightly

higher rate

Survey Question #11: I have a job afterschool.

Involved in dropout prevention program	Not involved in dropout prevention program
9% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question	41% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question

It appeared that students not involved in dropout prevention programs held jobs afterschool at a higher rate than students involved in dropout prevention programs. The opposite was true as it related to students at Properous High School who answered this same question.

Survey Questions #13: My parents are involved in my high school career.

Involved in dropout prevention program	Not involved in dropout prevention program
82% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question	76% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question

Despite the fact that both student groups (involved in dropout prevention programs, not involved in dropout prevention programs) reported that his/her parents were involved in their high school career, a slightly higher percentage of students involved in dropout prevention programs reported increased parent involvement in their schooling.

Survey Question #14: My parents attend parent-teacher nights most of the time.

Involved in dropout prevention program	Not involved in dropout prevention program
37% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question	32% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question

Based on the students' responses, it appeared that a larger number of parents of students involved in dropout prevention programs attended parent-teacher nights most of the time, as compared to parents of students not involved in dropout prevention programs.

Survey Question #15: My parent(s) cannot attend meetings at the school because the times conflicts with their work schedule.

Involved in dropout prevention program	Not involved in dropout prevention program
70% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question	57% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question

Students involved in a dropout prevention program reported a higher percentage of

conflict in his/her parents' work schedule for not attending meetings at the school.

Survey Question #16: I can go to an adult (counselor, teacher or assistant principal, principal or program staff) to discuss personal matters and/or about academic concerns.

Involved in dropout prevention program	Not involved in dropout prevention program
80% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question	65% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question

Participants involved in dropout prevention programs were more likely go to an adult in

the school building to discuss personal and academic concerns than participants not involved in

dropout prevention programs.

Survey Question #23: If I am having difficulties in any academic subject, or personal issues, I am comfortable asking for help from an adult in the school.

Involved in dropout prevention program	Not involved in dropout prevention program
76% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question	73% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question

Similar to the previous table, 3% more of participants involved in dropout prevention

programs revealed that they were more likely go to an adult in the school building to discuss

personal and academic concerns than participants not involved in dropout prevention programs.

Thus, this could be attributed to the fact that leaders of dropout prevention programs indicated

that they have staff who work in school buildings with the participants.

Survey Question #24: Overall, I like going to school.

Involved in dropout prevention program	Not involved in dropout prevention program
76% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question	57% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with this question

It appeared that a higher percentage of participants involved in dropout prevention programs enjoyed going to school than participants not involved in a dropout prevention program. Again, this could be attributed to the fact that leaders of dropout prevention programs noted that they design non-traditional activities such as: campus-based activities, field trips to historically Black Colleges, and summer dorm experiences that participants not involved in dropout prevention programs experience.

Curriculum Vitae

Kathy Evans Brown
Kathy.evans-brown@waldenu.edu

EDUCATION

Ph.D. Management, Leadership & Organizational Change   Expected 2015
Walden University, Minneapolis, MN 55401
Dissertation title: The Link Between Leadership and Reduced High School Dropout Rates
Dissertation Chair: Dr. Joseph Barbeau

Master of Science - Student Personnel Administration and Counseling   1983
SUNY Castle State College, Buffalo, New York 14222

Bachelor of Science - Human Services   1980
Medaille College, Castle, New York

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Adjunct/Evaluator   2006-present

Empire State College
Cheektowaga, NY

- Instructed courses in managing diversity, and interventions for family violence & child abuse.
- Guided students along the process for fulfilling their contractual agreement for completing course requirements.
- Evaluate essays and material submitted by students requesting credits for a course in a variety of areas such as: grant writing, leadership/management, case management, child welfare, youth services, documentation, cultural diversity and program development; which were based on his or her work and/or life experiences.

Substitute Teacher

Castle City Schools   2012-present
Castle, NY 14202

- Teach various subjects in math, science, history and English in the absence of regular teacher. Ensure the safety of children in Grades K-12, as well as provide classroom management.

OTHER EXPERIENCE

Coordinator   2013-present

Truway Community Center

Castle, New York 14215

- Oversee after-school reading program specific to participants in grades K- 8. Provide supervision and training to teaching staff, teaching assistants and student volunteers. Research grant opportunities, write grants for program, and provide individual reading assistance to students.

Program Manager   2011-2012

Community Health Center of Castle
Castle, New York 14215

- Oversaw day to day operations of Social Work Department, HIV Coordination, Outreach, Education and Research.
- Responsible for ensuring recruitment of new patients, integrated routine HIV testing at the health center with existing patient base, training of staff & development, coaching and mentoring of staff, design & implement patient based workshops such as Breast Cancer Awareness.
- Responsible for State and Federal reporting, budget for grant funded projects, outreach coordination, establishing collaborations and partnerships with external entities such as Department of Health, other Community Based Organizations, colleges, universities, public, private & charter schools.
- Oversee outreach coordination & HIV activities at the Castle Community Health Center.

Trainer

Community Action Organization   July-Dec, 2010
Castle, New York 14209

- Provided parent education training to parents involved in the child welfare system, mandatory court or school systems. The Incredible Years Curriculum was used as a theoretical base for training. Parents learned how to apply alternative and practical parenting skill knowledge (through lecture, role play and video vignettes) into their everyday lives with their children.

Director

Program and Family Services   2007-2010
Bright Options Family Services
Cheektowaga, New York

- Provided day to day management for: (a) Preventive Service Contract(s) with Erie County Department of Social Services; (b) Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities-Medicaid Services; and (c) coordinated the Family Support Services program.
- Hired and supervised staff, including clerical, maintenance, ancillary and case managers.
- Preventative Services provided to high risk families with disproportionate minority children involved in the child welfare system.
- Medicaid Service Coordination provided to culturally diverse individuals with developmental disabilities, residing in high risk areas.
- Supervised Medicaid Service Coordinators, including ISPs, case conferencing, submittal of timely reports and case notes. Conducted parent education training and budgeting to parents with developmental disabilities. Grant proposal writing, budget management & program development, recruitment, quarterly reports, incident reports, and training of staff. Ensured the overall effectiveness of the programs operation. Maintain and establish(s) interactions with external agencies to further establish partnerships and collaborative relations.

Director   1998-2007

Child & Family Services-Reach Out
Castle, New York 14204

- Overall administration, and day to day management of the Reach Out Program at all three locations.
- Created innovative program development which met the needs of the population served; participation in collaborations, alliances and partnerships with other organizations and agencies; maintenance of a team approach with staff.
- Participation in community groups such as tenant organizations and agencies
- Participation in community groups such as tenant organizations, neighborhood planning/improvement groups, agency coalitions.
- Liaison with Community Action Organization and United Way of Castle
- Active participation in Child and Family Services quality improvement as a member of the Administrative staff:

- Involvement in committees and task forces; development and maintenance of cooperative and collaborative working relationships with colleagues in advancing the agency's mission and vision
- Program development and grant proposal writing, as well as budget management

GRANTS/CONTRACTS WRITTEN & AWARDED:

- Co-Wrote preventive service contract to Castle Department of Social Services for $250,000. Awarded in 2007.
- Wrote and Awarded a $75,000 grant proposal contract from New York State Department of Family & Children Services for a Kinship Grant
- Wrote and Awarded a $40,000 grant from New York Department of Transportation for 12 passenger van
- Wrote and Awarded a $20,000 contract from US Department of Agriculture-Food and Nutrition Service for freezers, shelving, and refrigerators for our food pantry
- Wrote and Awarded $8,000 for proposal submitted to Castle Food Pantry for a part-time Coordinator
- Responsible for Grant proposal awarded to University at Castle's precollege programs as a viable training institute for over 300 youth from the Castle Youth and Employment Program
- Wrote and Awarded a $10,000 grant from Ronald McDonald Fund to operate an after-school program
- Wrote Refugee Grant for Community Health Center of Castle, Inc.
- Wrote "Stop the Violence" grant to City of Castle, funded for ($7,000) 2013, 2014

OTHER PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES:

- Co-authored a published article in local paper entitled "HIV/AIDS A Call to Action", November, 2011
- November 2009 Co-facilitated Conference Workshop (approximately 250 in attendance) entitled "Family Builders in contrast to Parent Education" for Getting to the Roots Conference (disproportionate number of children of color in the Foster Care system) sponsored by Castle Department of Social Services, Erie County Courts, and the Casey Foundation.
- Co-facilitated Conference Workshop at the University at Castle "Working with At-Risk Youth via Case management and wrap around interventions".

REFERENCES UPON REQUEST