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Systems of Support for Elementary School Principals: A Case Study

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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Abstract

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MA, California State University, Fresno, 2000

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Principals need support throughout their careers in order to lead effectively and promote continuous improvement. However, some elementary school principals of small, rural schools lack access to structured systems of support that could increase their knowledge and skills as instructional leaders. The purpose of this study was to examine a central California school district's existing system of support for elementary school principals to learn the essential features that could be used to provide support for principals of small, rural schools. Informed by the Principal Support Framework provided by the University of Washington's Center for Educational Leadership, the guiding questions for this case study examined the elements of the system of support for principals, focusing on professional development, collaboration through networks and learning communities, and coaching/mentoring partnerships. Interviews with 4 principals and 1 district leader were conducted, and school district documents were collected. Data were coded to identify themes and to help understand the participants' perspectives. The findings suggest that a system of support for principals is structured around the foundation of collaborative learning through networks in both large and small group settings. Based on these findings, a plan for a professional learning network for principals of small, rural schools to collaborate is included as the project outcome. The study has implications for positive social change: through continuous learning and improvement, elementary principals can improve student learning and, through collaborative problem solving and inquiry, they can help prepare students academically and teachers professionally for continuous improvement.

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Dedication

This project study is dedicated to my family. Without their support, none of this would be possible. My amazing husband, Mike, took on extra household and parenting duties so I could pursue an advanced degree. My thoughtful boys, William and Grant, were always tending to my needs; encouraging me and leaving notes for me on my desk, in my books, or on my computer so that I would persevere. I hope that I was able to set a good example for them that you can achieve anything if you work hard and believe in yourself.

My parents have also been a constant inspiration and support through this journey. From the time I was a little girl, they taught me what it meant to work hard without complaint. They taught me to have goals and not to be afraid to strive for those goals. They have always believed in me and I hope that I have made them proud.

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First, I want to thank God for so many wonderful blessings in my life. He has provided me with opportunities to grow as a person and a learner. He has provided love and support through the people He has put in my life. I am inspired everyday by His great love.

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Special acknowledgment goes to many local educators and colleagues for supporting my learning. Thank you for encouraging me to share my learning as we effect positive social change. It is a blessing to work with people who make each other better. Thank you also to the participating school district for allowing me to inquire and learn from their work. Without all of their support, this project study would not be possible.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

Education has seen many reform movements over the past few decades that have impacted the role of leaders and their ability to enhance student learning. These reforms have striven to improve the quality of education for students to compete globally, to provide equitable access to education so that all students are higher performers, and, more recently, to prepare all students for college and careers after high school graduation (Bowles & Gintis, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Fullan, 2012; Spring, 2013; Zhao, 2009).

As reforms change practice for educators, it is important to consider the support that is offered to all stakeholders. This study sought to explore how principals, in particular, can be supported in the ever-changing educational landscape so that they can provide the instructional leadership that is needed for student success.

Many researchers recommend ongoing professional development for principals (Goldring, Preston, & Huff, 2012; Grissom & Harrington, 2010; Mendels & Mitgang, 2013; Reardon, 2011). School districts across the United States provide support structures for principals that include networks, learning communities, and coaching/mentoring programs (Barnes, Camburn, Sanders, & Sebastian, 2010; David & Talbert, 2010; Duncan & Stock, 2010; Fahey, 2011; Gill, 2013; Hatch & Roegman, 2012; Hite, Reynolds, & Hite, 2010; Honig, 2012; James-Ward, 2011; Mendels & Mitgang, 2013; Patti, Holzer, Stern, & Brackett, 2012; Rieckhoff & Larsen, 2011; Robinson, Horan, & Nanavati, 2009; Scott & Rarieya, 2011; Simieou, Decman, Grigsby, & Schumacher,

2010; Wahlstrom, Louis, Leithwood, & Anderson, 2010). For this study, a system of support for principals was described as the framework for ongoing professional development using specific elements. These elements include professional development, collaboration through networks and learning communities, and coaching/mentoring partnerships. This study sought to understand (a) how one school district used these elements as part of their system of support for principals, and (b) how principals perceived the system's value in helping them develop their skills as instructional leaders.

Definition of the Problem

In a central California county, Innovate County (pseudonym), systems of support for principals—which would build knowledge and strengthen the skills as instructional leaders—are lacking. Providing such support can have a significant impact on student achievement (Goldring et al., 2012; LaPointe, Davis, & Cohen, 2006; Mombourquette & Bedard, 2014; Ringler, O'Neal, Rawls, & Cumiskey, 2013; Spillane & Kim, 2012). According to researchers, the impact of the principal on student learning is second to that of the classroom teacher (Fullan, 2014; Rieckhoff & Larsen, 2011; Seashore Louis, Dretzke, & Wahlstrom, 2010). With this in mind, an examination of how ongoing collaboration between instructional leaders and professional development can be provided for principals can add to professional practice and the literature. An examination could also inform the practice of educational organizations that seek to provide support for developing principals' instructional skills.

For a system of support to offer effective ongoing professional development for principals as instructional leaders, three elements are necessary:

1. Professional development: Principals must have access to professional development; they must set goals for their learning and create a plan for achieving them.

2. Coaching/mentoring partnerships: Principals must form partnerships with other leaders who serve as either a coach or mentor to support the goals of the professional development plan.

3. Collaboration through networking: Principals must participate in a professional network of leaders to learn from each other collaboratively and to solve complex problems collectively. Learning communities are formed within these networks to provide the environment for collaborative problem-solving and honest assessment of current reality. ("Principal Support Framework," 2013)

While there are workshops and informational meetings in Innovate County, ongoing support through coaching and networking with other leaders is optional and it is not well attended by most principals (C. Stringham, 2014). Because there are no effective systems of support for instructional leaders, there is a gap in practice. This is due in large part to the lack of professional development plans for principals, which are used to guide purposeful, ongoing professional development.

According to the Innovate County Office of Education website, opportunities to gain knowledge of current reforms are provided bimonthly; however, attendance records provided by the county office show that only 38% of districts in the county have participated and fewer than 4% of them participate on a regular basis. Sustainable school

reform that supports innovation to prepare students for college and careers in the 21st century requires ongoing professional development for instructional (Akomolafe & Adesua, 2013; Fullan, 2011; Grissom & Harrington, 2010; Hatch & Roegman, 2012; Lingam & Lingam, 2013; Madsen, Schroeder, & Irby, 2014). While Innovate County offers workshops and professional development for teachers and leaders alike, according to a discussion during a monthly meeting with consultants (personal communication, October 24, 2014) the Innovate County instructional consultants claimed that the structure of these opportunities alone has not provided ongoing learning for many principals. They noted that, according to evidence at many sites, new ideas, strategies, and skills had not been implemented.

Providing support for principals to develop their instructional leadership skills and knowledge has a significant impact on student achievement (Goldring et al., 2012; LaPointe et al., 2006; Mombourquette & Bedard, 2014; Ringler et al., 2013; Spillane & Kim, 2012). However, it is a challenge to provide adequate support (Barnes et al., 2010; Lingam & Lingam, 2013; Madsen et al., 2014; Rieckhoff & Larsen, 2011; Scott & Rarieya, 2011). While principal preparation programs contribute to a leader's skill and ability upon entering the profession, an organized and efficient system of support for ongoing professional development is key to the continued growth of principals in schools (Bottoms & Fry, 2009; Goldring et al., 2012; Grissom & Harrington, 2010; Kearney, 2010; Lingam & Lingam, 2013; Madsen et al., 2014).

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

Innovate County has a diverse population and a variety of challenges in terms of school organization and size. According to the county website, there are 44 school districts, the smallest of which has an average daily attendance of 17 students, and the largest has an average daily attendance of 27,500 students. There are 29 small school districts in Innovate County. Those districts range from two teachers with 17 students enrolled to 31 teachers with 771 students enrolled.

But systems of support are lacking for school-site leaders. The leaders of small schools have a dual role as both superintendent and principal. In some cases, the leader also serves as a teacher. In 2014, 19 of the small schools sought support from the county office for teacher development and classroom coaching. Four of the schools, or 2%, participated in leadership development during the 2013-2014 school year. The leaders at these four schools participated in a network for leaders with others in the area. Two of those leaders also met with a consultant regularly for coaching support of their leadership skills. According to feedback received from these four leaders in interviews conducted by the county office, the network was helpful. However many solutions and ideas shared within the network could not be applied in their small school settings. In September 2014, the Assistant Superintendent of Innovate County Office of Education expressed concern about the lack of participation from small schools. While opportunities for communication and collaboration are provided to these schools, few of them actively participate consistently. With inconsistent participation and a lack of cohesiveness within

the group, collaboration with honest inquiry and problem-solving does not exist for the leaders of these schools. Ongoing professional development for leaders of small schools requires consistent participation in networks, which allows leaders to build learning communities for continuous support (Preston, Jakubiec, & Kooymans, 2013; Versland, 2013).

In addition, the Office of Education learned through participant feedback and through analysis of attendance data that much of the support provided is not practical for the unique needs of leaders of small-school-districts. These leaders indicated that networking was helpful on a broad level. But certain ideas and solutions were not practical for their small school setting. The principal of a rural small school in Innovate County found it challenging to encourage more collaboration among the staff with one teacher at each grade level. Because each taught a different grade level, it was difficult to get teachers to share ideas and to see the value of collaborating. The concept of vertical alignment and collaboration across grade levels in some schools is a challenge to the status quo.

Innovate County is also challenged with supporting the leadership needs of larger districts. A large school district has over 1,000 students and more than one school building. According to records of attendance and contractual work provided by the Innovate County Office of Education (2014), 13 large school districts sought support for on-site support from the county office, through either workshop attendance or a contract. Attendance data from Innovate County Office of Education showed that while leaders at these schools attend specific training for leadership, attendance is inconsistent. In

addition, according to Innovate County Office of Education monthly meeting minutes from October 2014, consultants observed that principals did not reflect on or implement new strategies or ideas from workshops unless a consultant provided follow-up support. Inconsistent attendance at workshops and trainings created the need for more follow-up support.

When working with county office employees, teachers and leaders asked what other districts were doing. This prompted the county office to provide a venue for leaders to talk about and collaborate on their work. According to the assistant superintendent of instruction, the format of this venue has changed over the past few years to meet the needs of schools in the county (C. Stringham, personal communication, September, 2014). Prior to 2011, administrators attended curriculum council meetings at the Innovate County Office for a couple of hours five times per school year. During these meetings, county office personnel disseminated information about policy, guidelines from the state, and support services for schools and districts. This venue gave leaders a chance to get answers to their questions about policy and learning opportunities (C. Stringham, personal Communication, September 2014).

In 2012, the format was changed in order to offer a chance for districts to share their work, ideas, successes, and learning opportunities with each other. Based on a topic for each session, a panel comprised of teachers and leaders was formed to provide advice and examples of their work on improving student achievement. County office employees invited these panel members from districts that had experienced success with implementing new strategies. According to the minutes from Innovate County's

Educational Resource Services monthly meeting in May 2014, instructional consultants reported that while leaders responded positively to hearing ideas, none of the schools were implementing any of them. Communication with panel members also indicated that participating schools and districts had not contacted them for further information or support. One principal stated,

> It is strange that so many leaders come together, ask for support, and then just drop the ball and do not follow through. My intention was to offer some support as a panel member and then build a partnership or collaboration with other leaders. But, no one ever contacted me for more information and I am not really sure whom to reach out to myself (B. Bilbo, personal communication, September, 2014).

Without a structured system of support for leaders, the individual elements of professional development do not provide ongoing learning and support for leaders who wish to impact student achievement (Fullan & Senge, 2010; Kay & Greenhill, 2012; Kirtman, 2013).

The purpose of this study was to examine a central California school district's system of support for principals, a system that was designed to build their knowledge about, and strengthen their skills in, instructional leadership. The system was examined within the framework of the three elements of support for developing instructional leaders provided by the University of Washington's Center for Educational Leadership: professional development, collaboration through networks and learning communities, and coaching/mentoring partnerships.

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

Navigating through 21st century learning and reforms, such as Common Core Standards, has presented challenges for leaders looking for support. Because many of these reforms are new there are no local models from which to glean information and ideas. All schools must design their innovations with little support from local models. Ongoing professional development for leaders is necessary so that schools can navigate the changing face of education and educational reform (Bottoms & Fry, 2009; Grissom & Harrington, 2010; Kearney, 2010; Lingam & Lingam, 2013; Madsen et al., 2014; Mombourquette & Bedard, 2014; Scott & Rarieya, 2011). Current information and ideas are required to support innovation and the sustainability of school reform (Akomolafe & Adesua, 2013; Fullan, 2011; Hatch & Roegman, 2012; Knapp, Copland, Honig, Plecki, & Portin, 2010). In Innovate County, support in the form of workshops, conferences, and networking are regularly offered but in isolation and outside of a system of support that provides ongoing professional development. This is evidenced in the professional development catalog available on the Innovate County website. Individually, these elements - professional development, networks, and coaching/mentoring - do not build the capacity of leadership by way of a whole systems approach to professional development (Fullan & Senge, 2010; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009).

Few studies analyzed the importance of ongoing professional development for school principals (Barnes et al., 2010; Bottoms & Fry, 2009; Grissom & Harrington, 2010; Rieckhoff & Larsen, 2011). Barnes, Camburn, Sanders, and Sebastian (2010) examined learning and change among principals who participated in a sustained, ongoing

professional development program through their district. They found that the principals perceived the ongoing support as helpful in refining their practice and applying knowledge with structures, tools, and protocols learned through the professional development provided. Grissom and Harrington (2010) examined the connection between professional development of principals and school performance. They found that university course work as professional development yielded lower ratings than participation in formal mentoring programs. Riekhoff and Larsen (2011) studied the perceptions of principals who participated in a model of school reform called Professional Development Schools (PDS). They found that principals perceived the model as allowing them to focus on sustainable school improvement and professional development. All of these researchers recommended further studies to analyze the impact of support for principals in different formats.

Innovate County Office of Education uses leadership research from researchers and practitioners such as J. Hattie (2011), M. Fullan (2014), D. Reeves (2009), and R. Marzano (2005) to inform professional development practices for a variety of settings and purposes as evidenced in the professional development catalog available on the Innovate County website. A gap in practice exists between the opportunities available for knowledge building and a systemic approach to support leaders in applying this knowledge for sustainable change. This research was necessary to identify missing elements for the ongoing professional development of principals and to discover how the elements could be established systemically. This information could explain how to

develop a system of support for leaders and both student learning and the successful implementation of new standards.

Part of the successful implementation of new standards and preparing students for college and careers requires principals to use both innovation and instructional leadership to build capacity within schools (Fullan, 2014; Kay & Greenhill, 2012; Kearney, 2010; Mendels & Mitgang, 2013; Scott & Rarieya, 2011). Much of the research indicates that schools need to be collaborative and reflective of their practice in order to meet the needs of students in the 21st century. At the same time, principals are working in competitive, isolated, and noncollaborative environments (Bottoms & Fry, 2009; Fahey, 2011; Fullan, 2014; Kearney, 2010; Reardon, 2011; Rieckhoff & Larsen, 2011). In order to build capacity in schools, principals need to participate in similar problem-solving environments and collaborate with other leaders (Barnes et al., 2010; Wahlstrom et al., 2010). While Innovate County offers a forum for this collaboration, the group lacks the cohesion that would be needed for honest inquiry and for opportunities to solve problems in schools.

Many principals are expected to accomplish more than ever before and to be more accountable while receiving fewer resources and less support (Fullan, 2014; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; Muhammad & Hollie, 2011; Piggot-Irvine, Howse, & Richard, 2013). It is expected that, by providing a system of support for ongoing professional development—development that seeks to guide leaders in applying relevant knowledge and solving complex problems—an innovative and collaborative culture of learning will be facilitated (Goldring et al., 2012; Grissom & Harrington, 2010; Knapp, Copland,

Honig, Plecki, & Portin, 2010; Mombourquette & Bedard, 2014). Implementation of new practices and collaborative support within a systemic structure are lacking in Innovate County.

One factor that requires differentiated support is the fact that challenges are site-specific due to size, demographics, and location (Preston et al., 2013; Versland, 2013). Innovate County serves 29 small school districts and 15 large school districts. In addition to differences in size, demographic data collected from the Innovate County website revealed that many of its schools have a large populations of English learners and students of low socioeconomic status. Another challenge noted in the research for leaders of small schools is location, which isolates students from resources (Preston et al., 2013; Versland, 2013). Some of the small schools in Innovate County are in rural areas. Ongoing professional development should be made available for leaders of all schools (Preston et al., 2013; Scott & Rarieya, 2011; Versland, 2013).

The purpose of this study was to examine a central California school district's (Filigree School District, a pseudonym) system of support for principals that was designed to build their knowledge about, and strengthen their skills in, instructional leadership. The Filigree School District system was compared to three elements of support for developing instructional leaders provided by the University of Washington's Center for Educational Leadership. As described earlier on pages 2 and 3, these elements included professional development, collaboration through networks, and coaching/mentoring partnerships. The Filigree School District in central California is near Innovate County. Its demographics are similar to those of Innovate County in terms

of ethnic diversity, percentage of English learners, socioeconomics, and migrant status. Its schools range from small with one administrator to large with more than one administrator. Each school leader in the district participated in a system of support provided by the district. The results of this study could be used to support organizations, such as county or district offices, that strive to provide ongoing professional development for school principals.

Definitions

In order to ensure understanding, the following terms have been defined as they were used throughout this study.

Instructional leader: An instructional leader provides support to their school community through management, collaboration, and focused learning. The main goal of instructional leaders is to improve instruction through analysis of teaching and learning. Essentially, instructional leaders are "leaders of learning" (The Wallace Foundation, 2013). First and foremost, instructional leaders clarify a vision of successful learning and create a climate for collaborative learning for all (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Effective instructional leaders share leadership with others as the community learns together through inquiry and action (Fullan, 2011; Lambert, 1998).

Leadership: Leadership is creating a collaborative, synergistic professional community for learning (Knapp et al., 2010; Lambert, 1998; Shantal, Halttunen, & Pekka, 2014; SRI International, 2011). Lambert (1998) and Knapp, Copland, Honig, Plecki, and Portin (2010) separated the role of leader from the definition of leadership to distinguish between looking at strong or poor leadership as a single person. Instead, their

definitions further describe the importance of collaborative learning. A component of leadership is the shared work that influences the entire team toward a shared vision (Fullan, 2014; Maxwell, 2013; Sterrett & Haas, 2009).

Learning community: The learning community described in this study focuses on how principals learn together. Principal learning communities operate much like professional learning communities (PLCs) employed by many teachers in schools (David, 2009). While the PLC within a school site will analyze student-learning data to determine interventions and next steps, a principal learning community takes on a broader view. Student learning data is analyzed to inform principals about areas of need for instructional support or identify problems for schoolwide practice and professional learning opportunities (Barth et al., 2005; Dufour & Fullan, 2013). Principals should also serve as active participants in their school's PLCs; the principal learning community becomes another venue for learning how best to organize and facilitate the school site PLCs (Darling-Hammond, Orphanos, LaPointe, & Weeks, 2007).

Mentoring/Coaching: Mentoring and coaching are similar in terms of purpose. Both provide principals with ongoing professional learning through collegial support and guidance (Goldring et al., 2012; Scott & Rarieya, 2011; Versland, 2013). Mentoring is provided for principals who are newer to the principal position. Coaching is provided for more experienced principals. Mentors are more experienced principals that provide support through guidance, advice, problem-solving, and observation (Grissom & Harrington, 2010; SRI International, 2011). Mentors and coaches could be colleagues, retired educators, or consultants associated with a university or other organizations

(Duncan & Stock, 2010; Elder & Padover, 2011; Grissom & Harrington, 2010; James-Ward, 2011; Robinson et al., 2009).

Network: In this study, the term network is used to describe the multiple resources available to principals from which to learn. These resources include colleagues in similar job positions, organizations that provide professional development for leaders, and people who can engage principals in learning and application of skills and knowledge such as a coach or mentor. Networks could be localized or they could be through virtual environments using the Internet (Scott & Rarieya, 2011). The essential component of a network is that it is comprised of colleagues with similar responsibilities to offer support for each other in their respective working environments (Goldring et al., 2012; Grissom & Harrington, 2010; Scott & Rarieya, 2011).

Systems of support: For the purpose of this study, a system of support refers to the elements within a system that supports principals with ongoing professional development. These elements are derived from the conceptual framework that is used and described in detail on page 18 of this paper ("Principal Support Framework," 2013). The elements are interdependent and form a complete system of differentiated support for principals to build their knowledge and strengthen their skills as instructional leaders.

Significance

Findings from this study may inform other educational organizations that are seeking to develop a system of support to provide principals with ongoing professional development. Effective support for instructional leaders provides opportunities to develop

the knowledge and skills they need to create learning communities within which adult learners can work together to improve student learning.

Professional learning that provides opportunities for principals to enhance their skills of inquiry is essential within a system of support. These skills enhance their learning and can be used with reflective practices with their school staff. Fullan (2014) asserted that principals effect change by creating collaborative environments that promote inquiry that is focused on improvement. Part of the inquiry cycle involves reflection on practice. But principals often do not have time for this, nor is it a part of their school culture. A system of support for principals could provide opportunities for principals to reflective on their own practices and to learn how to develop more reflective practices within the school community. Many researchers support instructional leadership through inquiry and collaboration focused on data and useful information for shared decision-making and reflection (Bryk, 2010; Fullan, 2011; Kirtman, 2013).

Implications for Positive Social Change

The information gathered from this case study can inform the practice of providing a structure for ongoing professional development to principals. The district studied provides a support system for principals that encompass collaboration, coaching, mentoring, and professional development. County offices can benefit from looking at the structure examined to inform their plans for networks and forums that engage principals in meaningful dialogue and reflection of their impact on student learning. State offices can also benefit from a look at how they can provide resources for both large and small school districts to offer similar structures of support.

Using the findings from this case study and the information gleaned from the literature, this project will serve as a guide for developing systems of support for instructional leaders in Innovate County. The project was designed by considering the lessons learned from the Filigree School District and using the literature to inform best practices for differentiating support for principals.

Guiding Question

As educators embark into new territories in education, such as Common Core State Standards, it is important that, to implement shifts in instruction, leaders are given the same level of support as teachers. While instruction is shifting, so too are leadership and the way schools work and learn together. Leaders need support to shift their practices to support the instructional shifts that teachers are navigating. Leadership at a school site is often perceived as lonely because in many cases there is one leader at a the site (Goldring et al., 2012). Creating a system of support that allows principals to network with each other, to problem solve, and to build their knowledge about instruction is one way to support leaders as they strive to support students and teachers through the learning process (Grissom & Harrington, 2010; Madsen et al., 2014; Mombourquette & Bedard, 2014; Shantal et al., 2014; Versland, 2013). The purpose of this study was to examine the Filigree School District system of support for principals, a system that is designed to build their knowledge about and strengthen their skills in instructional leadership. The district's system was compared to three elements of support for developing instructional leaders recommended by the University of Washington's Center for Educational Leadership.

1. How does the Filigree School District structure its principals' network to support principal learning and collaboration?

2. How does the Filigree School District provide professional development plans to support principals in building knowledge and strengthening their instructional leadership skills?

3. How does the Filigree School District provide principals with coaching and mentoring to support principals in building knowledge and strengthening their instructional leadership skills?

4. How do principals in the Filigree School District perceive their district's system of support?

Review of the Literature

Professional learning for principals can provide support in maximizing the impact of instruction on student learning (Grissom & Harrington, 2010; Kearney, 2010; Knapp et al., 2010; Madsen et al., 2014; Mombourquette & Bedard, 2014; Reardon, 2011; Rieckhoff & Larsen, 2011). This literature review examines the existing research to discover elements of a system of support aimed at building instructional leadership capacity in principals within a principal support framework for ongoing professional development.

Conceptual Framework

This study was grounded in a conceptual framework for leadership development derived from the University of Washington's Center for Educational. The purpose of this study was to examine the Filigree School District system of support for principals

designed to build their knowledge about and strengthen their skills in instructional leadership. Their system was juxtaposed to three elements of support for developing instructional leaders provided by the University of Washington's Center for Educational Leadership. The three elements within this framework are (a) professional development, (b) coaching/mentoring partnerships, and (c) networks for collaboration.

An examination of the literature reveals that ongoing professional development of principals is needed to build leadership capacity (Goldring et al., 2012; Knapp et al., 2010; Madsen et al., 2014; Mendels & Mitgang, 2013). Not only do principals foster support of student and teacher learning, they too, must learn alongside students and colleagues. As such, a system of support can provide ongoing professional development to build instructional leadership capacity in principals, which can prepare leaders with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively lead a community of learners.

Grounded in the goal of providing ongoing professional development, a structure for systems of support for principals is described from the literature and from the case study. These systems of support include elements that create a balanced approach to professional development for principals. The University of Washington's Center for Educational Leadership (2013) has developed a principal support framework to provide guidance to school districts who seek to focus on developing principals as instructional leaders. The framework was designed to help leaders at both the district and school site levels to

- create their own picture of what it means to support principals,

- assess their school system's current approach to supporting principals as instructional leaders,

- identify strengths to build on,

- identify technical assistance needs, and

- highlight areas for inquiry and next-stage policy development. ("Principal Support Framework," pp. 1-2, 2013)

The framework has been used and tested in school districts across the country to obtain feedback for revisions. The framework was then synthesized into three action areas. These three areas include (a) a shared vision of principals as instructional leaders, (b) a system of support for developing principals as instructional leaders, and (c) making it possible for principals to be instructional leaders. For the purpose of this case study, the researcher explored Action Area 2, system of support for developing principals as instructional leaders. The key ideas for Action Area 2 focus on the support from district office personnel and a structured system to help principals grow as instructional leaders. These key ideas include:

1. Instructional leadership directors (ILDs) are hired to focus on developing principals. A responsibility of the ILD is to provide principals with professional development that is relevant to their needs as well as facilitating networks for collaboration with all principals.

2. Differentiated support is offered for principals through coaching or mentoring along with the development of a professional growth plan.

3. Principal networks are facilitated and lead by ILDs.

4. ILDs collaborate with other central office departments regarding principal professional development.

5. ILDs are provided support by central office and are held accountable for principals' growth and performance through evaluations and collected data. ("Principal Support Framework," 2013, pp. 5-6)

Within these key ideas exist the three elements of a structured system of support for developing instructional leaders that will be explored in this study: (a) professional development, (b) coaching/mentoring partnerships, and (c) networks for collaboration. These elements provide for a sustainable support system for principals to grow as instructional leaders. As part of this system of support, the principal is better prepared to create environments of learning throughout the school to include students, teachers, and the community. A 4-year program evaluation study in Sanger Unified School District demonstrated how a system of support for principals effected change in school culture, which in turn increased student achievement (David & Talbert, 2010). Sanger's system included two of the elements discussed in this study, principal collaboration and focused professional development. In another mixed-method research study on principals within a network over a 3-year period, participating principals articulated that the support they received through collaboration with other leaders helped them improve their practice in a number of ways (Rieckhoff & Larsen, 2011). The principals were more purposeful in goal development, revision, articulation of goals, and resourcefulness to support those goals. They also shared that their professional development plans were more specific and aligned with school improvement plans. Finally, they reported that the collaboration in

partnership with other districts provided them with a forum for their own professional development. In both of these studies, two elements, principal collaboration and professional development, existed as part of the system of support. However, coaching and mentoring partnerships were not clearly articulated as an element within these studies.

To better understand how ongoing professional development exists within a system of support, the research questions focused on the elements included at the Filigree School District. Additionally, they examined how the elements of professional development, coaching/mentoring partnerships, and networks for collaboration were embedded within the system implemented in the school district. Furthermore, the case study approach allowed the researcher to ascertain the support for building instructional leadership capacity through the analysis of data gathered from the perceptions of principals involved in ongoing professional development.

Review of the Broader Problem

The following is a list of factors gleaned from the research and addressed in the literature review that could inform the development and analysis of a system of support for principals:

1. Collaborative communities foster inquiry practices that lead to problem-solving and implementation of new knowledge and skills (Barnes et al., 2010; Honig, 2012; Knapp et al., 2010). Within a principal learning community, which will be described in detail below, these principals receive support in

problem-solving through open and honest sharing of relevant evidence of student learning.

2. A network of support with other colleagues can provide further insight and new ideas for student achievement (Hatch & Roegman, 2012; Knapp et al., 2010). Similar to collaborative communities, networks provide opportunities for principals to learn through inquiry. Within a network, one might see a variety of formats for this inquiry. Professional development is one format for this network. Described below are the different formats that professional development might take to provide a network of support for principals. In the 21st century, opportunities for networking with other colleagues has increased. Principals can network locally with their colleagues and neighboring schools and districts, as before, within a workshop environment. However, principals can also network with other leaders around the world using a variety of communication systems such as Twitter, Skype, Google Hangouts, e-mail, and other online learning communities.

3. Partnerships in the form of coaching or mentoring can provide differentiated support to leaders to improve their practice (Mendels & Mitgang, 2013; Patti et al., 2012). While collaborative communities and networks foster learning within groups, partnerships afford the opportunity for principals to practice with a critical friend who can provide kind, specific, helpful feedback for improvement. The nature of these partnerships will be described below in detail.

To find peer-reviewed, scholarly sources for this study, I used the following databases: ProQuest Central, ERIC, Educational Research Complete, and Google Scholar. The Wallace Foundation was important because it provided statistical information and reports on structures for supporting principals. I used the following search terms: *professional development, principal development, learning leader, coaching, mentoring, leadership, principal preparation, school leadership, change agent, school change, learning culture,* and *leadership capacity.* Through this process, I found 55 journal articles and 9 reports on the topics of leadership, systems, and principals. To identify the local problem, Innovate County Office of Education provided data from its public sources available on the Internet and through personal communication.

Systems of Leadership Support

A system of support for principals provides a structure for ongoing professional development. A system encompasses the many formats of professional development to allow leaders to collaborate, learn and share with others in similar roles, as well as reflect upon and apply new learning in their respective school environments. Within the research, one can find many formats that constitute professional development including workshops, seminars, conferences, mentoring, shadowing, coaching, and the list could go on (Bottoms & Fry, 2009; Goldring et al., 2012; Grissom & Harrington, 2010; Knapp et al., 2010; Rieckhoff & Larsen, 2011; SRI International, 2011; Wahlstrom et al., 2010). This study examined a central California school district system that provides support to principals in building knowledge and strengthening their instructional leadership skills and determined how the school district provides a system of support for principals.

The term system of support is intended to describe the ongoing professional development plan and interactions for principals. Kearney (2010) suggested that principals should be provided with the opportunity to participate in "a coherent and comprehensive system for principal development and support" (p. iii). The system includes professional development that allows principals to participate in peer-to-peer learning (Bottoms & Fry, 2009). Systems of support provide principals with opportunities to focus on their own learning needs while also contributing to the collective growth of peers, which in turn expands their own learning (Goldring et al., 2012; Wahlstrom et al., 2010).

Learning is personal and occurs best in groups (Goldring et al., 2012; Madsen et al., 2014). A system of support offers the opportunity for principals to challenge their own beliefs, answer difficult questions, and problem solve collectively (Goldring et al., 2012; Madsen et al., 2014; Sterrett & Haas, 2009). The purpose of a system of support is to provide the necessary learning and environment for principals to be successful at their jobs (Mendels & Mitgang, 2013). The focus of the collaborative, professional learning is "on improving the quality and practice of leadership" (Knapp et al., 2010, p. 33).

Professional Development

The term professional development has a very broad meaning. Professional development could take the form of attending a workshop or training session or it could include the entire plan for professional growth. Within a system of support for principals, professional development is a process that is ongoing and sustained with multiple opportunities for learning and application of knowledge (Goldring et al., 2012). The

professional development process for principals includes both formal and informal opportunities for learning (Scott & Rarieya, 2011). Piggot-Irvine (2010) described the development of principals as a career-long process that is highly reflective of the job itself. Unlike an event for training of new curriculum or implementation of mandates, professional development within a system of support should be designed to help principals develop their leadership skills and capabilities to build capacity for sustained school improvement (Grissom & Harrington, 2010; Madsen et al., 2014). These experiences are included in a professional development plan with an identified focus and are tied to measures of success in order to ascertain growth and garner feedback from the learning community. Zimmerman (2011) emphasized the need for leaders to develop a plan for professional learning that has clear and specific goals accompanied by practical steps to ensure the process for continuous improvement is attainable.

To develop the leadership capacity of principals, professional development must be multifaceted. The curriculum used must be flexible and allow for job-embedded application (Goldring et al., 2012; Piggot-Irvine, 2010). Differentiating the approach and the curriculum is important for meeting the unique needs of different settings and the different needs of the leaders (Knapp et al., 2010). Wahlstrom (2010) added the importance of recognizing that elementary, middle, and high schools have different settings. Principals within these different settings can learn from each other in terms of general leadership models and provide a frame for vertical articulation. However, differentiating for the application within the context of the school is essential (Goldring et al., 2012).

The curriculum used for professional development must provide practical tools and processes to allow for the application of new learning within the context of the respective school setting (Goldring et al., 2012). This provides principals with the opportunity to apply new learning and reflect for deeper learning and understanding. The focus needs to be on the real work of the principal while incorporating research-based strategies and theories of change (Goldring et al., 2012; Grissom & Harrington, 2010). By providing this balance and the opportunity for reflection, leaders can develop a deeper understanding of theory and current practices (Madsen et al., 2014).

Professional development for instructional leaders is complex and ongoing (Goldring et al., 2012; Piggot-Irvine et al., 2013). It offers a plan for professional learning that encompasses many settings and formats. The goal is to improve student learning, which requires principals to participate in opportunities that will deepen their understanding of effective instructional practices. Beyond the workshop or conference session, professional learning exists in other collaborative formats. The professional development described here can exist in these different formats that provide deeper understanding of problem-solving and application. The following sections will describe a few of these formats of professional development: networks, principal learning communities, and coaching/mentoring partnerships.

Networks

One might consider a system of support as a network for gaining new knowledge and collaborating with colleagues. Shaked and Schechter (2013) referred to a school network as an example of systems thinking for lifelong learning. They describe these

networks as the collaborative meeting of principals and other school staff members from different school settings to "advance educational practices, share their professional expertise with each other and learn from their colleagues' experience" (p. 785). Within a system of support, a network provides a structure for principals to learn together through the sharing of new knowledge and inquiry into current educational challenges, initiatives, programs, and policies (Enomoto, 2012).

Networks can be structured to provide learning opportunities for leaders and at the same time provide flexibility for relevant learning and application to meet the needs of principals (Carlson, 2012). Within a system of support, internal networks are structured to provide opportunities for leaders to learn together toward a common vision. In addition to these internal networks, instructional leaders may belong to external networks of their choosing to deepen their own understanding in areas that pertain to their professional goals. Examples of external networks include those created through attendance of academies sponsored by professional organizations such as the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) or the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA). External networks can also include social media such as Twitter and online learning environments such as massive open online courses (MOOC).

Because these external networks are on a larger scale and available online, they can include educators and organizations from around the globe (Gao et al., 2012; Lieberman, 2000). Principals may be involved in multiple networks that inform their practice. Within a system of support, a network is internal and can provide opportunities for principals to share their learning from other networks with whom they are involved.

These external networks could be included in a professional development plan to target specific learning goals and shared with the internal network to support other learners.

Principal Learning Communities

There are many facets to the principal learning community. Leaders identify and solve problems based on student learning data (Barnes et al., 2010; Dufour & Fullan, 2013; Rick DuFour & Mattos, 2013; Mombourquette & Bedard, 2014, 2014; Wahlstrom et al., 2010). To build the knowledge of principals, these communities focus on instructional practices to foster student achievement and to meet the needs of particular content areas and student populations (Bottoms & Fry, 2009; Dufour & Fullan, 2013; Honig, 2012). David (2009) pointed out that these "principal learning communities need sufficient time, strong facilitators, and carefully constructed agendas grounded in the real problems that school administrators face" (p. 89). It is important to provide the time and space needed for this to occur as well as a structure provided by a facilitator.

Learning communities can serve a valuable role in a system of support for leaders. Principal learning communities provide an opportunity for practitioners to share knowledge, learn jointly, and engage in inquiry to solve problems and find solutions (Barnes et al., 2010; Dufour & Fullan, 2013; Rick DuFour & Mattos, 2013). Members of a principal learning community typically share a similar job description or work within the same organization. In this way, principals can offer support to their peers and serve as a resource for building leadership capacity (Honig, 2012). As Reardon (2011) pointed out, "engaging principals in dialogue with each other and school district administrators

offers a sustainable way of approaching the challenges" principals face as they work toward instructional leadership practices (p. 81).

Effective learning communities are grounded in a shared set of values, beliefs, and a vision (Cook, 2014; Fahey, 2011). Similarly, learning communities share an understanding of the measures of success as they examine evidence of learning and problem solve together. While the members of the community work in different locations and different settings, the learning community remains focused on the goals for improved student learning. Collaborative relationships formed within the community offer support for principals who seek to improve student learning at their school site (Fahey, 2011). Communication and collaboration across schools provides the opportunity for principals to share their experiences to develop and apply knowledge within their own context (Mombourquette & Bedard, 2014; Seashore Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). As part of the process of professional development, members of the community engage in self-reflection and action research as they seek to learn and support each other (Cardno, 2006; Dufour & Fullan, 2013; Fahey, 2011). The learning community provides support and feedback for solving complex problems that is grounded in evidence from data and research (Bottoms & Fry, 2009). In this way, principals must be open about their practice to seek out solutions and ideas for learning and application within their school environment (Fahey, 2011).

For these learning communities to thrive, members need to have a commitment toward each other to create the necessary environment for open communication and problem-solving. While some flexibility must exist for professional development, strong

facilitation by a leader within the community and a relevant agenda for meetings is important (David, 2009; Fahey, 2011). Fahey (2011) suggested that the use of protocols ensures that the focus remains on student learning and problem-solving. Structure for learning and communication ensures that the learning community remains focused on the vision for improved student learning.

Coaching and Mentoring Partnerships

Coaching and mentoring opportunities within a system of support for principals provides an opportunity for one-on-one problem-solving and learning. Leaders form partnerships that become part of a coaching and mentoring structure for differentiated support. Principals can develop new skills as a result of the partnerships formed with colleagues (Carlson, 2012). These partnerships provide ongoing support for professional development that is job-embedded to fit the context of their work environment and reduces isolation experienced by leaders in rural and small school settings (Duncan & Stock, 2010; Goldring et al., 2012; Robinson et al., 2009). Coaching and mentoring provides the opportunity to apply learning and implement new strategies for school improvement gleaned from other forms of professional development (Elder & Padover, 2011). A key factor for the success of any coaching or mentoring culture is a focus on results and improved performance (Grissom & Harrington, 2010; Reeves, 2009).

The one-on-one nature of the coaching/mentoring partnership allows participants to use a cycle-of-inquiry for problem-solving (Honig, 2012; Knapp et al., 2010). The use of protocols for discussions grounded in data ensure that the partnership is focused on continuous improvement (Honig, 2012; Reeves, 2009). This continuous improvement is

evidenced within the measures of success identified by the community or the coaching/mentoring partners. Coaching and mentoring structures makes differentiating professional development for leaders attainable. Individual professional development plans can be addressed in a partnership with a coach or mentor, allowing for focused learning in areas for improvement. Robinson, Horan, and Nanavati (2009) suggested that coaching and mentoring offer the opportunity to build a continuum of support that benefits all levels of experience and skill. Coaches and mentors provide feedback and modeling of leadership practices to deepen understanding and support implementation of new ideas and strategies (Honig, 2012; Knapp et al., 2010; Reeves, 2009). They often work alongside principals to observe and critique in order to support the principal's professional learning (Grissom & Harrington, 2010). Based on the collaborative conversations and feedback, coaches and mentors can also connect principals with the resources necessary for their continued learning and improvement (Grissom & Harrington, 2010).

Coaching and mentoring partnerships have been associated with greater performance and confidence of participating principals (Grissom & Harrington, 2010; Patti et al., 2012; Versland, 2013). Through the collegial support, principals engage in self-reflection about their goals and their current practice (Patti et al., 2012). This reflection is essential for principals to navigate changes in the educational climate and for continued improvement.

The terms coaching and mentoring are often used interchangeably. While they share many of the same characteristics, there are some differences that should be noted.

Combining coaching and mentoring into a system of support for principals benefits both new and veteran leaders (Robinson et al., 2009).

Coaching. The term coaching is often used to describe partnerships focused on problem-solving and improved performance through collaboration with a colleague. Elder and Padover (2011) emphasized that "the purpose of coaching is to transform the person and the organization" (p. 139). This supports the notion that change is a part of coaching, using the experience of the coachee to learn and inquire further about changes in practice that will give them the results they seek (Elder & Padover, 2011; Robinson et al., 2009). Coaching, as part of a system of support for professional development, has been associated with school improvement when feedback, reflection, and a focus on results are emphasized (Goldring et al., 2012; Grissom & Harrington, 2010; Honig, 2012; Knapp et al., 2010; Patti et al., 2012; Reeves, 2009). Using identified measures of success, this process is enhanced through focused collaboration with the coach.

Reeves (2009) offered three prerequisites for effective coaching: (a) the person receiving coaching must be committed to a change in performance, (b) a clear learning and performance agenda should be created, and (c) relevant, useful, and timely feedback should be provided for continuous improvement. Coaching as part of a professional development plan is intended for those seeking support in changing practice and improving upon their skills. Coaches help individuals apply their learning. As such, a coach needs to be a knowledgeable colleague. In some cases, the coach may be a far more experienced individual. In others, the coach may have the same number of years of experience, but can offer insight from having had different experiences and knowledge.

Mentoring. Mentoring is provided to those who are new to a leadership position (Scott & Rarieya, 2011). Mentors are usually more experienced individuals who offer guidance to those who are beginning their careers in leadership (Mendels, 2012; Mombourquette & Bedard, 2014; SRI International, 2011; Versland, 2013). Browne-Ferrigno and Muth (2006) described leadership mentoring as "the formal and informal social construction of professional performance expectations developed through purposeful interactions between aspiring and practicing principals in the context of authentic practice" (p. 276). Where coaching is focused on a change in performance to meet goals, mentoring is focused on the individual's skill and knowledge development for high performance toward set goals (Duncan & Stock, 2010). In a system of support, new principals may engage in a partnership with a mentor, while more experienced principals work with a coach. Mentors serve as critical friends that can provide the encouragement and support to take risks that will improve student learning (Duncan & Stock, 2010). This process is enhanced through inquiry and problem-solving supported by feedback (Duncan & Stock, 2010; Elder & Padover, 2011).

Reeves's (2009) prerequisites for coaching exist for mentorships with subtle differences. In coaching, the person receiving coaching must be committed to a change in performance. In mentoring, the support is offered to new principals to apply new learning and strategies (Mombourquette & Bedard, 2014). Like coaching, a clear learning and performance agenda should be created. The agenda for mentoring may be more fundamental than for coaching an experienced principal and provides differentiation to meet the needs of the individual (Versland, 2013). Finally, both coaches and mentors

should be provided relevant, useful, and timely feedback for continuous improvement. Assessing the performance of new principals is essential for continued growth and offering the necessary resources and support for improvement (Mendels, 2012).

Structured Systems of Support for Principals

Described above are the elements of a system of support for principals including professional development, networks and principal learning communities, and opportunities for partnerships in the form of coaching and mentoring. Within a system of support, all of these elements are present (Fullan & Senge, 2010; Kearney, 2010; Kirtman, 2013; Knapp et al., 2010; Mendels & Mitgang, 2013). Each of these individual elements has merit for supporting the learning and skill development as leaders. What makes a system of support unique is that all of these elements are purposefully and intentionally provided to principals for the purpose of continuous improvement of both individuals as leaders and the school district collectively.

Carlson (2012) found that structures for support are important as they ensure the elements of a system are used effectively. However, he also cautions that there needs to be some flexibility within the structures so that partnerships and collaboration continue to be relevant for ongoing professional development. Threaded into these components are also the elements of professional development plans and measures of success. These elements of a professional growth plan and a procedure to measure how well the principal met the goals of the plan are essential for ensuring the relevance of the learning and feedback for improvement.

Summary

Amid the changing tides of education following the adoption of Common Core Standards in most states, which seeks to prepare students for college and careers through the mastery of 21st century skills, teachers are learning how to shift their instructional practices. School leadership is also experiencing a shift in the way schools are led and managed. Instructional leaders lead the learning within a community of shared leadership fostered by collaboration and problem-solving with peers. To lead in this kind of environment, principals need to reflect on their practice and how they structure support for teachers and students. Principals need ongoing professional development in order to make the shift and for continuous improvement for student learning and achievement (Hite et al., 2010; Kearney, 2010; Mombourquette & Bedard, 2014; Shantal et al., 2014).

The Filigree School District is a diverse district in central California that provides support to principals by facilitating the building of knowledge and strengthening of their instructional leadership skills. The purpose of this study was to examine their system of support for principals designed to build their knowledge about and strengthen their skills in instructional leadership. The Filigree school district system was compared to three elements of support for developing instructional leaders provided by the University of Washington's Center for Educational Leadership. Insights from this study could aid similar educational institutions in learning about current practices and challenges as they seek to develop systems of support for principals. Positive social change can be achieved through focused collaboration and support of principals whose mission is to create a culture of continuous improvement of self and others.

In Section 2, I will provide support for the qualitative approach and design; describe the participants and how I recruited them; and explain the findings from the data analysis.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

The research method used for this study was the qualitative case study, which seeks to investigate processes in order to describe an in-depth understanding of a bounded system or unit for the study (Creswell, 2014; Lodico & Voegtle, 2010). The purpose of this study was to examine the Filigree School District system of support for principals, which was designed to build their knowledge about and to strengthen their skills in instructional leadership. Their system was compared to three elements of support for developing instructional leaders provided by the University of Washington's Center for Educational Leadership. The bounded system for this study was limited to the organization of the system in the district. To deeply understand the system of support provided to elementary principals in Filigree School District, I collected data via face-to-face interviews and document analysis.

Qualitative Research Design: Case Study

Qualitative data were collected to gain insight into the system of support provided to principals in the Filigree school. I sought to understand how this system provided support to its leaders. Through interviews, I learned of the perceived influence the system has had on principals who strove to improve their practice and effectiveness in leadership. I analyzed the information provided through the lens of the principal support framework of systems of support ("Principal Support Framework," 2013).

Case study research works well when explaining a phenomena or circumstance (Yin, 2013). In this case, I explored a system of support that is used today in a single school district; I used the research questions as a guide to explain the system in-depth (Creswell, 2013). This study is important because it will allow for a better understanding of how leaders perceive the system supporting their learning. Through interviews, I sought to understand the participants, setting, and influence the system had on them. Case studies are often conducted within a natural setting, not in a lab or office that is removed from the situation or program being researched (Yin, 2013). In this study, participants chose to be interviewed at their school sites, and I came to them for this part.

Different types of case studies are distinguishable by size and intent. Yin (2013) defined the types of case studies as explanatory, exploratory, and collective studies. The explanatory case study is used to seek answers to questions that could explain a causal link that are too complex for experimental strategies. An exploratory case study is used to explore interventions that do not have an initial set of clear outcomes. Finally, the collective case study approach is used to explore differences among cases and make comparisons between cases. Stake (1995) also described the intrinsic case study, which focuses on a single case, seeking to analyze and describe in detail a particular situation, program, or individual. For this study, the intrinsic case study approach was used, as the intent was to analyze and describe how a system of support is structured to provide ongoing professional development for school site leaders.

For this intrinsic case study, I described and analyzed the system of support with the intent to further understand the case under study and to inform the body of knowledge

that currently exists. While generalizations are not a primary goal for qualitative research (Stake, 1995), the ideas and understandings discovered can be applied and investigated further.

The case study method was preferred for this particular study as I sought to describe a system of support to add to the existing literature and inform practice. Other types of qualitative methods would be inappropriate for this purpose. Creswell (2013) described five approaches to qualitative research: narrative studies, phenomenological research, grounded theory research, ethnographic research, and case studies. Narrative studies focus on the collection of stories from individuals that explain or describe experiences. For this study, stories would not have been an appropriate form of data collection to discover more about the system of support. A phenomenological research would not be appropriate as this study sought to describe a system, not to understand the influence of a particular phenomenon on individuals. Grounded theory research seeks to generate or discover a theory, which was not the intent of this study. Finally, the ethnographic study has its merits in examining the culture of a group. This could be useful for a future study involving a learning community to examine their shared beliefs and values. However, for the purpose of this study, it would not have been appropriate. The case study approach allowed me to examine the system of support, the elements of the system, and the implementation of the elements identified in the literature review for a system of support for principals.

Setting

This study was conducted in the Filigree School District, a mid-sized school district in central California. According to the school district website, there were 20 schools, including three charter schools, a community day school, and an adult school. They served an average of 11,000 students in grades K-12. There were 582 certificated employees in the district, which included 19 school principals. Among the schools, 14 were elementary, 6 served Kindergarten through 6th grade, 5 served Kindergarten through 5th grade, and 3 served Kindergarten through 8th grade. Each elementary school had one principal; twelve of them also had a curriculum support provider or instructional support provider. One middle school served sixth through eighth grade with one principal, five vice principals, and four curriculum support providers. Three high schools offered alternatives to educational approaches. One high school was a charter school that supported homeschool families and was led by a director in lieu of a principal. Another high school offered an independent study model that was led by a principal with support from a guidance-learning specialist. Finally, there was one comprehensive high school with a deputy principal, four assistant principals, and eight guidance counselors.

The Filigree School District followed a "grow your own" model for hiring principals. This meant that all the principals in Filigree had served as teachers, curriculum support providers, or vice principals within the district prior to becoming an elementary principal. The principals had all moved into their respective leadership roles as part of the district's model for site leadership preparation. The number of years that educators had served in these different roles varied. The district also partnered with their

county office and a local university to provide training and support for new leaders. The nature of these partnerships included college courses for the administrator services credentials and a Master's degree program with an emphasis on school leadership as well as onsite coaching and mentoring for new principals provided by the county office.

The district provided scholarships for select educators to attend classes and receive their administrator services credential through the university. The prospective principals that attended courses created a cohort that worked together collaboratively to obtain their degree and their credential. The university was approximately 20 miles from the school district. When possible, the district provided the facilities for the university to hold classes within their district for the convenience of their employees.

The district also paid for ongoing support through the county office for new administrators to clear their credentials. Once the administrator credential was obtained, principals were required to clear their preliminary credential by participating in ongoing professional learning. The county office provided afternoon and evening professional development workshops as well as onsite mentoring and coaching for new principals.

Participants and Ethical Protection

Four principals and one administrator were selected. Of the four elementary principals, selected via purposive sampling, two were male and two female; their years of experience ranged from less than 1 year to 19 years. The fifth participant, selected via convenience sampling, was a district office administrator that facilitated and guided the system of support for principals in the Filigree School District.

The district office administrator's knowledge of the system of support provided in the Filigree School District came from 21 years as an elementary principal, teacher, curriculum support provider, and school site administrator. This participant will be referred to as DA throughout the study to differentiate this role from the principals. The DA was serving a second year as the associate superintendent. This position included oversight of all school sites and district level programs, such as early childhood education, after-school care, and English learner (EL) services and curriculum.

The school site principals were selected using a maximal variation sampling to gain the perspective of principals with varying levels of experience. The intent for this sampling was to gather the perspectives of newer principals as well as perspectives of more veteran principals who have more experience in their role. This provided information pertaining to differentiating support within the system for all principals. There were 14 elementary schools in the district, two of which were charter schools that operated using a different structure from the other schools. I invited the 12 public, non-charter elementary principals to participate in the study. Four principals volunteered to participate in this study, and will be referred to as Principals 1-4.

All of the principals were educators in the Filigree School District prior to their current role as elementary principal. Principal 1 had been an educator in Filigree for 13 years. This principal participant began as a teacher and then served as a vice principal for 2 years prior to becoming an elementary school principal. This participant recently completed a doctoral degree from a local university.

Principal 2 was serving as an elementary principal for a third year. This participant began teaching in the Filigree School District 10 years earlier and was also a student in the district. Principal 2 is completing the process to clear an administrator services credential through participation in the county office partnership described earlier.

The most experienced principal, principal 3, had been an educator for 29 years. This participant's entire career had been in the Filigree School District. Principal 3 began as an elementary teacher for 10 years prior to serving as an assistant principal for 1 year. Then this participant became a principal at one of the established elementary schools and served there for 3 years. Principal 3 was then invited to open a new charter elementary school in the district. For 10 years, principal 3 served as the principal at that charter school before returning to the school served as principal previously. Principal 3 has a total of 19 years experience as an elementary principal in Filigree School District.

The newest principal, principal 4, was serving as a first year principal. This participant began teaching 17 years earlier in another district and took some time off for other ventures. When principal 4 then returned to teaching in Filigree School District as a teacher for 5 years, a curriculum support provider for 1 year, and now as an elementary principal.

Creswell (2012) asserted that ethical protection must be considered for all phases of a research study prior to conducting the study, at the beginning of the study, during data collection, in the analysis phase, and in the reporting, sharing, and storing of data. Prior to conducting the study, I examined the code of ethics and secured IRB approval

from Walden University. The district also provided me with a letter of cooperation as part of the process for IRB approval.

Once Walden University granted IRB approval (approval number 04-04-16-0360392), I contacted the district to begin the process for recruiting participants. Information was shared by the district contact to all elementary principals at a principals' meeting to inform them of the invitation to participate. Following this invitation, I crafted an email to further explain the study, criteria for participation, and the time commitment involved, and a copy of the consent form was attached. Also included in this email was a link to a survey to indicate interest in participation and to identify possible dates for an interview. Participants who expressed interest in participation were then provided with an electronic copy of the consent form to sign and return to me at the scheduled interview. I scheduled interviews for a time and location that was selected by the participant. All the participants chose to be interviewed in their offices at the school site where they serve as principal during school hours. Prior to beginning the interview, I introduced the problem and the purpose for the study and made sure to answer any of the participant's questions.

As stated in the consent form, participants could choose to withdraw from the study at any time. I also safeguarded all data collected by storing files on a password-protected external hard drive to avoid any danger of compromised information stored in cloud storage through the Internet. In addition to this safeguard, all interview transcripts were coded so that there would be no identifying information.

The collection of data was largely done in person through face-to-face interviews. Scheduling of the interviews, reminders, and follow-up communication was done through

e-mail using the e-mail address provided by the participants. Each interview took less than 1 hour to complete. Transcripts were provided to participants through email two to three days after the interview for participants to review for accuracy and clarification. All the participants approved the transcripts as they were.

Following the principal interviews, I used an unstructured interview approach to gather further information from the DA. A list of documents to describe the case was developed in this interview. Following the interview, this participant gathered the requested documents and shared them with me electronically via e-mail. The DA removed any confidential information prior to sharing the documents with me so that none of the documents were of a confidential nature. All the documents collected were saved on a password-protected internal hard drive and backed up on a password-protected external hard drive.

During the data analysis phase of the study, confidentiality of participants was strictly enforced. Names were changed to numbers and profiles were composited so as not to be easily identifiable. Multiple perspectives were reported to include any contrary findings or perspectives that differed from others.

Researcher's Role

I served as an instructional consultant at a county office in a different county from the Filigree School District. I learned of the system of support in Filigree from the literature reviewed and through connections with other educators in the area, but have never worked in the district or with any of the educators in the district. The district was previously involved in a 4-year longitudinal study. In addition to that study, they sought

the guidance and support of M. Fullan, who consulted the district during a process of organizational change. This occurred prior to the Common Core State Standards and a new accountability system for California. I was involved in a statewide collaboration, which sought M. Fullan's guidance in providing support for school districts navigating new educational initiatives. I felt that the organizational change that the Filigree School District had begun in prior years with M. Fullan could inform other organizations seeking an approach to continuous improvement. Because there are no structured systems of support in Innovate County, the information gleaned from this district could provide guidance for developing and establishing systems of support for instructional leaders in the county.

Data Collection

Approval from Walden University's IRB was obtained prior to collecting any data (04-04-16-0360392). Interviews were the primary source of information for this case study and documentation was collected to further describe and corroborate information gleaned from interviews. Yin (2013) suggested using multiple sources of evidence that is available and relevant for the case. In this case study, interviews provided the most extensive information as it allowed for both a description of the case and perspectives of participants. In addition to the interviews, documentation provided further description and, in some cases, a visual representation of the case for the researcher to use for analysis.

Semistructured Interview for Principals

Data collection began with interviews with each of the four consenting principal

participants. These interviews were conducted face-to-face in the principals' offices,

where they chose to meet. The semistructured interviews included consistent questions

for each principal participant. An interview protocol for these semistructured interviews

is provided in Appendix C. The sessions were audiotaped and transcribed using the

Rev.com transcription service. This was intended to allow me to take pertinent notes and

stay focused on the participants' responses. Using the Rev.com service allowed for a

quicker transcription process so that the participants could review their interviews just

days following the event.

The semistructured approach was largely guided by a list of questions to be

explored, however there was flexibility in the way the questions were used (Merriam,

2009). This approach allowed me to inquire to ascertain the perspective of the participant

and to adjust the order of questions dependent on the responses received. Probing

questions were used to elicit more information to develop a deeper understanding.

Unstructured Interview for the District Administrator

Following the interviews with principals, an interview was conducted face-to-face

with the district administrator. The intent of this interview was to establish rapport with

the participant and explore the system of support that is the focus of this study. Together,

this participant and I explored the documentation that was available to provide an

understanding of the establishment of the system of support. I also used information

gathered from the principal interviews to determine questions that could be answered by

the district administrator for further understanding and clarification of the system of support. While the nature of this interview was unstructured, key points and questions were considered prior to the interview so I could remain focused on the system of support. Conducting the interviews with principals beforehand provided some background to inquire further about the system of support with the district administrator. Appendix D provides a protocol form with key points and questions that were considered for this unstructured interview.

Documents from District Administrator

To assist in understanding the system of support that the school district offers to leaders, documents outlining the structure and processes were collected. The decision as to what documents would be collected was decided upon collaboratively with the district administrator. Initially, I was not certain what documents might have been made available, but suggested the types of documentation would be helpful for exploring each of the research questions. Appendix E provides a documentation log that was used to identify data that could provide insight into each of the research questions. The documents collected were aligned to the guiding questions to support the analysis. Alignment of the research questions and the data collected for analysis is described in Table 1.

Table 1

Alignment of Guiding Question with Data Sources and Analysis Reporting

Research Questions (RQ)	Data Source	Data Analysis Reporting
RQ1: How does the Filigree School District structure their principals' network to support principal learning and collaboration?	Interviews, schedules, agendas, protocols	Qualitative narrative summary
RQ2: How does the Filigree School District provide professional development plans to support principals in building knowledge and strengthening their instructional leader skills?	Interviews, agendas, professional development plans	Qualitative narrative summary
RQ3: How does the Filigree School District provide principals with coaching and mentoring to support principals in building knowledge and strengthening their instructional leadership skills?	Interviews, job descriptions, organizational chart, transformational leadership rubric	Qualitative narrative summary
RQ4: How do principals in the Filigree School District perceive their district's system of support?	Interviews, email correspondence	Qualitative narrative summary

Note: Alignment of research questions to data collection methods and analysis.

Data Analysis and Evidence of Quality

Data analysis for case studies is extensive because of the amount of data and the different forms of data that are collected. I chose to gather the data and begin categorizing, editing, and checking for redundancy to sort the data between each interview. In this way, I could organize the data in a more manageable format for intensive analysis (Patton, 2014). The strategy I used was to break the data apart into manageable units. I then coded these units and began searching for patterns (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Saldana, 2015).

The data collection and data analysis occurred concurrently for this study. This proved to be beneficial in managing the sheer volume of the data that was collected to eliminate repetition and maintain focus (Creswell, 2012; Saldana, 2015). As previously

mentioned, interviews were transcribed through an online service, for which the audio recording of interviews was provided with a code as a title. The transcripts were then reviewed by the researcher for accuracy and provided to the participants for review. Transcripts were also shared with a peer debriefer to provide some understanding of the case study evidence. The transcript of each interview ranged in length from 12–24 pages. A sample of participant responses to questions gleaned from the transcripts can be found in Appendix G.

The software program, QSR NVivo11 for Mac was used to store documents, analyze data, and organize information. The data stored included interview transcripts and documents. Audio recording of the interviews were saved in a separate folder on an external hard drive. The transcripts proved to be more useful than the audio versions for coding and thus were preferred for analysis. I maintained a journal within the software program to record findings, questions, and ideas for other ways of organizing the data.

While NVivo offers automatic coding, I chose to begin with manual coding based on multiple reads of the interview transcripts and documents. Saldana (2015) suggested that descriptive coding provides an initial, basic categorization of the data that can provide a foundation for second-cycle coding. For this particular study, descriptive coding was used to begin the process of categorizing the information. The categorization was useful in describing the elements of the system of support and perceptions of principals. I used the word frequency query function within the software program to cross-reference manual codes and identify other possible themes. This process also prompted me to note when themes appeared in comparison with other data (Bogdan &

Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2014). Once this first-cycle to coding was complete, I then began

to explore the coded data to identify themes that could be used to answer the research

questions.

A master list of codes was maintained within the software program to ensure

consistency and accuracy throughout the analysis of the data. Creswell (2013) suggested

that codes should be limited to 25-30 categories under five or six overarching themes. I

identified 25 codes, aligned them with the four research questions, and categorized them

into five themes. This allowed me to consider manageable amounts of data that helped

me to maintain focus on the purpose of the study.

To ensure validity and accuracy, I used several strategies for analysis and

evaluation of the findings. Yin (2013) recommended collecting multiple sources of data,

maintaining a chain of evidence, and seeking review from key informants to ensure

construct validity. For this case study, multiple sources of evidence were collected to

include interviews and documentation. I kept track of the data collected within the NVivo

software program and with documentation and interview logs, which can be found in

Appendices E and F. Additionally, each participant reviewed their entire interview

transcript and the researcher's notes from their interview to ensure accuracy and to solicit

feedback about the findings and portrayal of perceptions (Creswell, 2014; Saldana, 2015).

A sampling of the transcripts can be found in Appendix G. These member checks helped

to ensure that the researcher's biases did not influence how the case and findings were

portrayed (Lodico et al., 2010). Throughout the collection and analysis process, I also

maintained a journal to share with a peer debriefer on a regular basis. This peer was a

former Walden University student with a doctorate in education. The peer debriefer reviewed the transcripts after approval from the participants along with the researcher's notes. During the analysis phase, the themes and findings derived from documents and interviews were also reviewed. Finally, dense description of collaboration with participants and findings facilitated evidence-based analysis (Lodico et al., 2010).

Findings

Using the principal support framework developed by the University of Washington's Center for Educational Leadership, three elements were used to describe the Filigree School District's system of support. These elements include (a) professional development, (b) coaching/mentoring partnerships, and (c) networks for collaboration. The local problem identified for this study is a lack of systems of support for principals in Innovate County. While elements of support are available for leaders within Innovate County, a structured system that aligns the elements for principals to develop as instructional leaders does not exist.

The findings for this study were derived from interviews and documentation that served to describe the system of support for principals in the Filigree School District. Principal participants were coded numerically (i.e., Principal 1, Principal 2, and Principal 3, and Principal 4) to ensure confidentiality. The district-level administrator is referred to as DA to differentiate the roles of the participants within the system of support. The findings were built from the problem to identify how systems of support for instructional leaders are structured and implemented.

In this section, the research questions are answered first to show the findings and examples that describe the system of support used at the research site. This is followed by a summary of the five themes that emerged from the data and the connection to the conceptual framework in order to provide a deep description of the system of support for instructional leaders provided in the Filigree School District.

Research Question 1: How does the Filigree School District structure their principals' network to support principal learning and collaboration?

One component supported by the conceptual framework is the structure of networks for principal learning, which provides principals with opportunities to learn from each other and to solve shared problems of practice collaboratively. Filigree School District provides a network of support for principals through a structure that allows for learning collectively as a whole district. Additionally, smaller networks allow for differentiated support for principals. The development of these networks and details of the implementation are described below.

In 2004, the Filigree School District found themselves in the bottom 10% for student achievement among California schools. The realization of No Child Left Behind accountability motivated them to find another way to do business so they could increase student achievement. Some central office leaders began researching to learn from schools that had found a way to change the trajectory of achievement from low performing to high performing. The DA shared the thinking behind a network for principal learning and collaboration in Filigree:

They did some research and came across the DuFours and PLCs. They started

hearing about how Illinois and the districts over there turned themselves around.

They attended some trainings for PLC in southern California and just started

learning about it. They realized that this was something they had to do, so the

superintendent assembled a leadership team; a few principals and few central

office leaders. They were able to find a grant funded program to receive deeper

training. As they came through this experience, they were realizing that you need

people to lead this. It can't just come from the central office, that we really need

to build the capacity of every site leader to have the knowledge, have the skill, the

veracity to go forward with this and lead this at the site levels.

This experience initiated a change to their structure for leadership meetings. The weekly

principals' meetings were transformed into an Administrator PLC. The DA went on to

share that through learning about PLC's, leaders were enabled to bring it to their teachers

for collaboration and learning at the school site level. The following year, the PLC

structure was their main initiative for teachers, and principals were leading this initiative

at their respective school sites.

The more experienced principals, Principals 1 and 3, as well as the DA, referred

to Rick DuFour as part of their early learning about PLCs. DuFour and Fullan (2013)

emphasized that within a culture of collaboration, PLCs offer job-embedded learning that

is focused on results. Principal 3 explained, "currently, our system of support is through

our PLCs. Our PLCs play a big part in where our district has gone in our success. PLCs

apply to every type of occupation we have within our district." The newest principal,

Principal 4, also mentioned the history of the PLC structure in Filigree. Principal 4 stated,

"We're a PLC district. That is one of our initiatives that started 8-10 years ago, way

before Common Core. That collaborative culture is set in place." The DA described how

they provide a PLC structure for their principals:

> At monthly Administrator PLC meetings, we do our best to run as a PLC so what
>
> we've done is have no informational topics during this time. Administrator PLC is
>
> all data-driven, capacity-building topics. We want to then replicate the model of
>
> data-driven sharing of best practices, getting better because we're learning from
>
> others. Then we also incorporate some type of professional development if
>
> needed. The Administrator PLC is usually about an hour and a half or 2 hours,
>
> depending on what is on the agenda, and we try to build as much time as possible
>
> to let them reflect on whatever the topics would be.

When asked about a time for informational topics that would not necessarily fit

the PLC structure described, the DA shared that they have what is called an administrator

information meeting (AIM). The DA clarified the nature of this structure as an

opportunity for "any department that needs to get information out to principals that needs

to be a dialogue, sometimes it can go in a memo, but sometimes you need to talk and

explain things and answer any clarifying questions." This is a meeting that is scheduled

as needed.

Upon review of the documentation, agendas for the administrator PLC and AIM

indicate a distinction between the two sessions. Administrator PLC agendas have few

items and all have data and discussion structured around the specific topics. This aligns

with the foundations of PLCs that DuFour and Fullan (2013) have described, in which educators focus their improvement strategies on results. The PLC structure includes looking at data to determine current results and then discussion to determine how to respond (Dufour & Fullan, 2013). An example from one administrator PLC agenda has principals looking at their Annual Measureable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs) and attendance data to determine how to respond to students who are not meeting the AMAOs and determining if there is a correlation with attendance. Included on this agenda is a discussion of budgets to meet student needs based on their analysis and discussion. The AIM agendas include topics of an informational nature. An example from one agenda includes topics from the food services division regarding free and reduced lunch services and ordering lunches for special events such as field trips.

During that first year of learning through implementation, the district leadership team came to realize that their leaders needed additional support through a job-alike PLC as well. The administrator PLC was provided for all leaders, from elementary to high school principals. At that point, they saw a need to provide support that could allow principals the opportunity for deeper learning with other principals that shared similar demographics and responsibilities. The DA explained,

> [Principals] need to be data driven. They need to learn from each other and get better based on what each other are doing. At that time, about two years into the journey, we developed our academic achievement leadership teams. It was very much driven about the academic achievement. The lens is different now that NCLB is done and our focus is about continuous improvement. But then it was

academic achievement. We wanted our principals to learn together some effective

instructional practices and how to strengthen instruction at their sites. We grouped

sites by like demographics. It was important that we did not group low performing

schools with low performing schools. We wanted schools with some similarities

to be able to talk about their challenges and successes. And we still have the

schools grouped in this manner today.

Every principal belongs to an academic achievement leadership team. The teams

meet every 4-6 weeks throughout the school year to provide support in moving toward

the district goals and initiatives. There was a set agenda for these team meetings, and the

principals take turns hosting them at their school sites. The DA shared that in the

beginning, these teams were driven by district leadership who would identify a problem

of practice that the district was addressing as a whole. They would then walk through

classrooms and debrief afterward about what instructional practices were observed to be

working and to identify some challenges and strategize for addressing those challenges.

Following these sessions, the district administrator that facilitated the session would type

up a letter for the principal to share with the staff. The DA stated, "it was a formal letter

that thanked them for allowing us to come visit, highlighting the promising practices

observed and then some things to consider" (personal communication, May 10, 2016).

This letter was an attempt to be transparent about the classroom walkthroughs and the

purpose of the academic achievement leadership teams with the teachers. The DA also

shared how this initial development of the teams has emerged:

How that practice has evolved now, is we still have a district member as the

coordinator of it, but they don't necessarily lead the team meetings. They rotate

from site to site. The host principal sets the agenda. If they have a particular need,

a problem to be solved, like a problem of practice or something that they need

input and advice on, that can be put on the agenda. The district person is there

now, as a means of any support that might come up that the district needs to be

helping them with. Letters are no longer generated. The principals decide what

they will discuss, which classrooms to visit, and sometimes they use that time as a

work session if they are developing something together that support instruction in

the classrooms.

Principal 1 shared a perception of the academic achievement leadership teams,

Each month it's scheduled in that we, as a team, walk classrooms. As the host site

leader, we set what that focus is going to look like, this is what I want feedback

in; this is what we've been working on, but let's get a new set of eyes in here to

look at it. That's the lens that we're looking at when we go through, and so then

they'll give that feedback.

Principal 2, a newer principal, likened the academic achievement leadership teams to

grade-level PLCs. Principal 2 said, "it's almost like your grade-level PLC that you've

shared a lot with and you just enjoy being with each other and learning together. That's

our academic achievement leadership teams." All of the principals described the

academic achievement leadership teams as helpful to see other classrooms and to have

that time to talk about relevant and purposeful topics. As Principal 3 stated, "we are building our capacity as leaders."

Another element within the structure of the academic achievement leadership teams is what the district refers to as a summit in the fall. Each principal shares with the district cabinet members and their academic achievement leadership team members the state of their school based on data and goals. Principal 1 explained, "we're presenting our sites' flaws, strengths, everything … completely transparent." The DA further explained,

> It's like a state of the union address type of thing that [principals] can say, here's our plan based on data. We've simplified the summit a lot since when it was first brought out and we try to keep the summits to these are our three goals. How are you going to address these goals? We find that all of the principals coming really listen in, because they're constantly learning from each other.

A review of the documentation provided further description for the summit. One document titled, Summits 2015-16 described the purpose of the summit and details for principals to prepare for the summit. The question, "What is a Summit?" was answered within the document as follows,

> Summits are a collaborative process between site and district leaders designed to build capacity, increase articulation, problem solve, and help meet the needs of every school. Site leaders will share past performance, key findings, and their plans for improving achievement. The discussions will focus on the goals and initiatives of the district with the primary goal of building leadership capacity.

The format of the summit was unique to the academic achievement leadership teams and the administrator PLC meetings for collaboration. Principals submitted a PowerPoint with slides that showed their data and described their initiatives. Additionally, they submitted any supporting documents three days prior to their summit date. Rather than the principal projecting their PowerPoint and presenting to the group, a member of the district leadership facilitated the discussion about the information provided by the principal and projected the information accordingly. The summit document described a seating arrangement where participants sit around a center table creating a "fish bowl" arrangement. Participants at the center table included academic achievement leadership team members, school support staff such as curriculum specialists, and district leadership members in addition to the principal of the presenting school. Other leaders in the district were seated outside the center table and participated as observers. As the district leader facilitated the discussion, key questions were considered for each goal. The center-table participants discussed their responses to the questions while other leaders and support personnel seated outside the center table listened and took note. Occasionally, the members of the center table ask for the observers to offer some feedback. Table 2 provides a summary of the goals, data, and key questions for discussion that were used at the summits.

Table 2

Filigree Summit Agenda and Protocol Summary

Goal/Focus	Data	Key Questions Sample
Goal 1: Overall Student Achievement	State Assessment Data Local Assessment Data	• What is your plan to increase student achievement and monitor progress throughout the year? • How are you monitoring assessments to ensure they are diagnostic and impacting classroom practices?
Goal 2: Closing the Achievement Gap between Sub-groups	Literacy Data English Learner Data Comparison Data Local Assessment Data	• How do you use all the areas of data to inform your program and instruction? • What is your process to monitor? • How will you monitor and provide formative feedback?
Goal 3: Ensure a Safe Environment	Disciplinary Data Attendance Data	• How do you use your behavioral data to decrease behavioral incidents? • What is an overview of your attendance incentive program?
Instructional Leadership	Self-evaluation on Leadership Rubric High Leverage Team Action Goal	• How will you increase your own capacity to grow? • How will you improve the effectiveness of your feedback to ensure it is specific, timely, and actionable?

Note: This is a sample of the questions and data suggested from Filigree School District for principal's summit presentation. High Leverage Team is a term used from their work with PLCs (DuFour & Marzano, 2011).

I noted that the formal structure used with the administrator PLC, academic achievement leadership teams, and the summit all engage in a collaborative process for learning. The PLC principles of looking at data, analyzing data for correlations, and responding to data existed within these three learning formats that comprised their network to support principal learning and collaboration.

Research Question 2: How does the Filigree School District provide professional development plans to support principals in building knowledge and strengthening their instructional leadership skills?

Another component supported by the conceptual framework is the alignment of professional development for principals to meet district, school, and principals' needs. The framework emphasizes the need to coordinate professional development across departments to ensure cohesion of learning toward identified district goals. When departments coordinate the learning together, the professional development plan provides connections across content areas to reduce fragmentation of implementation.

In the Filigree School District, principals participate in professional development throughout the year as administrators and alongside teachers. The district-office leadership develops a professional development plan each school year. This plan is informed by the needs identified by teachers, principals, and particularly by data and research. The most experienced site leader, Principal 3, shared how the alignment of professional development plans has evolved over the years:

> In the old days, you would get these constant requests from teachers "Oh, let's go to Homework this, let's go to Literacy Strategies that." I remember those brochures, ah those brochures. But the thing about it, is that they were isolated. They weren't structured to the point where everyone would benefit from that. It came down to "Oh, I'll send a couple of teachers to Guided Reading, I'll send a couple of teachers to Language Development. And we'll send a couple to how to teach Language Arts." And you would hope that they would come back and share or they would incorporate. With the professional development planning format that we have now, the district, everybody is involved.

During interviews, all principals had the professional development plan posted in their office and pointed it out when asked about professional development. The district provided me with the same document titled, "Professional Development Plan 2015-2016," which shows the intended professional development topics for the school year. Additional information was provided for each training to include the topic covered, intended audience, number of days for the training, and the expected outcomes. It was further color coded by subject area for teachers or by job description for those who are not classroom teachers. These categories included English language arts (ELA), math, content, support providers, and administration. The content category was intended for middle and high school teachers with trainings listed for English learners, science, social studies, and differentiation. I noted that the intended audience for most trainings on this document was teachers. Principals were identified as an audience in the administration trainings only. However, during interviews, all the participants had expressed that the district expects them to attend professional development opportunities with their teachers.

These professional development opportunities are intended for principals to learn alongside teachers. As Principal 3 stated, "the expectation is that administrators are working with [teachers] to make sure implementation is taking place. But also at the actual sit downs, [administrators] are there, sharing with the teachers and hearing what the presenter is saying." Principal 1 further expanded on the degree of participation in professional development with teachers commenting that "you will not see principals sitting in the back of the room looking at their phones; we get in there and work right along with the teachers so we can learn too." The newer principals, Principals 2 and 4,

also acknowledged that learning with their staff and participating in professional

development supported their knowledge to be able to lead effectively.

Filigree provided a copy of their Transformational Leadership Rubric, which

further supports this sentiment. This rubric is used during the academic achievement

leadership team meetings and summit. The rubric is also a tool used to evaluate

principals. The rubric has three categories: lead learner, group vs. individual, and culture

conducive to learning. The expectation at the highest level on the rubric for lead learner

states, "all staff clearly see leader as a learner alongside them." According to the DA, it is

an expectation that all leaders (i.e., principals and district administrator) participate in all

professional development opportunities with teachers. The DA expressed that leaders

need to be attentive learners by "asking questions, hearing what the teachers are saying."

The DA feels that this is essential to continue the learning as teachers put things into

practice at their sites. The goal is for all leaders to use this information to make decisions

about leadership and share with each other as they build their knowledge and skill as

principals.

Documentation from the district identified the goals for the school year and the

focus of district-wide initiatives. The district provided a document titled, "Goals

Alignment" that provides a visual representation of how their goals, initiatives, and

structures are aligned for professional development. There are three goals set for the

district:

1. Raise all students' achievement.

2. Close achievement gap between sub-groups.

3. Ensure a safe environment.

Aligned with these goals is a section titled "Initiatives Focus." This section identifies the instructional focus for all professional development that is included on the professional development plan. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the "Goals Alignment" document. For the 2015-2016 school year, the initiative focus was on literacy. More specifically, the literacy focus concentrated on supporting early childhood literacy practices and supporting literacy growth for college and career readiness. This focus was evident in the professional development plan across the different grades and target audiences for training. The district identified an "Early Literacy Task Force," which included primary grade teachers, support staff, and administrators. In addition to the task force, literacy support teachers had 4 days of training in guided reading to provide coaching to teachers. Primary grade teachers had 2 days of training in guided reading. Literacy was also a focus for use in the varying content areas for teachers in middle and high schools. The district considers collaborative cultures as a foundation for their goals and initiatives, thus represented on the bottom of the pyramid in Figure 1.

```
        District Goals

        Initiatives
     PLCs/Academic & Behavioral
  Interventions/Effective Instruction

   Collaborative Culture:
      Mission/Vision/Values
```
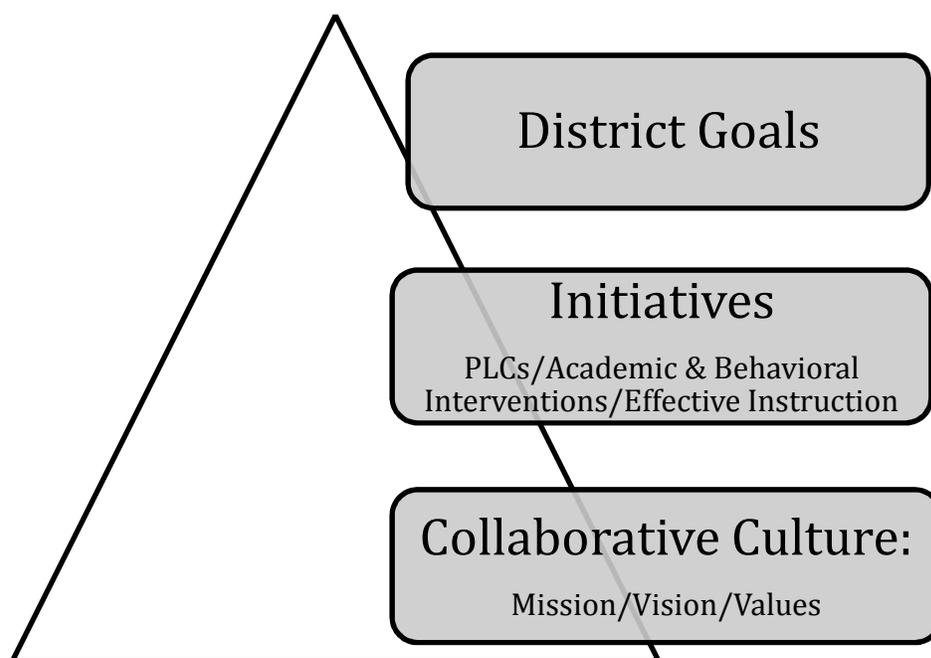
Figure 1. Alignment of goals in the Filigree School District.

　　　　Based on the review of documents and transcripts, I noted that a professional

development plan is clearly laid out by the district. While the intended audience for each

professional development opportunity does not include principals, interviews revealed

that attendance at all of these opportunities is an expectation understood by all of the

participants. Interviews also revealed that principals not only understand this expectation,

but they desire to be included in these opportunities so they can learn alongside their

teachers.

Research Question 3: How does the Filigree School District provide principals with

coaching and mentoring to support them in building knowledge and strengthening

their instructional leadership skills?

　　　　The third component supported by the conceptual framework addresses the need

for principals to receive differentiated support. This differentiation of support is derived

from the individual needs of the principal and the needs of the school. The framework suggests that one way to differentiate is through coaching and mentoring ("Principal Support Framework," 2013).

The DA pointed out that there is no formal process to pair principals together for coaching or mentoring support. However, all principal participants stated that they were involved with both coaching and mentoring in some capacity. The means for this coaching and mentoring were derived from the opportunities provided in the school district. The DA explained,

Mentoring and coaching kind of evolves from their academic achievement leadership teams. We don't purposely match anybody up to have a mentor or coach. Years ago the district had a formal mentoring program with coaches that would come out from another organization. I know back then it was perceived as, "I must be weak because they gave me a coach."

From the principal perspective, the mentoring and coaching support varied depending on the principal's level of experience. Two of the principal participants with less than 5 years of experience described mentors as those with whom they have worked under before becoming a principal. In addition, the newest principal, Principal 4 explained,

I've been supported by the mentors in our district. We have a great superintendent and great associate superintendents who call me on a weekly basis. They are calling me all the time, checking in, asking how it's going. That level of support starts from the top, and it's very unstructured.

Principal 2 who is serving a third year as principal described a coach that provided

support in their first year as principal. This coach was assigned as a requirement for the

credentialing process described earlier.

> I had a coach and I met with him pretty frequently. He was really good. He would
>
> ask, "What's going on? Guide me through it. What are some of the things you're
>
> doing and why? Have you talked to…?" He had already been an administrator. He
>
> actually was a principal here too. He knew everybody, so he could just connect
>
> the dots for you and say here's who you can talk to, here's some things you can do,
>
> so that was really good.

Overall the participants feel that there is support for them to build their

knowledge and skills for instructional leadership through the PLC structures mentioned

earlier. A formal structure for coaching and mentoring is not a part of the system of

support in Filigree School District. While all principal participants mentioned mentors or

coaches, it is not a systemic process and is left to the individuals to seek their mentors

and coaches. The two newer principal participants currently work regularly with coaches

through the training program with their county office and connect with self-selected

mentors with whom they previously worked informally. The more experienced principal

participants engage in supports through the PLC process and provide coaching and

mentoring to others if requested. The most experienced principal participant, Principal 3,

explained,

> If you're lucky, you find a mentor, someone that you can model. It really depends on where your path is and who you are working under or you are close to that you can emulate or ask questions to see how they perform.

There is no clearly defined role for coach or mentor in the district. I also noted that coaching and mentoring was once a formal process in the district, however it was not well received at the time.

Research Question 4: How do principals in the Filigree School District perceive their district's system of support?

The principal participants in Filigree School District perceive their system as supportive of their needs. The perceptions they shared describe a culture of trust and focused on building relationships. The participants mention learning as an essential part of the support system for leaders. In addition, principals felt that the system provides autonomy, which is perceived as differentiating to meet their needs. All of these perceptions are described in detail through the themes identified in the study. The five themes identified through analysis of the data are: (a) effects of professional development, (b) support for instructional leadership, (c) culture, (d) professional learning, and (e) autonomy.

Theme 1: Effects of Professional Development

All of the participants described their system of support as a structure that provides effective professional development. All the principal participants described how the structure for PLCs is effective for problem-solving and learning together. In describing the academic achievement leadership teams, Principal 1 stated,

That's where my instructional learning happens; it's really helpful to get that new

set of eyes, another perspective, and we all just start talking about how we see

things and what can we do either to enhance, replicate, or change.

When asked what impact the system of support has had on the learning community of

leaders, Principal 2 shared that it has impacted the community "tremendously because

you don't have all the answers." Principal 2 goes on to say,

If it were just you by yourself, you would just keep doing the same thing over and

over. I think sharing best practices is essential, which we do all the time. Then

you see people go out and try the new things we've discussed. We give each other

feedback, and we can see the good things that people are doing. And we share in

each other's successes. It's not competition against each other. It's winning

together.

The newest principal, Principal 4, had a unique perspective in response to how the system

of support has impacted the learning community of leaders. This principal has been a

principal for just nine months, so the perspective cannot compare changes over time.

However, Principal 4 shared what they noticed as a new principal joining the PLCs in

Filigree.

Principal 4 explained,

It's interesting that they still have some of the same questions I have. Things I

struggle with as a new principal are some of the very same things they're still

struggling with. I think Common Core and the way we handle curriculum in the

Common Core has evened the playing field for learning. It has created a learning

curve for all of us. Without the PLCs, learning together, I don't know how any of

us could really be effective.

Principal 4 went on to say, "what's making me a better leader is my experience in the

district, having those conversations with people who have been in the field."

Providing a more historical view of how the current state of professional

development has affected learning at their schools, the most experienced principal,

Principal 3, shared some of the changes over time.

We met a lot back then, up until about 10 years ago. But it was the logistical nuts

and bolts. We'd meet every week, and you'd hear others report out or you'd

report out about what is going on, what you must do, and things like that. But

now, we look at research, we gather our own data for research. It is a lot more

about capacity building rather than everybody on the same page, turning reports

in, or upcoming events. And we really need that as principals right now. Things

have changed, and I might have some experience to share with other principals,

but I need to learn from everyone else too.

The effects on professional development have shifted the focus of coming

together for meetings. Principals now come together with the intention of learning

together and contributing to others' learning. The effect of the professional development

in Filigree School District has been positive due to the PLC structure used to learn

together collaboratively as described by the principals. The conceptual framework

supports this aspect of learning through inquiry. Bringing principals together around a

common set of goals and initiatives. The effectiveness of the professional development

plans and the structure for learning in Filigree are strongly connected to the conceptual framework for providing support for principals.

Theme 2. Support for Instructional Leadership

All participants mentioned levels of support provided to them through the formal structure described earlier as well as what they perceived as informal structures of the system of support in Filigree School District. Collaboration and teams were perceived as supportive aspects of the formal structure. An informal structure for support was mentioned as participants described partnerships that they create with the principals in their academic achievement leadership teams.

Principal 2 who is a newer principal shared how the structure provides support to meet their needs. In describing the support that they experience through the PLC structure, Principal 2 stated,

> If I had a need, they would just give me the time and talk to me. We build relationships with these people where you sit at meetings with them, you've learned with them, you've had experiences with them. We share similar concerns and challenges and we can work through them together. I'm not alone, and there are others who encourage me everyday.

The more experienced principals also shared the level of support that it provides them as instructional leaders. Principal 1 shared an example of how the system works to provide support when and where it is needed.

> We problem solve together. One principal might come to the PLC and shares what he's been doing and others are like, "Wow, that's pretty awesome. Tell us

more." And we start asking questions, "So, what kind of push back did you get

from teachers or parents? How did the students do? What was your first step?

Would you do it that way again?" And that principal becomes a guide for us along

this journey. And the cool thing is that he also learns from us trying at our sites

and coming back to share. He may have been the one to start something and took

that risk, but he is still learning and working out the kinks in the idea. What better

support could you have?

Principal 4, a first year principal, explained,

We're very data-driven, and the only way we could possibly do that is if we come

together as a team. Sometimes the facilitators have some difficult information or

data to share and to segregate with us. That is the time where we hear, as a group,

they want everybody to hear the same message as a group. I find that very helpful.

Principals 4 also stated, "I don't know what other districts offer in levels of support. I

only know I wouldn't leave my district because of that differentiated support, both formal

and informal." Figure 2 is a visual that was sketched by Principal 4 to explain a

perception of the support provided in Filigree. Principal 4 shared that the Administrator

PLC is supportive of the whole district moving in the same direction, ensuring that the

system is supporting the goals and initiatives. The middle level is larger in the graphic to

emphasize the degree of support that the academic achievement leadership teams have for

instructional leaders. The smaller PLC provides that specific level of support for the

unique needs and the time to learn together around common challenges. Finally, the

informal support as described by Principal 4 is the opportunity for coaching and

mentoring from members of the academic achievement leadership teams and other district office personnel.
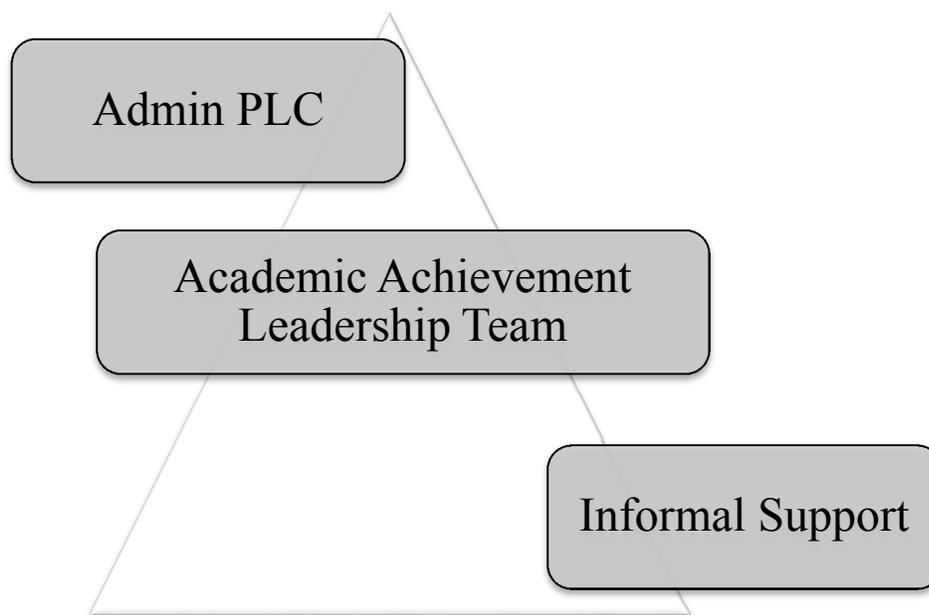
Figure 2. Visual representation of the levels of support in Filigree School District.

The conceptual framework is built around the notion of providing a system of support for principals to build their knowledge and skills as instructional leaders. The framework provides support for the structure that Filigree has developed with the opportunity to learn collaboratively and network with other leaders. In addition, the framework supports the input of district-office personnel in facilitating and guiding the learning of instructional leaders.

Theme 3. Culture

Within the conceptual framework, a culture conducive to developing principals as instructional leaders is described as having systems for collaborative learning.

Additionally, collaborative learning is supported by professional development plans that align the goals and expectations for principals.

All the participants expressed that the system of support has a particular culture that allows for learning and sharing. There were a number of different descriptions for the culture. The most common description was a "collaborative culture." This description came from all participants and was also evident in documents such as the Goals Alignment flowchart. The structure of the system described earlier also supports the environment of a collaborative culture.

The three newest principal participants and the district administrator also explained the guiding principles of the district. They listed three guiding principles as follows:

1. Don't blame the kids.

2. Hope is not a strategy.

3. It's about student learning.

Each of these principles was explained as part of the culture of their district. The first principle is intended to take away excuses. The participants that shared this stated that it is the responsibility of the adults at school to find a way to help students learn. The second principle is about a strategic plan to support students in their learning. Finally, the last principle defined the purpose for all educators in Filigree—the emphasis being on student learning, not just focused on teaching. As Principal 1 explained,

Just by those three guiding principles, you really get down to the nuts and bolts

and wipe away all excuses that any adults can make. You get right down to

making sure that the decisions we make are best for the kids.

I noted that these three guiding principles were not written in any of the

documents provided. However, 4 of the 5 participants articulated these principles without

specific prompting from the interview questions. This indicated to me that these

principles served as a guide for collaboration with others and decision-making as the

instructional leader.

The participants also explained their perceptions of the culture, which would

include words such as transparency, accountability, and relationship building. All of the

participants mentioned that there is a culture of getting better together, not one of

competition with each other, but rather one of working together and celebrating

everyone's success together. Principal 1 explained:

I couldn't even tell you what instills that [getting better together] in the culture of

a district or … I wouldn't even know where to start. I think a lot of it has to do

with the transparency and if we felt like our leaders were on a witch hunt, then

that's when people start to feel like they need to save themselves by throwing

other people under the bus or doing things like that to try to look better. I think

that's where maybe that gets fostered to a certain extent. My superintendent is on

my campus at least once a week, and I know that's not as an "I gotcha." We call it

going on treasure hunts.

Principal 2 also described the culture of the district in terms of relationships and accountability:

> I would just say that I think our district has really figured it out, and it's all about the relationships. It's the people. It's doing work with a purpose. I think we've set it on the right foundation where it's all about the kids. I think we've said that so much, and we hold each other accountable so much that you have no room for excuses.

The Transformational Leadership Rubric that the district uses for evaluating their principals also describes the goal for the kind of culture they are seeking. One section of the rubric describes a "culture conducive to learning." The first descriptor in the section states, "the culture of the school is nonjudgmental and transparent. It's okay to make mistakes as you learn." The conceptual framework supports this sentiment of "creating a climate hospitable to education" ("Principal Support Framework," 2013, p. 2). This culture of learning leads to the fourth theme I identified from the data collected.

Theme 4. Learning

The three components of the conceptual framework, (a) professional development, (b) coaching and mentoring, and (c) networks for collaboration share the common outcome of learning. The learning described within the conceptual framework encompasses many forms for principals to build their knowledge and strengthen their instructional leadership skills.

The district has shared on many agenda documents the following statement, "We are on a journey and it is about continuous learning." All participants mentioned learning,

as an instructional leader is an essential part of their work in the Filigree School District.

Three of the four principals described it as "learning together." The Transformational

Leadership Rubric emphasizes learning in two sub-categories. One category is the lead

learner, which is described as someone who models learning, learns alongside teachers,

and looks to other leaders both inside and outside the organization to support learning.

The other category is creating a culture conducive to learning. This culture is described

for the adults learning on campus and includes having a growth mindset, building trust

for continuous learning, and building the capacity to do meaningful work.

I noted that the expectation of learning exists within the structure and is part of

the support built into the culture. During the interview, the DA emphasized that, "they

need to learn from each other and get better based on what each other are doing."

Considering each component within the structure of the system of support covered in

Theme 1, learning is an expectation in each component. The collaborative structure of the

Administrator PLC and the academic achievement leadership teams emphasizes learning

together through the sharing of practices and reflection. The most experienced principal,

Principal 3, explained,

> I feel that the only way you can be thought of as a professional is by learning,
>
> learning from your experiences. You have the practical sense day in and day out.
>
> But also sharing what we have done with our district and also research when it
>
> comes about.

In describing the system of support for principals, one of the newer principals, Principal 2 stated:

> I knew that this [Administration] was something I wanted to be a part of early on. I saw that there was support and I knew it was a lot about building relationships, and the most important thing to me was what can you learn.

> A culture conducive to learning is what has been created in Filigree School District for their principals to build their knowledge and skills as instructional leaders. This focus on learning is supported by the conceptual framework. It states, "central office maintains a culture of support that includes direction, a framework of best practice, resources and tools, professional learning, and an acknowledgement of the uniqueness of schools" ("Principal Support Framework," 2013, p. 2). This leads into the final theme derived from the findings regarding autonomy.

Theme 5. Autonomy

The conceptual framework suggests that differentiated support is essential for the continuous learning and growth of instructional leaders. Meeting the needs of both leaders and schools requires an autonomous approach for effective instructional leadership practices. The goals and objectives of the district remain consistent, and skilled district office personnel support the individual leader's path to achieve those goals in a way that fits the school and the leader.

Participants mentioned that the structure for the system of support includes autonomy for each of the schools. The structure mentioned earlier provides expectations and a focus for the direction in which the district is going. However, there is an

understanding that each school may go about the work differently. Participant 1 explained:

> They (the district) do give principals autonomy. They are not going to say, "this is how everyone will respond when students don't learn." Each site is different. One site may have twice as many students as another site. They're not going to have the same amount of resources that a larger school will have. Or one site may have 100% of its students on a free- and reduced-lunch program while another site has only 75%. So there are Title One funds there for some schools and not others based on student needs. Some schools can invest in more reading intervention teachers than others. These are just some examples. The way that they respond is going to look different, and the district gives them the autonomy to say, "these are the things that are non-negotiable," but how that's going to look on each particular site is up to the leader.

One of the newer principals, Principal 2, shared how autonomy looks from their perspective. Principal 2 explained,

> We have some similarities, some differences. In the end, we are all dealing with improving our practice. We are all after the same result, but we can't all do the same thing to get there. The cool thing is, we don't all have to be on the same path to get to the same destination. But, we can all learn from each other about the different paths we take.

The perspective from the newest principal, Principal 4, is similar. Principal 4 said, "every site is different, even right down to the teaching team. I think [the district] keeps a pulse

on the teams by really developing those relationships with us." Principal 4 also shared

how each school tends to have their niche. "Some schools, it's the arts. Some schools, it's

environmental science. For us it's civic learning. These decisions are made within the

community of the school, and the district encourages us to find our niche."

Based on a review of the documents provided, the district identifies core actions

and provides professional development to support the core actions for all schools. The

district does not prescribe the specific method for implementation of these core actions.

The academic achievement leadership team walkthrough protocol illustrates the

collaborative nature of implementation for each site during their regularly scheduled half-

day meetings. Discussions begin by reviewing actions aligned with the Transformational

Leadership Rubric focusing on sharing successes and challenges to their growth as

leaders. Then the host school shares evidence "for specific leadership action to support

the implementation of ELA and/or Math Core Actions." This is a collaborative

conversation with feedback provided from all leaders on the team. Classroom visitations

provide further evidence of the core actions emphasizing, "the focus is to support the

evidence of leadership actions." Finally, the meeting is concluded with a debriefing to

"review and provide clarity to next steps, review collective commitments of the team, and

set the agenda and goals for the next visit."

Another document that provides evidence for the nature of autonomy for schools

is the Summit Agenda and Protocol. As mentioned earlier, principals prepare for a

summit presentation in which they share evidence of the work they are doing at their

schools specifically focused on the goals of the district and instructional leadership. Data

is used as well as any other supporting documents and/or evidence to describe the status and the plan for the work toward the district's goals and their growth as instructional leaders.

Two of the principals gave an example of the efforts they made at their sites to address behavior. Both attended the same professional development session and worked with the same district goals and initiatives. However, their approaches to addressing behavior at their sites were different. One of the newer principals shared an experience with their school staff as they focused on behavior expectations for all students. Principal 2 described a process where they assessed the current reality, had conversations about the expectations together, participated in professional learning together, and monitored progress. Principal 2 explained,

> The first thing we had to do was own it and say, "What is our current reality?" During the summer, we went and got some training. Then I knew exactly what my vision and plan was going to be. It was purposeful, and we brought in everybody to learn together and come up with solutions to the problem we had discovered about behavior expectations. I gave them the tools for them to be successful. We monitored the expectations we had agreed upon regarding behavior. We provided feedback to each other around this common goal … I feel like our behavior has gone so much better and even our instructional practices all around; I feel like the teachers have really. I'm like, "Oh my gosh, it's so impressive." I'm just proud of them when I walk by and I see all the things they're putting into practice.

Another example shared by a more experienced principal also involved behavior

expectations for all students. Principal 1 stated:

> I haven't had a suspension here since the 2010-11 school year. That doesn't mean
>
> that students haven't done suspendable things; it's just that my beliefs are that if a
>
> student struggles to read, we wouldn't send him home and expect him to come
>
> back reading. Same with the student who struggles to behave, if I were to pull up
>
> that 2009-10, 26 suspensions that I had, was the same five kids. Same five kids,
>
> 26 incidents but the same five kids, so it wasn't obviously working; so why
>
> continue doing the same things, expecting different results? We then started using
>
> alternatives, and so my philosophy, especially at a K-5 school, obviously, it would
>
> be different if it were a secondary. But for me to suspend a kid in an elementary
>
> school would be one of the "big 5," like brandishing a firearm, something like
>
> that. Immediate threat, you got to go, but for just the typical things.

Both of these principals were working toward a common goal, to improve their

response to behavior in order to provide a safe environment for learning and improve

student achievement. The first school's approach focused on common expectations for

student behavior in classrooms, the hall, on the playground, and at lunch. All teachers

worked together to ensure that these expectations were clear and supported students in

reaching those expectations. They learned together about how to reach those

expectations. The other school focused on the response to behavior at the administrative

level. The work they chose to do involved an approach called Positive Behavioral

Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Both schools participated in the same professional

development about behavior, and they each approached it differently at their sites resulting in success.

The DA explained that autonomy also applies to principals' plans for their own professional learning. The DA said, "[principals] work on their own leadership capacity. They all use the rubric to reflect on their leadership practices." They are all striving for the same ideal outlined in the Transformational Leadership Rubric. How they get there is dependent on the plan they create for their own learning as instructional leaders. The conceptual framework supports this autonomy as it states, "central office provides customized support to schools to enable principals to address operational issues efficiently" ("Principal Support Framework," 2013, p. 9).

Summary of Findings

Filigree School District provides a system of support for elementary principals to build their knowledge and skills as instructional leaders. The conceptual framework used for this study identified three elements of support for principals: (a) professional development, (b) coaching/mentoring support, and (c) collaboration. Juxtaposing these elements with the findings from this study on Filigree revealed that two of these elements are systematically part of the structure they provide.

Professional development plans provided were found to be aligned with district goals and the focus initiatives of the school district. Elementary principals attend professional development opportunities with their teachers in order to learn alongside them and provide support in implementation. Leading the learning at the school site is an expectation of the school district for all principals.

Collaboration is a foundation for all learning in Filigree School District. The structure for providing support to instructional leaders is based on a collaborative culture. The PLC structure is used for administrators to support each other in their efforts for continuous improvement. Leaders share data from their school sites in the collaborative environments provided in the Administrator PLC, AALT, and summit formats. They use these different structures to support each other in learning and problem-solving as each school strives to meet their goals.

Coaching and mentoring partnerships is the one element that was not a part of the structure in Filigree School District. While the newest principals mentioned the support they receive from mentors and coaches, this is not a formal process for all principals. New principals receive this support through the credentialing process in the district. Because of the "grow your own" model for administrators in Filigree, many upcoming leaders have mentors that invited them to consider administration. More experienced principals mentioned coaching and mentoring as part of the AALT structures as an opportunity that one may choose. However, it is not an assigned partnership or an expectation that anyone to be a part of such partnerships. Coaching and mentoring were once an expectation in Filigree with outside coaches coming into the district to provide the support. The perception at that time was not positive and was not considered supportive for the principals involved. The more experienced participants felt that coaching and mentoring could be derived from the AALT support structure and that it should be optional. It was apparent that the participants perceive the current structure of

the system of support in Filigree to be one that meets their needs as instructional leaders seeking to build their knowledge and skills in order to lead their schools effectively.

Strengths and Limitations

This study has two strengths in addressing the problem identified for instructional leaders, the approach and the timing. First, the case study approach provided the structure for investigating perceptions of principals at a deep level. Through the case study, I was able to understand the system of support used in the district and to glean the most essential components of the system for building instructional leaders' knowledge and skills.

Second, this study was conducted in the spring, which also allowed for more insights to the system during the current school year. One of the principals interviewed was a first year principal. Had I conducted the study earlier in the year, the responses might not have been as rich. However, with the school year coming to an end, all the principals were able to reflect on the growth through the system of support during the current year and share their plans for the following school year.

There are also two limitations of this case study, a single case and the sample size. The first limitation is that it was limited to a single school district. While the case study approach allowed for a deep analysis of this single district and its approach, it would be advisable to continue further research into other districts' systems in order to create a picture of systems of support and their application in other settings. This was a single case study as there was only one district within my reach to explore. A multiple case study approach could provide more comparison for application in other settings.

The relatively small size of the sample for this case study also presents a limitation. Four principals and one district office administrator were included in this sampling, all from a single school district. There were a total of 12 principal participants who met the criteria for participation; only four of those principals agreed to participate in the study. For further research, a larger sample size would be important to gather more perspectives and allow for the reader to generalize the findings to their setting.

Summary

The problem and purpose for this study were described in Section 1. The problem was that principals lack access to structured systems of support as they seek to build their knowledge and skills as instructional leaders. The purpose of this study was to examine a central California school district's system of support for principals. The central California school district system was examined for the provision of three elements of support for developing instructional leaders provided by the University of Washington's Center for Educational Leadership. These three elements included professional development, collaboration through networks and learning communities, and coaching/mentoring partnerships.

Section 2 presented the methodology for data collection and analysis. Included in this section was the design of the case study, a description of the setting and participants, and ethical considerations. The findings were explained to reveal the themes derived from the research and to answer the research questions directly. The connections to the conceptual framework were also provided.

In Section 2, I explained the qualitative research methods used to collect and analyze data. In addition, a description of the setting and participants provided some understanding of the case. Interviews of principals and a district leader along with documentation provided evidence to describe the system of support for principals used in the Filigree School District. The research questions were answered using a deep description of the participant responses and corroborated with documentation. The findings resulted in identifying five themes that are indicative of the system of support in Filigree School District. The relationship of the findings and themes to the conceptual framework was also described.

The findings from the research study revealed that collaborative learning within a structured system provides support for principals to improve their practice. Furthermore, aligning professional development and providing differentiated support to leaders had a positive effect on the principals' ability to lead change initiatives.

Based on these findings, I present a professional development plan that would create a professional learning network (PLN) for these leaders, so that they could learn together to build their knowledge and strengthen their instructional leadership skills. I discuss the rationale and goals of the project and then present a review of the literature, which provides research-derived insight to support the development of the project. A description of the project itself, including the evaluation plan and implications of the project, is included.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The local problem in this study was that Innovate County did not have systems of support in place for instructional leaders so that they could build their knowledge about leadership and strengthen their leadership skills. The purpose of the study was to locate and examine a school district with a system of support for principals. The Filigree School District, in another county, has had a system of support for their principals since 2006. In the project, described below, I use the findings from the research study in Filigree to create a professional learning network (PLN) for collaboration among principals in order to address the problem in Innovate County. The completed project can be found in Appendix A.

The University of Washington's Center for Educational Leadership (2013) developed a support framework for principals to provide guidance to school districts who seek to develop principals as instructional leaders. In the framework are the three components of a structured system of support for developing instructional leaders; these components were explored in this study: (a) professional development, (b) coaching/mentoring partnerships, and (c) networks for collaboration. The conceptual framework was built on the claim that these components provide a sustainable support system for principals to grow as instructional leaders. I sought to understand how these components work within a system. In Innovate County, leaders have access to all three of these components, but they lack coherence.

From this study, I learned how one system incorporates two of the components in the structure of the system of support they use for principals. One component is the professional development plan. Principals were included in the development of professional development plans for the district, and they were active in all professional learning alongside teachers. The other component revealed in the data was the structure for networking and collaboration. This structure followed a PLC model, which was used by both leaders and teachers in Filigree. Coaching and mentoring was the missing component. Instead of assigning partnerships, principals can choose to seek support from their colleagues. Principals perceived coaching and mentoring as an optional, informal support structure that was not included as a systemic process for instructional leaders in the district.

The findings of this study revealed that various structures for networking support principals in the Filigree School District. Principals perceived these networks as an essential component of learning and of improving their instructional leadership skills. One network, the Administrator PLC, included all principals in the district. Other networks were designed for smaller groups of principals, called the academic achievement leadership teams (AALT). These smaller networks were formed based on similarities in school demographics. In the interviews, all participants stated that the smaller network was more supportive of their efforts for student achievement and learning.

Project Description and Goals

To support the principals of Innovate County, the project I designed provides a structure for leaders from small school districts to collaborate and learn together to build their knowledge and skills as instructional leaders. The small school district leaders currently meet together and collaborate through both formal and informal structures. These leaders have worked together within the existing structure and have requested guidance for the collaboration in order to propel their inquiry and planning toward a more effective strategy for continuous improvement. The proposed network will follow a similar model to the structure in Filigree with a larger meeting for all leaders and an opportunity for small cohorts based on similarities of school size and other demographics. This network will provide a purpose to help the leaders of small schools in Innovate County reach their goals within the existing structure. All districts in the state of California are required to submit a local control accountability plan (LCAP) that identifies goals based on current data analysis and a strategic plan to reach those goals. A deliverable from the principals in the network will be the LCAP they produce throughout the school year.

There are three parts to the network being developed in this project for instructional leaders: Learning and Leadership Forum (LLF), professional learning network (PLN) meetings, and small schools breakfast. I will incorporate the existing LLF, which is provided for all leaders to encourage purposeful collaboration around a common set of goals, into the proposed project. The small-school leaders in Innovate County also meet separately at monthly meetings and monthly breakfasts. Some of them

have expressed an interest in receiving guidance for their professional learning. As such, a smaller cohort of leaders will be selected from this group of principals to assemble after their monthly meetings for collaboration stemming from topics introduced at the LLF. These will be the PLN meetings for 10-20 of the leaders of small schools that choose to participate. The monthly breakfast will also be included as part of the informal support structure for these leaders. Currently, leaders of small schools meet monthly for breakfast as an informal structure. These breakfasts will include all of the PLN participants along with other leaders. The purpose of this network will be to bring leaders together to collaborate and learn together as they build their knowledge and skill as instructional leaders while navigating new standards and accountability systems. There are four main goals for this network of instructional leaders:

1. Build a common language and understanding about current educational initiatives.

2. Engage in dialogue and collaborate to support each other's efforts toward continuous improvement.

3. Share tools and strategies to inform the collective work as instructional leaders.

4. Explore how to make the systems deliver for the students.

There will be four LLF sessions that serve as the larger meeting for all leaders. Each session has a unique set of learning outcomes dependent upon the focus of discussion. Table 3 shows the focus and learning outcomes for the four sessions. More details about how these learning outcomes will be accomplished can be found in Appendix A.

Table 3

Learning and Leadership Forum Session Focus and Outcomes

Session	Focus	Outcomes
Session 1	Student Achievement	• Create your story to share with all stakeholders. • Identify data that is used to measure student achievement and plan for new ways as needed.
Session 2	Culture and Climate	• Identify lagging and leading indicators used and plan for new ways as needed. • Share surveys used for measuring culture and climate.
Session 3	Implementation of Standards	• Identify data used to measure implementation of standards beyond test scores and plan for new ways as needed.
Session 4	Parent Engagement	• Share strategies for engaging parents in school. • Use parent engagement rubric to assess current practice and plan for improvement as needed.

Rationale

There are four genres of projects outlined by Walden University. They include an evaluation report, a curriculum plan, professional development curriculum and materials, and policy recommendations. The evaluation report is appropriate for an evaluation study and would not fit the case study approach done for this research. A curriculum plan would be appropriate for classroom instruction, which this case study does not address. A policy recommendation is also not appropriate for this case study as it does not allow for generalization to create a policy nor do the findings indicate a need for new policy.

Instead, this project will provide professional development curriculum and materials for principals in Innovate County.

The problem in this study was that Innovate County does not have systems of support for instructional leaders to build their knowledge and strengthen their leadership skills. This project will provide a system for participating principals to learn together with a focus on a common set of goals. With my support as facilitator, the leaders will also have the opportunity to align their professional development plans for their staff and themselves to achieve their goals. Using the findings from the research study, a network will be created to engage leaders in professional learning, problem-solving, and inquiry.

The findings of the study revealed that collaborative networks serve to provide support to principals for building knowledge and skill as they navigate changes in education systems and standards. Additionally, the networks provided an opportunity for principals to receive feedback on new instructional practices and leadership skills. This form of professional development for leaders in Innovate County will allow leaders the opportunity to learn from other leaders. The professional development for leaders will build understanding of the new accountability system in California, instructional practices for 21st century learning, and the new standards. Through collaborative conversations and professional learning facilitated by curriculum and instruction specialists, principals will expand their knowledge of effective practices. In addition, they will be equipped to establish a strategy to reach the instructional goals at their respective school sites. The findings from the research study and a review of the literature pertaining

to networks for professional learning have provided guidance for the development of this
project.

Review of the Literature

The literature review presented here revealed the emergence of research regarding
networks for learning, particularly for instructional leaders. The research design used for
this project was a case study to describe the system of support provided to principals in
the Filigree School District. Based on the findings of the case study, a network for
principals to facilitate collaborative learning to build knowledge and strengthen skills as
instructional leaders emerged as an effective format to support leaders. With these
findings in mind, this project was developed to create a network for instructional leaders
in Innovate County that provides the opportunity for collaborative learning and inquiry.

Keywords and search terms were used to explore the existing literature to provide
further guidance for the development of the project. Keywords and search terms included
network effectiveness, principal learning teams, principal networks, principal interaction,
professional development for principals, adult learning, inquiry learning, and *learning*
network. Additional resources were gleaned from the peer-reviewed journal articles
found. The literature used for this review included peer-reviewed journal articles, reports
from educational foundations, and recently published professional books. The databases
used to search and locate specific sources included Education Research Complete, ERIC,
EBSCOhost, ProQuest, SAGE databases, Google Scholar, and the Wallace Foundation.
The search was filtered to include sources from 2011 through 2016. After extensive
reading and review of the sources, themes pertaining to the project were identified to

organize the research presented in this literature review. For example, the search returned

research related to professional learning, adult learning theory, network learning theory,

and PLCs. Schools in Innovate County have used the PLC model with teachers with

varying degrees of success. Due to this variance, leaders have different perspectives,

assumptions, or reservations about the model for collaboration. Because of the reputation

that PLCs has in Innovate County, the adult learning theory and networks for learning

were chosen as the focus of this literature review.

Adult Learning Theory and Networks for Learning

In planning for the genre of professional development, a focus on adult learning

theory and network theory served to inform the creation of this professional development

plan and to support the intent of the network. Social network theory looks at how

individuals interact within a system to learn together (Rienties, Héliot, & Jindal-Snape,

2013; Tappin, 2014). The network approach is used to encourage collaborative learning

to include the sharing of ideas and problem-solving together (Knowles, Holton, &

Swanson, 2012; Moolenaar & Sleegers, 2015). The learning that occurs in networks is

through collaboration and dialogue "where meaning is both negotiated and created"

(Dirckinck-Holmfeld, Hodgson, & McConnell, 2012). In essence, the network provides a

structure for adult learning that addresses the four principals of andragogy proposed by

Knowles (1984): (a) adults are involved in the planning and evaluation of their learning,

(b) experience provides learning, (c) adults are motivated by learning practical and

relevant information, and (d) adult learning is problem centered to seek solutions

(Knowles et al., 2005; Tappin, 2014). Networks are guided by the participants of the

network (Cullen-Lester, Woehler, & Willburn, 2016; Finnigan, Daly, & Che, 2013; Rienties et al., 2013). There may be a leader that facilitates, but the participants are very much involved in the planning. Due to the collaborative nature of the network, experience from all participants provides the knowledge and information needed to seek solutions to relevant problems and challenges. Networks are centered around learning practical and relevant information that can be directly applied (Breidenstein, Fahey, Glickman, & Hensley, 2012; Hall & Hord, 2014).

Focus on Networks

The case study conducted in Filigree School District revealed that principals perceived learning in teams as a necessary support for success as an instructional leader. Leithwood and Azah (2016) found similar results in their quantitative study. Principals identified learning in leadership networks as a significant source of professional learning. Filigree used the tenets of PLCs as a foundation for their work together, providing a structure of support to principals in a variety of settings (Dufour & Fullan, 2013). Two of these settings included the PLC structure: (a) Administrator PLC for all principals in the district and (b) smaller cohorts of principals in the academic achievement leadership teams (AALT). Principals in Filigree perceived the AALT as the most supportive of their learning as instructional leaders. Research describing networks for learning reveal similar perceptions. One study from Arkansas found that there was "a connection between peer learning support networks and effective development of school leaders" (Bengtson, Airola, & Peer, 2012, p. 14). Research on networks has revealed that leaders who connect with others, collaborate to find solutions for problems, and learn through inquiry with

others have a greater impact on the success of their organization (Cullen-Lester et al., 2016; McKibben, 2015; Szczesiul, 2014).

Moolenaar and Sleegers (2015) defined networks as "at least two organizations working together for a common purpose for at least some of the time" (p. 12). In the case of Filigree, this would be two or more schools coming together. In the case of Innovate county, this would be two or more districts coming together. Innovate county has many small school districts that are made up of a single school site. A network provides an opportunity for these leaders to learn collaboratively with others in similar roles. The key to these collaborative networks is that the focus is on the relevant work and learning principals are doing together to improve their practice through application of new learning (Fahey, 2011; Stoszkowski & Collins, 2014).

Principals have a responsibility to ensure not only that students are learning, but that teachers are continually learning about how best to meet the needs of students. The Wallace Foundation (2013) reported that individual variables at a school have a relatively small effect on learning. However, when these individual variables come together in a system for supporting student learning, the impact is greater (Hattie, 2011). It is the job of the principal to create the conditions for this to occur. So, how do we support principals who seek to do this?

Principals need to not only learn about instructional leadership, they need to reflect, discuss, experiment, and practice (Chitpin, 2014; Ng, 2015). One challenge faced by many principals is the isolated nature of their job (Carlson, 2012; Chitpin, 2014; Chitpin & Jones, 2015; Szczesiul, 2014). At a school site, there is often only one

principal. Principals need to find networks they can join in order to learn collaboratively with other instructional leaders (Borgemenke, Blanton, Kirkland, & Woody, 2012; Chitpin, 2014; Ioannidou-Koutselini & Patsalidou, 2015). As the principals in Filigree discovered, small cohorts of schools grouped by similar needs proved effective for professional learning.

As discovered by the Filigree School District, coaching and mentoring partnerships were informal and not always well received. However, coaching and mentoring occurred within the AALT groups informally. In Innovate County, coaching partnerships are difficult due to lack of funds and resources for effective partnerships. Providing a network structure for a small cohort of districts with similar needs will provide the support necessary for principals to receive coaching and mentoring from colleagues in other organizations (Brown & Tobis, 2013; Honig & Rainey, 2014; Ng, 2015).

Effective Networks Characteristics

So how can one create an effective network for instructional leaders to gain knowledge and strengthen their skills? A review of the literature has revealed characteristics that make for a promising learning experience for leaders. These characteristics are reported here in four categories: purpose, relationships, learning, and structure.

Purpose. Establishing a purpose for interacting within the network is an essential component to determine early on (Leithwood & Azah, 2016). Network participation is not one that is intended to be a mandated activity. Rather, it is an opportunity for

principals with a commitment to their own professional growth to learn collaboratively in order to improve their instructional leadership (Brown & Tobis, 2013). The purpose and focus for the network needs to be established from the beginning. Researchers have also added that the vision of the network challenges the status quo, emphasizes the need for change, and focuses on the needs of participating schools (Fullan & Senge, 2010; Leithwood & Azah, 2016). Once the purpose is established, the network collectively establishes achievable goals. This should be a small number of goals that are monitored for progress (Fullan, 2015; Leithwood & Azah, 2016). As Leithwood and Azah (2016) described, a network of multiple organizations is not bound by a common monitoring system. Each organization may have different ways of reporting evidence of learning within their school. Because of this, it is essential that a network have progress monitoring in place to ensure there is transparency from all participants as they work toward a common purpose (Leithwood & Azah, 2016).

Another purpose for networks is to learn together in a smaller collaborative to then share with others in the field (Borgemenke et al., 2012; Chitpin, 2014; Leithwood & Azah, 2016). Filigree School District is an example of this kind of microlearning that can inform a larger context. When the AALTs met together to learn, the resultant information was shared with the larger Administrator PLC. Sharing what was learned with the larger context allows other networks to consider the lessons learned and how that may apply to their situation. An example shared by a participant in the Filigree study involved behavior interventions. This practice was explored within the AALT and other schools within that AALT tried some of the same practices. After a year of successes and challenges, the

AALT was able to share their ideas and discoveries with other schools in the district. Eventually, what they learned became a strategy that all schools in the district could use.

Relationships. To fulfill the purpose of a network, much work must be done to build relationships among participants so that they are comfortable to share and learn with each other (Leithwood & Azah, 2016). Research on leadership has found that the ability to build relationships is an essential leadership competency (Cullen-Lester et al., 2016; Kirtman, 2013). Moolenaar and Sleegers (2015) emphasized that relationships with other principals is crucial to support the learning and collaboration of individuals and to support the collective learning within a network.

One goal for networks is to build a community of practice. It is through this community of practice that collaboration and learning can occur. More importantly, it is the action to improve student achievement as participants in the network continue their inquiries into what works. Discussing theory and sharing knowledge is a small component of a learning network. There is the expectation that this learning is applied and that results, successes, and challenges are reported back to the group. The School-University Research Network (SURN) Principal Academy at the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia stated that their top priority was to "build relationships and a community of practice" (Hindman, Rozzelle, Ball, & Fahey, 2015, p. 19). Another network in Fort Wayne, Indiana worked to build their learning community of principals by developing high levels of trust to strengthen the relationships of participants and the schools they serve (Psencik, Brown, Cain, Coleman, & Cummings, 2014). Both of these

networks found that building relationships and establishing trust was foundational to the learning of all participants.

Building relationships within a network may take some time, but cannot be ignored if a team is to be innovative through the sharing and discussion of creative ideas (Moolenaar, Daly, & Sleegers, 2010). For collaboration to be valued and effective, participants must feel that the environment is safe to make mistakes, seek assistance, and ask for clarification when needed (Bengtson et al., 2012). Much of the research has pointed to the need for a welcoming and relaxed environment to ensure that participants feel comfortable with taking risks in learning through collaboration (Brown & Tobis, 2013; Chitpin, 2014; Leithwood & Azah, 2016; Psencik et al., 2014; Stoszkowski & Collins, 2014).

Learning. A network builds support for all participants through collaborative learning and problem-solving (Brown & Tobis, 2013; Moolenaar & Sleegers, 2015). The quality of the collaboration is essential for learning and even more important to consider than the size of the network (Leithwood & Azah, 2016). Kuhn (2015) suggested setting clear goals for collaboration, ensuring that members engage in one another's thinking, and focusing on the application of new knowledge and ideas. Chitpin (2015) explained the importance of collaboration for solving problems. Chitpin explained that when principals come together,

> "[they] are able to increase the pool of possible solutions to overcome the
>
> problem, thus avoiding a small sliver of spectrum of options. Moreover,

comparing alternatives helps principals to understand what is feasible and what is

not and what variables are involved. (p. 397)

Participants support each other as they share ideas and learn together through inquiry

around their data and current research (Hindman et al., 2015). They also support each

other through challenges and strategize about how to improve student achievement and

instructional practice (Brown & Tobis, 2013).

The quality of collaboration increases through inquiry and reflection of

participants. Powerful professional learning occurs through inquiry and reflection with

peers (Bengtson et al., 2012; Chitpin, 2014; Honig & Rainey, 2014; Ioannidou-Koutselini

& Patsalidou, 2015). Inquiry is a process that goes beyond reflection in order to learn

more deeply and take action. True inquiry requires honest reflection of practices in order

to ask questions and identify solutions to problems. Barley (2012) shared that

"practitioners must continually and systematically reflect on practice and whenever

necessary, translate that reflection into action" (p. 272). Bengtson (2012) further

explained that collaborative reflective practice is effective collegial inquiry that leads to

deeper learning. Reflection upon one's own work is essential to addressing the contextual

aspects of the work. While many may share similar challenges in their schools, the

context may be different and require a different approach. Through reflective

collaboration, participants in a network can share ideas and possible solutions, take action

to implement some change ideas, and report back about the results. This approach to

inquiry deepens learning for everyone and improves student achievement through

meaningful action.

Collaborative learning also serves to bring together the knowledge, expertise, and skills of all members of the network (Honig & Rainey, 2014; Leithwood & Azah, 2016; Moolenaar et al., 2010). Networks provide the opportunity for members with different levels of experience and different kinds of knowledge to come together and create meaning for the challenges they face (Cox & McLeod, 2013). To maximize on the potential for learning, it is essential that the environment is safe so that members can challenge ideas and competing theories about problems and potential solutions (Honig & Rainey, 2014). This can expand the collective knowledge as members challenge each other's thinking to find solutions and effective strategies for improving student achievement.

In addition to the knowledge fostered within the network, a network leader also provides support. While collective knowledge is built by the members of the network, it is also important to consider external sources of information and expertise (Honig & Rainey, 2014). A network leader can locate resources, connect to experts in the field, and provide information when needed (Leithwood & Azah, 2016).

Structure. The structure of the network is important to consider in terms of how it supports the goals of the network, facilitates the flow of information, and coordinates learning and resources (Daly & Finnigan, 2012). Effective networks need to have some structure to organize tasks and resources and to ensure that the needs of the group are met. Considering the needs of the group requires that the structure is flexible in order to adapt to any changing needs (Carlson, 2012; Leithwood & Azah, 2016).

One element to consider is the frequency of meetings. The more frequently teams meet, the greater the learning and impact on student achievement (Leithwood & Azah, 2016). In order to facilitate more frequent interaction, it is important to create formal opportunities with a flexible plan for learning (Daly & Finnigan, 2012). Gathering as a network in one location is ideal, however there are factors that may impede frequent interactions in person. An alternative to meeting in person may be the opportunity to meet virtually in a manner that is easily accessible to all members.

Another important element for structuring a network is effective communication. Communication outside formal meetings ensures that there is a continuous flow of information and learning between meetings (Leithwood & Azah, 2016). In considering this communication, it is important to ascertain the preferred modes of communication of all members. It may be easy to assume e-mail is most widely used, however e-mail communication can be cumbersome for people who receive a mass of e-mails everyday. Online discussions through social platforms could provide alternatives to e-mail. These might include services such as Edmodo or Google Classroom.

Project Implementation

This project is designed to support leaders of small schools who have less access to support from other leaders and resources. Small schools are defined as districts with a single school building and less than 1,000 students with one principal. The Small Schools Support Network described in this project has three parts: Learning and Leadership Forum (LLF), professional learning network (PLN) meetings, and small schools breakfasts. These three parts are described here. Table 4 highlights the intended audience,

purpose, and goals for all three parts of the professional learning networks described in the project.

The first part of the network is the LLF, which is a networking opportunity open to all school leaders in the county. Both large and small school district leaders are invited to participate in this forum. Leadership teams are encouraged to participate, which could include superintendents, assistant superintendents, curriculum directors, principals, assistant principals, teacher leaders, academic coaches, and other campus staff that the team considers to be integral for leading at their schools. While teams are encouraged, small schools do not have formal teams in place. Instead, the leaders of small schools will sit with other leaders of small schools to form a team. There are four half-day morning sessions throughout the year. The overall purpose and goals are the same for each session. Each session of the LLF has a unique set of learning outcomes and focus. The learning outcomes for each LLF is highlighted in Table 3 and details for how those outcomes are achieved can be found in Appendix A. At the end of each session, participants will complete an online form to provide feedback to communicate what they learned, the value of the session for them, and what they plan to use and how. The project will use the existing LLF structure to provide a foundation for the PLN) meetings for small-school principals.

Table 4

Innovate County's Small Schools Support Network

	LLF	PLN Meetings	Breakfasts
Audience	Open to leadership teams from all districts in the county	Leaders of small schools, 10-20 committed leaders	Open to all leaders of small schools
Purpose	Provide the opportunity for leadership teams to network with others as they build their knowledge and understanding of their role as leaders in navigating the changing educational landscape.	Provide the opportunity for leaders of small schools to learn together through inquiry and collaboration in order to build capacity as instructional leaders.	Provide the opportunity for leaders of small schools to share resources and ideas to build collective knowledge of instructional leadership.
Goals	• Build a common language and understanding about current educational issues • Engage in dialogue and collaborate to support each other's efforts toward continuous improvement • Share tools and strategies to inform the collective work as instructional leaders • Explore how to make the systems deliver for the students	• Build a common language and understanding about current educational issues • Engage in dialogue and collaborate to support each other's efforts toward continuous improvement • Share tools and strategies to inform the collective work as instructional leaders of small schools • Explore how we can work together to make the systems deliver for the students	• Engage in dialogue and collaborate on strategies learned and/or implemented • Share tools, resources, and ideas to inform the collective work as instructional leaders of small schools • Provide feedback to each other to improve strategies and for deeper inquiry

Note: LLF = Learning and Leadership Forum, PLN = Professional Learning Network

The second part of the system of support is the PLN meeting for leaders of small schools. This network meeting will take place once a month for an hour and a half. This is a smaller cohort that is intended to support leaders who are more isolated due to the small size of their district. These leaders do not have a leadership team formally established at their sites. They serve as the sole leader in their school, sometimes as both superintendent and principal. While the offer to participate in the PLN meetings will be made to all leaders of small-school-districts, a commitment to the network will be an expectation. Invitations to participate were sent out in October and 17 principals signed up to participate in the network, which begins in January 2017. Each session has an open agenda with guiding questions for discussion that are connected to the learning outcomes from the LLF. At the end of each session, participants will provide a quick, written response to the guiding questions as a reflection of learning.

Finally, the small-school-district leaders will also meet for breakfast once a month. This is an informal structure that has already been in place. Some of the leaders of small schools who choose not to participate in the network will be present at the breakfast. This gives the opportunity to share what is learned in the network with other leaders. The breakfast is informal and serves as an opportunity to discuss current issues and needs without an agenda. The goal of the breakfast is to provide all the leaders of small schools an opportunity to hear about strategies, inquire about the implementation of those strategies, and provide feedback about the usefulness of the information shared. This feedback will be collected at the end of the breakfast as an exit ticket.

This three-part network will be called the Small Schools Support Network. It is anticipated that the small-school-district leaders that make a commitment to the PLN meetings will be participating in all three of the networking opportunities presented here. Other small-school-district leaders would be participating in one or two of the offered formats. Leaders in larger school districts would participate in just the LLF.

The purpose of the Small Schools Support Network is to build knowledge and skills of instructional leaders as they work toward continuous improvement through the use of the LCAP template provided for the state of California. This is part of the new accountability system currently under development in California. As a road map for the cycle of continuous improvement, the network will follow the process model presented by the California Department of Education (CDE). Of great importance in this model is the stage of local self-reflection and the use of the new rubrics in promoting this practice.

Participation in this network was solicited from all 29 principals of Innovate County's small school districts. To maintain a smaller cohort for learning, no more than 20 principals will be part of this network. A detailed description of the content of the network meetings, benefits of professional networking, and the commitment requirements for participation was sent to all leaders of small schools to invite them to participate. A copy of the letter sent to these leaders can be found in Appendix A.

The principals of these small schools in Innovate County currently participate in our existing large-group PLC event, the LLF, which I facilitate with two colleagues. The network will be connected to this existing support and allow for meaningful collaboration within the small-district teams established in this network. This will serve as another

venue for the PLN for leaders of the small schools to connect and collaborate on their work and will also be an opportunity for them to share the progress of the network with the larger education community of Innovate County.

Cautions and Possible Barriers

As the developer of this network, I will also serve as a facilitator along with a colleague who is involved in this work in Innovate County. Understanding how our leadership will impact the network is essential for effectiveness. However, it is also important to build sustainability within the network so that it is not too reliant on the county-office staff. Daly, Finnigan, and Che (2013) cautioned, "the research on network theory suggests that networks that have a highly-centralized structure tend to be over-reliant on one individual, indicating a disproportionate influence of this individual over the resources that flow in the network" (p. 486). Leithwood and Azah (2016) asserted that network leadership should be more people-oriented than task-oriented for maximum learning and engagement. Keeping this in mind, it is essential for us to clarify the purpose, foster support for participants, and establish a flexible structure for learning together with mutual accountability.

Simply providing the time and space for collaborative learning is not a guarantee that learning and action toward continuous improvement will occur (Finnigan et al., 2013; Leithwood & Azah, 2016). Szczesiul (2014) cautioned that reflective collaboration does not develop organically. The author suggested using protocols to "promote the norms needed for open and honest conversation and the meeting habits that support inquiry, dialogue, and reflection" (p. 418). Szczesiul further added that these protocols

can ensure equity and further promote the building of trust. The National School Reform Faculty (2014) website provides a wide range of protocols and activities for inquiry and collaboration that can be used in the network.

Another caution that Leithwood and Azah (2016) reported is the need to ensure that the knowledge required for collaboration and learning is accessible. As a facilitator of the network, it will be important to recognize when additional knowledge is required from outside expertise. This also presents the challenge of ensuring that the use of outside sources of information is relevant and practical for the network. These could include information gleaned from conferences, consultants, and other networks. As part of our job at the county office, we have access to relevant and pertinent information that will be useful for the principals in this network. My partner and I will review the information we receive at state symposiums and workshops to ascertain what information will be essential for the network and how best to provide the information within the collaborative setting. We will review and select information that is pertinent based on the goals and outcomes of the LLF sessions and the PLN meetings. Furthermore, we will review our anecdotal notes pertaining to principal perspectives and summaries of past sessions to align with the group's questions and stated needs.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

The proposed implementation of this project began in September 2016 and will continue until the end of the school year in May 2017. The target group of administrators currently meets for three different kinds of collaboration. One is the LLF, another is their monthly Small Schools Leadership meeting, and finally, they meet for breakfast each

month. With the implementation of the proposed project, PLN meetings for the principals who volunteer to participate in the cohort will occur immediately following the existing Small Schools Leadership meeting. The LLF and breakfasts will include other leaders. The following is a detailed timeline of the proposed actions. The dates reflect the established Learning and Leadership Forum dates. The participants will confirm the network meeting dates and breakfast meeting dates that best fit their schedules at the first PLN meeting on January 10, 2017.

September - November, 2016: Invitations were extended to principals through personal contact, e-mails, and during the scheduled Small Schools Leadership Meeting in September and October

November 18, 2016: LLF Session 1

January 10, 2017: First PLN Meeting

January 17, 2017: Breakfast

January 20, 2017: LLF Session 2

February 2017: PLN Meeting

February 2017: Breakfast

March 2, 2017: LLF Session 3

March 2017: PLN Meeting

March/April 2017: Breakfast

April 27, 2017: LLF Session 4

May 2017: PLN Meeting

May 2017: Breakfast

May/June 2017: LCAP Reviews begin

Roles and Responsibilities

Researcher. This network was created to meet the needs of principals in isolated small-school districts in the county. Innovate County has 29 small-school districts, and the network will support 17 principals from this population. My role will be to work with the existing structure and personnel to develop a network that supports these principals and their students in continuous improvement. In addition, we will learn together how best to navigate California's new accountability system through the LCAP. My responsibility will be to ensure that the goals of the network are clear, adjust the structure to meet the needs of participants, and organize as needed to sustain the work. Additionally, it will be my responsibility to ensure that the quality of collaboration enhances learning and provides opportunities to implement new change ideas at the school sites. Between meetings, I will continue to connect with the members of the network to inquire about any assistance that they may need in preparation for sharing at the next meeting.

Colleagues. The magnitude of this network requires additional support from a co-facilitator. This partner will share in my responsibilities, as described above, in ensuring that participants receive the support needed to implement change and build their professional capacity. We will continue to learn together through opportunities provided by the California Department of Education and other conferences across the state. We will also share in the responsibility of ensuring that the culture and climate of the meetings fosters trust and a commitment to everyone learning together. We plan to do

this through continuous monitoring and reflection of the dialogue amongst members. Visits between meetings to the leaders will also provide us with an opportunity to build relationships with them and take note of any dissatisfaction with the culture of the network. As a summative evaluation for the network, we will be reviewing the LCAPs that are created by all districts in the county.

In addition to this partner (i.e., co-facilitator), the support of our county office superintendent will be essential in supporting the learning network. The superintendent has already expressed his support and dedication to ensuring that the network has all the necessary resources to proceed. Other colleagues will provide support in reviewing the professional development curriculum provided during Learning and Leadership Forums. They will also provide feedback about the structures used to support inquiry and the relevancy of the information provided to the participants of the network in relation to the goals stated in their LCAP.

Principals/Network Participants. Seventeen principals have signed on to participate in all three components of the network. The role of the principals in the network will be to engage in the learning. There will be a commitment to make in terms of participation and expectations to share and contribute to the collective learning of the group. They will work with the facilitators to establish norms for the professional learning network. The participants have already been working together in a similar capacity. This network brings guidance and structure to the kind of informal learning they have participated in before. As such, relationships have been built, and it will be important to maintain those relationships. It will be my responsibility to provide the

structures necessary to maintain those relationships through collaborative and team-building exercises.

Project Evaluation Plan

The network was developed to provide principals with an opportunity to build their knowledge and skills as instructional leaders as they navigate the current accountability system that is still in development for California schools. Through collaboration with other principals, the network will provide the opportunity for leaders to share their understandings, challenges, and questions regarding continuous improvement at their schools. Evaluation of the network will be a continuous process.

One method of evaluation will be through an analysis of the collaborative dialogue that occurs in each network meeting. I will take anecdotal notes and review the discussions to analyze the quality of the collaboration with my co-facilitator. This analysis will be important in determining the focus for the following meeting. It is anticipated that an area that will need to be assessed is the trust that is built within the group. This could be evidenced in the level and depth of engagement from each participant. Another way to assess the level of trust is the information that principals choose to share. Listening to the perspectives of principals will be valuable in determining the level of support both individually and within the network. This form of evaluation will be used to measure the goals associated with the Small Schools Support Network. The evaluation will seek to measure the achievement following goals:

- Build a common language and understanding about current educational issues.

- Engage in dialogue and collaborate to support each other's efforts toward continuous improvement.

- Share tools and strategies to inform the collective work as instructional leaders.

Another method of evaluation will be the feedback forms that participants will complete after each LLF session (Figure 3). This will be helpful in determining what structures are useful for learning and collaboration during the sessions. It will also indicate what resources need to be explored and brought to the network. This feedback form will serve as an evaluation tool for the learning outcomes of each session.

Learning and Leadership Feedback

Please provide us with feedback to help us provide structures and resources that support your learning and collaboration with other leaders.

I learned...*

I valued...*

I'll use...*

My next steps...*

Comments:

Figure 3. This feedback form will be provided for participants to give feedback electronically after each Learning and Leadership Forum Session.

Additionally, a quick write will be collected at each Professional Learning Network (PLN) meeting, asking participants to respond to the following questions each time:

- How did today's discussion support you in building your knowledge and skills as an instructional leader?

- What is one action you plan to take regarding today's guiding questions?

The responses will be helpful in determining the quality of the discussions and the relevance to each leader. They will also give my colleagues and me information about the resources that would be helpful for their next steps. This can guide the support for leaders both within the network and individually when their school site is visited.

Finally, we will evaluate the evidence of learning provided by each school site to determine progress toward their identified goals. Part of the LCAP process requires schools to identify their goals, clarify a strategy to work toward that goal, and report on local measures for assessing student learning related to the goals. The county office is charged with the task of reviewing LCAPs for the following year. The learning outcomes from the Learning and Leadership Forums are evidenced in the LCAP. Particular areas of the LCAP that provide evaluation of the learning outcomes are outlined in Table 5.

Table 5

Local Control Accountability Plan Alignment to Learning Outcomes

LCAP Component	Learning Outcomes
Executive Summary	Create your story to share with stakeholders
Local Measures of Student Achievement	Identify data that is used to measure student achievement and plan for new ways as needed
Local Measures for Implementation of Standards	Identify data that is used to measure implementation of standards beyond test scores and plan for new ways as needed
Local Measures for School Environment	Share surveys used for measuring culture and climate
Local Measures for Parent Engagement	Share strategies for engaging parents in school
Strategic Plan	Identify lagging and leading indicators used and plan for new ways as needed
	Identify data that is used to measure student achievement and plan for new ways as needed
	Identify data that is used to measure implementation of standards beyond test scores and plan for new ways as needed
	Use parent engagement rubric to assess current practice and plan for improvement as needed.

Project Implications

Elementary school principals are faced with many challenges and responsibilities everyday. The role of the principal in high achieving schools is described as that of instructional leader (Balyer, 2014; Breidenstein et al., 2012; Fink, 2011; Fullan, 2011). Unfortunately, principals are often isolated and lack collaborative support from other

instructional leaders (Hatch & Roegman, 2012). This network is intended to provide the opportunity for principals to improve their instructional leadership in supporting their teachers and students. While this network will begin at a small level, the intention is to share the learning with other schools and districts in the area and across the country. One expectation that will be expressed with participants is the need to share outside the network through a variety of formats. Some may choose to share at state and national conferences, while others may choose to share on Internet-based learning networks.

This work is essential to principals both locally and across the country as we find ways to combat the isolation and learn together. At the local level, this network can bring schools from different districts together for the benefit of all students in the county. While every school is unique and requires approaches that fit the community, all students in these schools deserve the same right to a quality education. Through networking and sharing knowledge and resources, we can build our capacity at a local level to provide this to our students.

This network also has potential for great impact in the state of California. The state is undergoing a transformation of their accountability system, which requires a shift in the way we do business in schools. As leaders come together to learn how to provide high-quality education for students, we will use the LCAP to demonstrate the strategic planning process. The state of California is encouraging county offices to share these plans with each other in order to provide a bank of model practices for others to learn from. The work of this network will produce high quality LCAPs that can be shared with others across the state of California.

Summary

Section 3 described the project designed to address the need for systems of support for principals in Innovate County through the development of a network for professional learning. A review of the literature revealed the importance of networks for professional learning, characteristics of effective networks, and cautions and barriers for implementation. Additionally, the findings from Filigree indicated that a collaborative structure for learning was effective for principals to build their knowledge and strengthen their skills as instructional leaders.

The network created for the project had three parts. LLF was a collaborative network for all leadership teams in the county. The PLN was a collaborative network for a smaller group of committed leaders of small-school-districts. Finally, the PLN breakfast was a collaborative network for all leaders of small-school-districts. Included in the description of the project was a timeline for implementation, roles and responsibilities of people involved, and methods of evaluating the effectiveness of the network. Appendix A provides presentation materials for LLF and agendas for the PLN and breakfasts.

In Section 4 I will (a) explore the strengths and limitations of the project as well as recommendations for alternative approaches; (b) reflect on what was learned in terms of scholarship, the process of developing a project, and leadership for change; (c) reflect of my own growth as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

This journey began as a quest to find ways to support principals as instructional leaders. This became a passion for me as I have spent much of my career supporting teachers through professional development and coaching and found that sustaining this support within a school requires an instructional leader who learns alongside their teachers. Instructional leaders build and support the systems in schools. As leaders, they need to have a strong understanding of the work in classrooms and the pedagogy that promotes deeper learning for all stakeholders. The challenge for instructional leaders has been the need to find opportunities for collaborative support. Principals are often isolated in their roles and wear many hats of responsibility that prevent them from taking the time to reflect and plan. My hope is that the network designed for this project will provide a valuable learning experience that instructional leaders will make a priority for their own learning in order to support the learning of all stakeholders within their school communities.

Strengths of the Project

Another strength of the project is the value it brings to the local educational system. I discovered in the research that there is a need to provide systems of support for instructional leaders (Barnes et al., 2010; Bengtson et al., 2012; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Fullan & Quinn, 2015). Through both the case study and literature review, the power of professional development through networks was revealed. The perceptions of principals within the Filigree School District provided insight into the logistics and value

to collaborative learning. The literature also provided a deeper understanding of how collaboration through inquiry supports adult learners (Knowles et al., 2012; Spillane & Kim, 2012). In sharing my project with instructional leaders, I found that many were anxious to learn more about my findings and the resulting project. School systems that want to provide support for their instructional leaders will find the details of the project valuable.

Finally, the network created for this project has the potential for great impact both locally and at the state level. Through the proposed network, principals will build their knowledge, strengthen their skills, and share strategies to inform their LCAP. This plan is new for the state of California and intended to move leaders from a plan for compliance to a plan for capacity building. The inquiry and collaboration that is structured for principals provides them with the opportunity to reflect on their current practices and learn together to create a strategic plan for continuous improvement for all students.

Limitations

While there are strengths to the project, there are also some limitations to be considered. One limitation is that the project focused on the LCAP in California as a tool for continuous improvement. The state of California is developing a new accountability system and has adopted a unique set of standards for English Learners. These issues are of particular interest to instructional leaders in California; however, some may not be relevant to leaders in other states. However, the foundation for understanding system change resides in broad research, most notably from M. Fullan. California's system

change may be unique in comparison to other states, but the foundation for continuous improvement in education is relevant across the nation.

Another limitation is that Innovate County was uniquely equipped to begin a network for supporting small-school leaders. Structures already existed that could allow for instructional leaders to make the time for the networking opportunity. The Learning and Leadership Forum was already an existing structure along with regularly scheduled superintendent meetings. With these already in place, facilitating the time and space for the network described in this study made for an easy transition. We were able to use the Learning and Leadership Forum as a basis for the network and encourage participation in smaller network meetings that could be an extension of their regularly scheduled superintendent meetings. Additionally, Innovate County already has the personnel available to facilitate the network. The county superintendent felt there was value to this work and therefore restructured some my and my colleague's responsibilities to ensure this network could be a priority. Other organizations would need to consider the structures they have in place and the resources available for a network to work.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

The problem in this study is the lack of systems of support for principals to build their knowledge and skills as instructional leaders. There are other possible approaches to addressing the problem and perhaps other ways to define the problem. A system of support has multiple components that work together to build capacity among instructional leaders. One component is the creation of a professional development plan for principals. An alternative approach may be to provide a policy recommendation for principals to

receive ongoing professional development. Part of this policy would be the expectation that principals would receive support from district personnel or consultants to develop professional development plans with identified goals for learning and continuous improvement. This would be particularly effective if the problem is due to instructional leaders not seeking support from systems that exist for their professional learning. Perhaps another way to define the problem would be that instructional leaders are not seeking support from existing structures.

Another possible definition to the problem could be that there is a lack of collaborative opportunities for instructional leaders to learn from each other. Filigree School District used the PLC approach for building capacity amongst leaders as well as with teachers. Another approach could be to design a professional development plan for learning about effective approaches to PLCs.

Scholarship

Scholarship through the doctoral journey is quite unlike everyday learning. It is extensive, challenging, and gratifying as you gain new knowledge that sparks curiosity to answer new questions. Through the review of previous research and conducting my own research, I learned how to narrow the focus in order to learn more deeply about the problem. Doctoral study required me to expand on my critical thinking skills and learn how to use an inquiry cycle repeatedly.

The process of creating a literature review was one of the more time consuming aspects and was vitally important. While the literature review was primarily intended to collect information related to the problem, I also found that it was useful for seeing

models of published research studies. Narrowing the focus of the problem also became so important as new knowledge creates other avenues to explore. I found this to be very challenging; the guidance of my chairperson was invaluable during this stage and helped to keep me focused on track. I became quite skilled at search queries during this phase and learned how to use the valuable resources in the Walden library. The support of the librarians and webinars really supported my work. The most valuable tool I learned from the librarians was probably the Zotero application for organizing and storing the many resources I collected.

The most intriguing part of the journey was the data collection and analysis. As a new researcher, there was much to learn about organizing the data collected, conducting interviews, and analysis. It was also exciting because it took me out of the office and into the field where I could talk to others and learn about their situation and how it supports their education system. Making these connections with participants really gave meaning to the data collected. As I analyzed the data, I reflected on those conversations and the feelings expressed by participants. The NVivo software also proved to be a valuable tool for coding the data for analysis. I took advantage of their month-long, online course to understand how to use the software to analyze the data from many different angles. This was an important component to ensure that I did not let my own bias or initial assumptions drive the analysis. Instead, the evidence collected was analyzed through many lenses to create a clearer picture so that it could speak for itself.

Project Development

The project development continuously evolved throughout the entire process. Early on in the work, a project was considered as a possibility to addressing the problem identified in the study. However, the project had to stem from the findings of the actual study itself. As such, the first consideration for a project is not what was developed. The importance of considering a project early on led to other possibilities. My initial project was much broader than what I developed here. Through the process I learned to narrow the focus so that the analysis of the data provided a deeper understanding of all components of a system of support. Because of this focus, I was able to identify a component that could be developed as the focus of the project. This was a valuable part of the learning process in project development, because it is important to start small and purposeful to develop capacity and understanding. Once this project is implemented and evaluated, another phase of the system of support can be considered for implementation.

Leadership and Change

Throughout this process, I have learned the value of effective leadership for change. An important lesson I learned is that leaders must continue to learn. The doctoral process brought to light the kind of learning that leaders must seek in order to facilitate change effectively. As a leader, I found that reviewing peer-reviewed journal articles provide valuable knowledge to inform practice. This is something I plan to continue to explore beyond the research for this project. I also found that articles in professional magazines and newsletters provide an initial review of research that is available. The references at the end of these articles bear more meaning for me as I continue my

learning. Sharing valid and relevant research with other educators provides a level of support for the work they are doing and allows for further inquiry.

Through the act of collecting data, I found that there is value to action research in our roles as leaders. We often do not consider action research to solve problems, but I found this to be of vital importance. In our current situations, it is easy to make assumptions about the problem and act on those assumptions. If we want to solve the problem effectively and quickly, it is important that we understand the problem clearly before acting. Action research allows us to assess the problem and identify the areas where we can effect change.

Analysis of Self as a Scholar, Practitioner, and Project Developer

I have always considered myself to be a lifelong learner. It has been a very rewarding experience to work hard and achieve a higher degree. Going into the program, I felt prepared for the kind of independent learning that would need to occur through an online program. What I learned about myself as a scholar is that I still had much to learn. While the act of researching, searching for information, asking questions, and writing was something I expected, I learned much more about efficiency of learning, application of new knowledge, and a deeper level of scholarly inquiry.

From the beginning, I quickly learned the importance of clearly identifying a problem and clearly stating a purpose. These seemed like such simple tasks, however they required many iterations and much inquiry to align the important elements of research. Reviewing literature and planning the methodology for the research depended on this alignment and made for more efficient learning.

I was also able to develop my inquiry skills. Learning how to ask better questions allows me to define problems more clearly, investigate those problems more purposefully, and analyze data more critically. Connecting all the dots in a research study is not something that comes naturally. Learning how to triangulate information and identify themes provided more practice for critical thinking and inquiry.

Writing was a strength for me going into the doctoral program; however, there are writing styles that scholars use that differ from everyday writing. It took many iterations of the prospectus before it was approved, and then the proposal required many revisions before it was approved. Through all of the hard work, I learned that perseverance and determination were essential character traits for completing a doctoral degree. I am grateful for the challenges faced throughout this process because I can now call myself a scholar.

When I began this journey, I was a classroom teacher. I had actually returned to the classroom after many years as a school administrator and instructional coach. As I reflect on my career, I realize that in everything I choose to do, I seek to learn more. My reason for returning to the classroom was because after being out of the classroom for so long, I knew I needed to go back and learn more about being a great teacher. About a year after starting the doctoral journey, I was offered a new position at the county office as a staff development and curriculum specialist. This new role opened new doors to learning that had not been afforded to me before. Juggling a new job, doctoral studies, and family was challenging. I learned how to manage my time and prioritize. I also learned how to set boundaries in order to achieve my goals. And I learned how to

incorporate all of these things together so that the learning for my project became a part of my work, and my family appreciated my passion.

The problem I identified was so relevant for our organization that I was invited to take the lead on developing systems to support our leaders. I was fortunate to be able to produce this project as both a doctoral requirement and as a project for work. I have a partner that has worked with me to create the professional development experiences and other colleagues have reviewed and provided feedback on our work. This project is our first pilot for networks in the county, and my partner will be doing his doctoral study on the next phase of this work.

Developing the project and learning how to plan an effective, collaborative professional development experience through a network was challenging. At the same time, it was one of the most rewarding parts of the process. In my role as an instructional consultant, designing professional development is a regular part of my job. Through this journey, I learned about effective practices for professional development and was reminded of adult learning theory. I find myself creating learning experiences for adults differently as I consider both the purpose and the adult learner.

Reflection and Impact on Social Change

This project and study revealed much in terms of how important this work is for instructional leaders. As I work with principals, I find that many of them work in isolation and find it difficult to collaborate with others due to their busy schedules. While time and scheduling will always be a challenge for instructional leaders, providing the time and the space for collaboration can open doors to new partnerships for learning. As a

former school leader myself, I found it challenging to find opportunities to meet with

other leaders to share ideas and ask questions. The one thing that helped me was that I

worked in a large school district, and we had a monthly meeting with all leaders.

Unfortunately, these meetings were not collaborative, but we took advantage of the

proverbial parking lot conversation afterward to discuss our needs as leaders. If this is

happening in a large school district, what kind of support do our small school districts

have for leaders?

This project was important to me because I work with both teachers and school

leaders. Successful schools have both teachers and leaders learning together. Part of this

learning is together in the same room and part of it is in collaborative job-alike groups

where ideas for application are shared. Often, limited finances allocate money for

teachers to build their knowledge and skills through professional development and time

for collaboration. But this same allocation is not always made for the instructional leader.

Leaders need to have the same opportunities to build their knowledge and skills as

instructional leaders so that they can support teachers as they effectively apply their

learning for the success of our students. This is why I am so thankful to be part of

developing a network for our school leaders that is free of charge. If they can give the

time, we can provide the support without any financial obligation.

The network created will be built for sustainability, which will impact social

change as the network evolves and expands. It is important that we learn from this first

pilot so that we can continue the work and include more leaders in the process. With

more leaders learning together and applying their new ideas to their work, we can

promote a larger learning community for new and veteran principals. Through the sharing of ideas and problem-solving together, we can create learning environments that support educators at all levels.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The findings of the study and literature review provided here has implications for other educational settings in terms of how a network can be beneficial for their instructional leaders. Networks as a means for inquiry and collaboration need to be flexible to meet the needs of the participants. However, there are particular characteristics that should be considered for a successful network. These characteristics along with cautions are provided in this study and should be examined for other organizations designing a network for their leaders. Bringing leaders together for this kind of collaboration is challenging and gratifying. The challenge is to ensure that the network does not become another social gathering that lacks purpose. Instead, it will be a time for inquiry and learning about the challenges that leaders are facing in their work.

I plan to share this project beyond the county where it will initially be implemented. Once we have learned from the initial work of the network and identified our own challenges and achievements, I will share what we have learned at national conferences. I also plan to submit an article for publication in some of the education journals referenced in this paper. By sharing the network development experience with others, I hope to impact positive social change for other organizations seeking to align their support systems for effective instructional leadership.

Future researchers can expand on this study through investigation of other networks. One consideration might be to explore multiple networks in different organizations to determine similarities and differences. These similarities and differences can be analyzed for variables such as size, location, demographics, and available resources. Another consideration for future research could be the sustainability and evolution of networks for instructional leaders. A longitudinal study could provide insight to how networks evolve to continue to meet the needs of the participating leaders as the educational environment changes over time. Finally, future researchers could expand on the coaching and mentoring partnerships for supporting instructional leaders. Filigree discovered that formally assigning coaches was perceived negatively. However, many leaders indicated that they had informal coaches whom they sought for support. Researching how these informal opportunities can be fostered within a system of support for instructional leaders could contribute to the research regarding professional learning for principals.

Conclusion

In Section 4, a reflection of the project's strengths and limitations were revealed, and recommendations for alternative approaches were presented. Reflections of what was learned about scholarship, project development, and leadership and change were shared along with a reflective analysis of myself as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer. Finally, the potential impact for positive social change was discussed. Implications, applications, and directions for future research were also explored.

I have found a new passion for supporting instructional leaders through the doctoral process. The knowledge gained from reviewing the literature and analyzing the data collected provided me with a clearer picture of the researcher's role in defining problems and seeking solutions. I plan to continue this journey far beyond receiving a doctoral degree and to seek solutions and educate others about the importance of building knowledge and skills as instructional leaders. Our students deserve the best educational experience we can offer, and teachers need instructional leaders who are knowledgeable and skilled to lead the way.

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Appendix A: Small Schools Support Network

Invitation Letter to Participate in the Professional Learning Network

October, 2016

Dear _____,

I hope all is well! You may recall us mentioning our work in developing a network for principals in our county, and there could possibly be an opportunity for small schools to collaborate though a network hosted by our county. I wanted to let you know that we received approval to host a Professional Learning Network (PLN) from our county superintendent. <u>The focus of our proposal to the superintendent was to support small-school district leaders with the new accountability system by giving them the space, information, and resources for collaboration around this subject</u>.

In order to best support the current educational restructuring, the focus will be on the new accountability system, rubrics, and LCAP template, but the process and exact content of the network will be determined jointly with the participants. We plan to meet for two meetings a month (either in person or virtual), and we are hoping to somehow integrate into existing activities such as the small-school meetings already on the calendar (at the groups discretion of course). We would look to those wishing to participate for other ideas (virtual meetings, coffee house, breakfast/dinner meeting, etc.).

Details we have established so far:

- Two meetings per month of some type (no time requirement)
- The network could range from 10-20 regular, official participants
- The network could dovetail into existing meetings
- The network would share topics from the Learning and Leadership Forum
- The network would commence in January and end in June with the option of possibly extending the network another year

Possible benefits of the network could be:

- Examine the new accountability system from the unique perspective of small school districts
- Have a say in what you need most to lead these changes in your school community
- Receive the latest information and materials on the new accountability system
- Get assistance with planning training for different audiences (teachers, board, parents, etc.)
- Receive individualized assistance from the facilitators as needed

We will be attending your small-school meeting on *(Insert Date)* to explain further and answer any questions you may have.

Learning and Leadership Forum Session 1 – November 17, 2017

Learning Outcomes:
- Create your story to share with all stakeholders – LCAP Section 1
- Identify data that will be used to measure student achievement – LCAP Section 2

Participants Bring:
- Data pertaining to student achievement

Detailed Agenda and Trainer Notes:

Time	Slide #	Notes
8:30	1-4	Welcome Overview of the session Today's topic is state priorities 4 & 8 – Student Achievement
8:35	5-7	Build understanding of the work that the state is doing with support and guidance from Michael Fullan. Read the quote from Fullan Acknowledge the current reality of accountability in California as a developing system. Read the Executive Summary of the report prepared by the Superintendent's Advisory Task Force on Accountability and Continuous Improvement to the California Department of Education titled Preparing All Studetns for College, Career, Life, and Leadership in The 21st Century. The document can be found at the following link: http://cdefoundation.org/staging/wp-content/uploads/Final-ACITF-Report-May-16-2016.pdf Follow the prompt for discussion questions on slide 6. First with table teams, then share out.
9:10	8-11	View Simon Sinek's Golden Circle found at the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l5Tw0PGcyN0 Share our "Golden Circle" for Learning and Leadership slides 8-10
9:20	12-13	Read California's Golden Opportunity – Follow prompt for reading on slide 11 See discussion questions on slide 12, with a partner, then share out.
BREAK		
10:15	14	Invite participants to craft their own "Golden Circle." Call time when it appears that most are ready. Have everyone stand up and find a partner. Take turns sharing their "Golden Circle." Call time when it appears that most

		have finished. Repeat with another partner.
10:35	15-17	Briefly point out the 8 state priorities Highlight priorities 4 & 8 for today's focus on student achievement Discuss how we measure student achievement – the state requires certain metrics, and we can choose others to show the complete picture.
10:40	18-21	Using student data requires us to • Analyze • Respond • Communicate Follow the prompts on the slides to discuss in teams how you use data. Slide 21 – discussion with table teams, how this impacts the LCAP
11:00	22	View Michael Fullan's video "Using Data". Video can be found at this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VJKrt8nzGt8 Discuss – Connect with your use of data. What can you glean from Fullan?
11:20	23-24	Prompts for discussion within leadership teams about other metrics. Share with whole group.
11:55	25-26	Wrap up the session with quote about accountability and responsibility. Request feedback form to be filled out electronically.

Learning and Leadership Forum Session 1 Presentation Slides

Slide 1

Slide 2

today's agenda

1	Why are we here? What is this year's Learning and Leadership Forum all about?
2	What is the LCAP's Theory of Action according to Michael Fullan?
3	How do we analyze student achievement data?
4	How do we respond to student achievement data?
5	How do we communicate and ensure transparency?

Slide 3

Goals

build a common language

dialogue & collaboration

share tools and strategies

make our systems deliver for our students

Slide 4

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

LCAP Priority 4 and 8

FORUM

Slide 5

> There is increasing consensus about the importance of moving away from the wrong drivers for school reform - high stakes accountability, technology, human capital solutions, and ad-hoc policies - named "wrong" because they do not produce the desired outcomes of improved learning for all students. There is increased agreement about the need to shift toward the right drivers - capacity building, pedagogy, social capital solutions, and system coherence - "right," because they are proven to produce the intended outcomes.
>
> -   Michael Fullan, 2015

Slide 6

Slide 7

California Department of Education
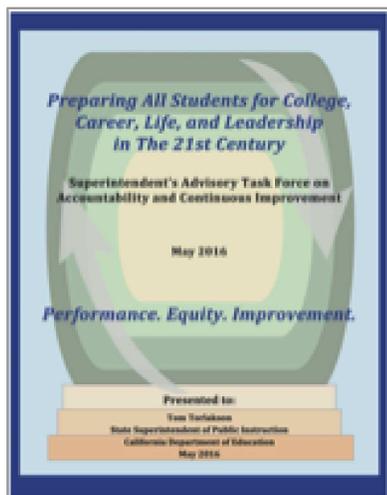
Review the information from the CDE:

What questions do you have?
What is your understanding of continuous improvement?

Slide 8

The "Golden Circle"

Slide 9

Slide 10

Slide 11

Slide 12

Slide 13

Slide 14

Slide 15

State Priorities

Conditions of Learning	1. Basic Services 2. Implementation of State Standards 7. Course Access
Pupil Outcomes	4. Student Achievement 8. Other Student Outcomes
Engagement	3. Parent Involvement 5. Student Engagement 6. School Climate
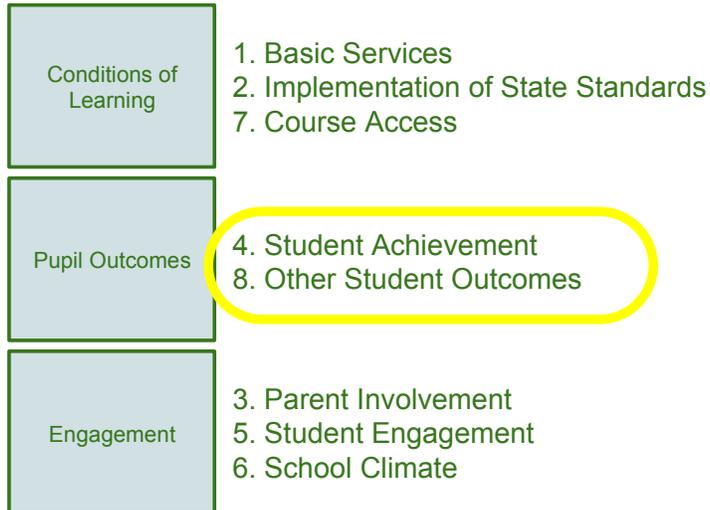
Slide 16

Student Achievement

What are we *required* to measure?

What do we *choose* to measure?

Slide 17

Required Metrics

- Performance on Standardized Tests (CAASPP)
- Percent of ELs who are reclassified
- Percent of ELs making progress
- Percent who are "College and Career Ready" (a-g)
- Percent of students with AP score of 3 or higher
- Percent of students passing the EAP

Slide 18

A N A L Y Z E :

What approaches and tools do you use to analyze this data?

What does your data say?
- Are there patterns?
- Do you notice any correlations?
- Can you identify any causal links?
- Do your subgroups show the same patterns?
- Is there any identifiable gaps in achievement?

Slide 19

R E S P O N D :

What approaches and tools do you use to respond to this data?

What instructional and/or programmatic responses are you considering?

Slide 20

C O M M U N I C A T E :

How do we communicate student achievement and progress toward reaching our goals with our stakeholders?

Do you have tools to share?

Slide 21

What implications does this have for your
Local Control Accountability Plan?

Slide 22

Using Data with Michael Fullan

Slide 23

O T H E R   M E T R I C S :

What do you elect to measure with regards to student achievement?

Some examples might include:
● Benchmark Data
● Grades
● Early Indicators

Slide 24

O T H E R   M E T R I C S :

Why did you choose these things to measure?

What does it communicate as being important to you?

How do you respond to what these metrics tell you?

Is everything you consider important monitored?

Slide 25

"No amount of *external* accountability
can make up for a lack of *internal* accountability."

This is responsibility.

Slide 26

LEARNING & LEADERSHIP FORUM

LCAP: Your Plan. Your Journey.

Small Schools Professional Learning Network Meeting

Agenda: January 10, 2017   9:00 am – 10:30 am

Purpose:
- To build capacity of leaders as instructional leaders
- To increase leader knowledge about changing educational reforms and the new accountability system

Learning Outcome:
- Reflect on the data and plan for student achievement – LCAP Section 2

Participants Bring:
- Data pertaining to student achievement

9:00   Coffee and Chatter

9:20   Welcome
             Establish Norms
             Share your "Golden Circle" (from November's LLF)

9:45   Student Achievement Data Collection, Analysis, Response, and
             Communication
             Guiding Questions:
             - *What data are you collecting to tell the story of student achievement at your school?*
             - *How have you analyzed this data? With whom?*
             - *What is your plan for responding to the data?*
             - *How do you plan to communicate this to stakeholders?*

10:20   Next Steps
             Needs for next session or further discussion at breakfast
             Collect Quick Writes

Small Schools Professional Learning Network Breakfast

Date: January 2018   7:00 am – 8:00 am
Location: TBD
Learning Outcome:
Reflect on your data and plan for student achievement – LCAP Section 2

Informal discussion:
Come with your own topics to discuss and questions to ask so we can continue to support each other as instructional leaders.

Learning and Leadership Forum Session 2 – January 19, 2018

Learning Outcomes:
- Identify lagging and leading indicators found in the data used at your site and plan for new ways of using the data as needed – LCAP Section 2
- Share surveys you use for culture and climate at your school – LCAP Section 2

Participants Bring:
- Data pertaining to school culture and climate

Detailed Agenda and Trainer Notes:

Time	Slide #	Notes
8:30	1-5	Welcome Review agenda Remind of purpose with "Golden Circle"
8:35	6-8	Discussion on slide 6 – Teams discuss their response to these questions, which will be repeated at every session Remind participants of the goals for our forum. Engage participants across teams to share what they have been up to since our last meeting – prompt on slide 8
8:50	9-13	Briefly show the 8 state priorities Emphasize focus for today as priorities 5 & 6 – Student Engagement and School Climate Slide 11 – Quick question with a partner What are the metrics we will use to measure these priorities? – Slides 12 & 13
8:55	14-16	Share information about Dropout indicators Lagging and Leading indicators discussion with table groups – Slide 16 View video "Omarina's Story" connected to Balfanz research – link to video is on the slide Discuss how this resonates with you and your students?
9:30	17-20	Early Warning Signs – Leading indicators Task: Student profile cards With table groups, participants read the cards and discuss how their district responds and how it is written in their LCAP plan (or could be written). Reminder of the need to analyze, respond, communicate to data. Open up to discussion to share any tools they use.
BREAK		
10:30	21-27	Culture and climate Connecting Bloom's Taxonomy and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Share Horacio Sanchez's work with brain research and closing the achievement gap

		Task: Quote Mingle Participants each take a quote card to read with a partner. They stand up and find a partner. Take turns reading the quote to a partner and share how it resonates with them. Trade cards and find a new partner.
10:50	28-31	Slide 30 – Discuss in teams the guiding questions on the slide Surveys – discuss as per questions on slides 32-33 (first in leadership teams then share out)
11:20	32-33	Team time to remember the importance of analyze, respond, and communicate. Discuss the metrics they are using and why they are using them with their team
11:55	34	Wrap up today's session Participants fill out the evaluation form electronically

Student Profile Cards for Session 2

John spends a lot of time in the office due to chronic misbehavior. He has a history of disruptive behavior since kindergarten that has accelerated into destructive behavior.	Angel has been in the nurse's office often, usually around break times. He complains of not feeling well, but no other symptoms - such as fever - are present. His parent has shared that he tries to find excuses not to go to school daily.
Gloria is often seen alone on the school grounds. She eats lunch alone and will often spend break times alone in walkways or in sitting areas. She has never participated in any school events such as game nights, carnivals, celebrations, etc.	Nicolas has a history of chronic absenteeism that dates back to kindergarten. He has been in foster care for the last 3 years. He continues to miss a day or two of school each month. His progress academically is low.
Mary participates in school activities and	Chloe is a quiet student and struggles

attends school regularly. She receives high marks for behavior; however, she is failing 3 of her courses - English, Math, and Science. She has attended 5 different schools in the past 3 years.	academically. She is often referred to as a "model" student with regard to her behavior. While often on-task, she does not engage in active learning with peers.
Christian often wears the same clothes every day and can be seen fixing his worn out shoes and laces with tape and yarn. He arrives to school early for breakfast and is often the last one picked up from the after-school program.	Susan was born in the U.S. and has attended the same school since kindergarten. The family at home does not speak English. She has been identified as a long-term English learner and has made little progress in the past 3 years.
Caleb has an IEP and moved from an SDC to mainstream with RSP support last year due to identifiable growth toward his IEP goals. Now his assessments show a decrease in scores for ELA and a plateu in mathematics.	Helen attends school regularly but does not turn in her class work or homework. As a result of not completing the course work for credit, she has a GPA of 1.2.

Quote Mingle Cards for Session 2

Students with the growth mindset continued to show the same high level of interest even when they found the work very challenging … challenge and interest went hand in hand. (p. 23)

From Dweck, C., Mindset: The New Psychology of Success

Great teachers set high standards for all their students, not just the ones who are already achieving … Yet [they also] establish … an atmosphere of genuine affection and concern. (p. 196)

From Dweck, C., Mindset: The New Psychology of Success

People's ideas about risk and effort grow out of their more basic mindset. It's not just that some people happen to recognize the value of challenging themselves and the importance of effort. Our research has shown that this comes directly from the growth mindset. When we teach people the growth mindset, with its focus on development, these ideas about challenge and effort follow. (p. 10)

From Dweck, C., Mindset: The New Psychology of Success

School cultures in which students submit to learning, and to the threats of punishment for not learning, generate students who want to be finished with learning when they graduate.

From Barth, R., The Culture Builder

The vision is, first, that the school will be a community, a place full of adults and youngsters who care about, look after, and root for one another and who work together for the good of the whole, in times of need and times of celebration. Every member of a community holds some responsibility for the welfare of every other and for the welfare of the community as a whole.

From Barth, R., The Culture Builder

When we come to believe that our schools should be providing a school culture that creates and sustains a community of student and adult learning--that this is the trellis of our profession--then we will organize our schools, classrooms, and learning experiences differently. Show me a school where instructional leaders constantly examine the school's culture and work to transform it into one hospitable to sustained human learning, and I'll show you students who do just fine on those standardized tests.

From Barth, R., The Culture Builder

Noncognitive factors such as motivation, time management, and self-regulation are critical for later life outcomes, including success in the labor market. Recent research on noncognitive factors has not only suggested their importance for student academic performance but has also been used to argue that social investments in the development of these noncognitive factors would yield high payoffs in improved educational outcomes as well as reduced racial/ethnic and gender disparities in school performance and educational attainment.

From Farrington, C.A., Roderick, M., Allensworth, E., et. al, Teaching Adolescents to Become Learners: The Role of Non-Cognitive Factors in Shaping School Performance

Evidence increasingly suggests that college and career readiness is driven by more than just content knowledge and core academic skills—that noncognitive factors play a key role in student success.

From Farrington, C.A., Roderick, M., Allensworth, E., et. al, Teaching Adolescents to Become Learners: The Role of Non-Cognitive Factors in Shaping School Performance

It can be as important to change people's ... interpretations of the social world and their place in it—as it is to change the objective environment. (Wilson, 2006, p. 1252, as seen in Farrington)

From Farrington, C.A., Roderick, M., Allensworth, E., et. al, Teaching Adolescents to Become Learners: The Role of Non-Cognitive Factors in Shaping School Performance

"To the student who does not believe in himself or herself, it is the belief of the teacher that initially motivates the courage to attempt the work and face possible failure again."

From Sanchez, H., A Brain-Based Approach to Closing the Achievement Gap

"Relationship is nature's natural regulator for stress... Several studies found that students consistently performed at a higher level in classes in which they perceived a positive relationship with the teacher (citations in the book). It is interesting to note that the findings were consistent across subject matter, even if the subject was not one that the student had traditionally done well in."

From Sanchez, H., A Brain-Based Approach to Closing the Achievement Gap

Belief is not just the motivator of behavior; it is the unspoken communication between teacher and pupil.

From Sanchez, H., A Brain-Based Approach to Closing the Achievement Gap

"Schools must consider creating positive climates before attempting to implement a behavioral modification program."

"Effective programs cannot survive in difficult school climates."

From Sanchez, H., A Brain-Based Approach to Closing the Achievement Gap

"Teachers should focus their initial attention on teaching the behaviors they want and creating an atmosphere in which students are motivated to adhere to desired classroom practices"

From Sanchez, H., A Brain-Based Approach to Closing the Achievement Gap

Learning and Leadership Forum Session 2 Presentation Slides
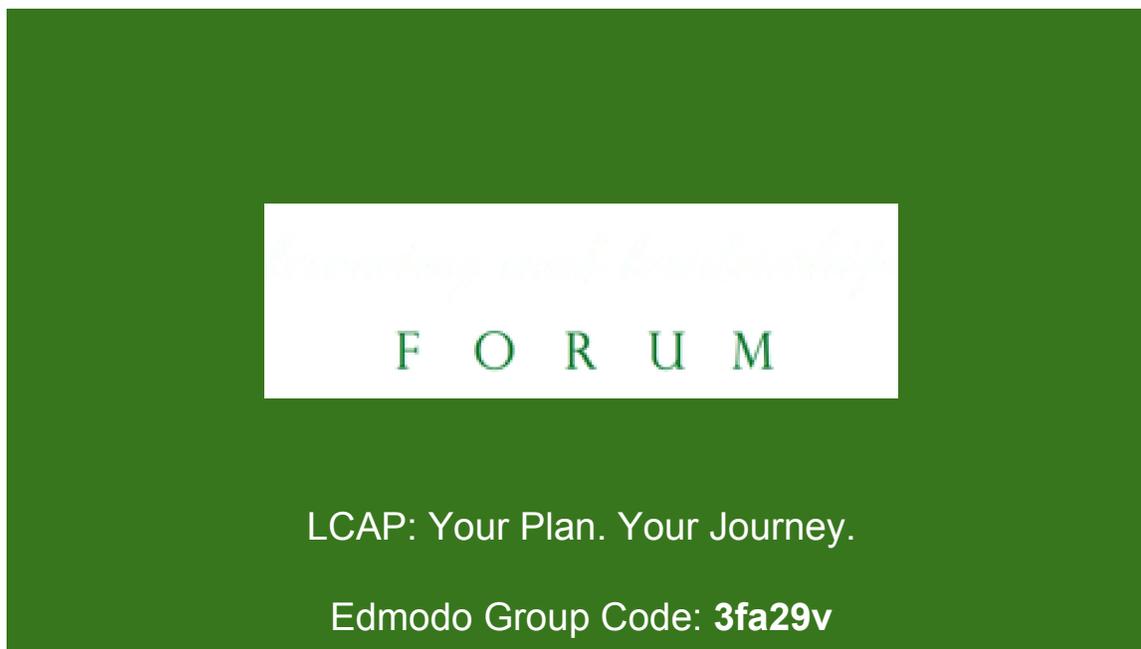
Slide 1

Slide 2

today's agenda

1	Review our purpose
2	Student Engagement and School Climate (State Priorities 5 & 6)
3	Predictors of Success
4	Culture & Climate
5	Share tools and resources

Slide 3

Slide 4

Slide 5

Slide 6

Slide 7

Goals

build a common language

dialogue & collaboration

share tools and strategies

make our systems deliver for our students

Slide 8

WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO?

Share something you've done since our last meeting?

FORUM

Slide 9

Slide 10

Slide 11

D I S C U S S :

Why are climate and engagement called out as priorities by the state?

Slide 12

Student Engagement & School Climate

What are we *required* to measure?

What do we *choose* to measure?

Slide 13

Required Metrics

Student Engagement
- School attendance rates
- Chronic absenteeism
- Middle school dropout rates
- High school dropout rates
- High school graduation rates

School Climate:
- Student suspension rates
- Student expulsion rates
- other measures

Slide 14

DROPOUT

Imagine if there were some way of knowing who this child is, early enough for us to do something about it...

Slide 15

<div style="background-color:green; color:white; padding:20px;">

D I S C U S S :

Lagging indicators are typically "output" oriented, easy to measure but hard to improve or influence.

Leading indicators are typically input oriented, hard to measure and easy to influence.

In the case of culture and climate, what are our "lagging" and "leading" indicators? Put another way, which metrics are summative, and which are formative?

</div>

Slide 16

Omarina's Story

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/education/dropout-nation/middle-school-moment/

Slide 17

Early Warning Signs

A ttendance

B ehavior

C ourse Performance

On Track for Success

Slide 18

C O N S I D E R

If a child misses more than 10 days in Kindergarten...

Knowing this, how should we respond?

Slide 19

T A S K :

Examine the descriptions of the children on the cards.

How does your district respond? What does your LCAP say?

Slide 20

A N A L Y Z E :

What approaches and tools do you use to analyze this data?

R E S P O N D :

What approaches and tools do you use to respond to this data?

C O M M U N I C A T E :

How do we communicate our efforts with our stakeholders?

Slide 21

Slide 22

Slide 23

Slide 24

Slide 25

Slide 26

Slide 27

Slide 28

Slide 29

Slide 30

Slide 31

C O N N E C T E D N E S S :

What types of things are on your survey?

What questions SHOULD we be asking?

Slide 32

A N A L Y Z E :
What approaches and tools do you use to analyze this data?

R E S P O N D :
What approaches and tools do you use to respond to this data?

C O M M U N I C A T E :
How do we communicate our efforts with our stakeholders?

Slide 33

OTHER METRICS:

Why did you choose these things to measure?

What does it communicate as being important to you?

How do you respond to what these metrics tell you?

Is everything you consider important monitored?

Slide 34

LEARNING & LEADERSHIP FORUM

LCAP: Your Plan. Your Journey.

Small Schools Professional Learning Network Meeting

Agenda: February 2018   9:00 am – 10:30 am

Purpose:
- To build capacity of leaders as instructional leaders
- To increase leader knowledge about changing educational reforms and the new accountability system

Learning Outcome:
- Reflect on the data and plan for school culture and climate – LCAP Section 2

Participants Bring:
- Data pertaining to school culture and climate

9:00	Coffee and Chatter Welcome Review Norms

9:15	Student Engagement Data Collection, Analysis, Response, and Communication
	Guiding Questions:
	    • *What leading indicators are you using for student engagement?*
	    • *How have you analyzed this data? With whom?*
	    • *What is your plan for responding to the data?*
	    • *How do you plan to communicate this to stakeholders?*

10:20	Next Steps Needs for next session or further discussion at breakfast Collect Quick Writes

Small Schools Professional Learning Network Breakfast

Date: February 2018   7:00 am – 8:00 am
Location: TBD

Learning Outcome:
- Reflect on the data and plan for school culture and climate – LCAP Section 2

Informal discussion:
Come with your own topics to discuss and questions to ask so we can continue to support each other as instructional leaders.

Learning and Leadership Forum Session 3 – March 2, 2018
Learning Outcomes:
- Identify data used to measure the implementation of standards beyond pupil outcomes from test scores and plan for new ways as needed – LCAP Section 2

Participants Bring:
- Data pertaining to implementation of standards

Detailed Agenda and Trainer Notes:

Time	Slide #	Notes
8:30	1-8	Welcome and Introductions Reviewing our purpose and goals Open to discussion about what everyone has been up to since our last session
9:00	9-11	Today's focus – "conditions of learning" highlighting implementation of state standards Discussion about what that means
9:20	12-13	View Michael Fullan video through 2 lenses. With a partner, one view through the lens of a student, the other view through the lens of the teacher. Link is: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ysURrEovM5Q Discussion about the conditions of learning from both perspectives. View the "Accelerated Learning Framework" used at the Park Manor School just observed. Allow teams to discuss what their framework may look like.
BREAK		
10:10	14-18	Point out the Executive Summary to the newly adopted ELA/ELD Framework. View the PowToon video regarding the new ELD standards. Link is: https://vimeo.com/151548811 Discussion guided by prompts on slide 16 Point out the Digital Chalkboard resources available from the state of California. View a segment with leaders discussing how they ensure implementation of the ELA/ELD standards at their school. The link is secured through the Digital Chalkboard and requires an account to access.
10:30	19-26	Point out the Mathematics Framework and the executive summary available. Explore the guiding principles for mathematics, mathematics teaching practices, and the Common Core's Standards for Mathematical Practice.

		Task: Card Sort – Productive vs. Unproductive Beliefs Partners work together to sort the cards into the 2 columns they feel it belongs: Productive Beliefs or Unproductive Beliefs. Discussion regarding mathematics mindsets.
10:50	27-28	Point out the Digital Chalkboard resources available from the state of California. View a segment with leaders discussing how they ensure implementation of the mathematics standards at their school. The link is secured through the Digital Chalkboard and requires an account to access.
11:05	29-33	Show the framework for mathematics which includes • Overarching Themes • Supportive Conditions • Imperatives for Knowledge • Imperatives for Instruction and Assessment • Imperatives for Systemic Change Also included are the things that are givens in our world – tests, standards, etc. Also includes the shared productive culture. Slides take each piece at a time to explore and discuss
11:25	34-35	Time for leadership teams to consider their own framework for learning.
11:55	36	Wrap up and invitation to complete feedback form electronically

Beliefs about teaching and learning mathematics	
Unproductive beliefs	**Productive beliefs**
Mathematics learning should focus on practicing procedures and memorizing basic number combinations.	Mathematics learning should focus on developing understanding of concepts and procedures through problem solving, reasoning, and discourse.
Students need only to learn and use the same standard computational algorithms and the same prescribed methods to solve algebraic problems.	All students need to have a range of strategies and approaches from which to choose in solving problems, including, but not limited to, general methods, standard algorithms, and procedures.
Students can learn to apply mathematics only after they have mastered the basic skills.	Students can learn mathematics through exploring and solving contextual and mathematical problems.
The role of the teacher is to tell students exactly what definitions, formulas, and rules they should know and demonstrate how to use this information to solve mathematics problems.	The role of the teacher is to engage students in tasks that promote reasoning and problem solving and facilitate discourse that moves students toward shared understanding of mathematics.
The role of the student is to memorize information that is presented and then use it to solve routine problems on homework, quizzes, and tests.	The role of the student is to be actively involved in making sense of mathematics tasks by using varied strategies and representations, justifying solutions, making connections to prior knowledge or familiar contexts and experiences, and considering the reasoning of others.
An effective teacher makes the mathematics easy for students by guiding them step by step through problem solving to ensure that they are not frustrated or confused.	An effective teacher provides students with appropriate challenge, encourages perseverance in solving problems, and supports productive struggle in learning mathematics.

Learning and Leadership Forum Session 3 Presentation Slides
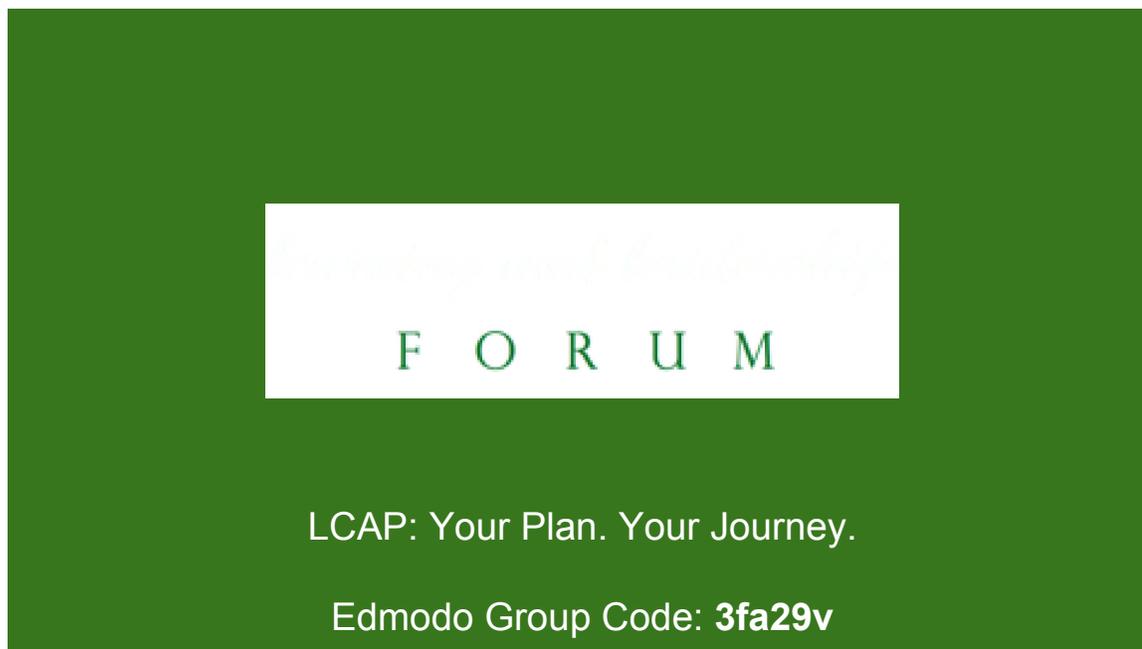
Slide 1

LCAP: Your Plan. Your Journey.

Edmodo Group Code: **3fa29v**

Slide 2

today's agenda

1	Review our purpose
2	Basic Services (State Priority 1)
3	Implementation of State Standards (State Priority 2)
4	Course Access (State Priority 7)
5	Share tools and resources

Slide 3

Slide 4

Slide 5

Slide 6

Slide 7

Goals

build a common language

dialogue & collaboration

share tools and strategies

make our systems deliver for our students

Slide 8

WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO?

Share something you've done since our last meeting?

FORUM

Slide 9

State Priorities

Conditions of Learning	1. Basic Services 2. Implementation of State Standards 7. Course Access
Pupil Outcomes	4. Student Achievement 8. Other Student Outcomes
Engagement	3. Parent Involvement 5. Student Engagement 6. School Climate

Slide 10

IMPLEMENTATION
OF
STATE STANDARDS

LCAP Priority 2

FORUM

Slide 11

Slide 12

Slide 13

Conditions of Learning

Accelerated
Learning
Framework

LCAP
Connections

How do we measure?

Programs & Applications
Technology Tools
Rich Learning Tasks
Exemplary Pedagogy
Critical Skills
Community of Learners
Learning Goals
Student
Success Criteria

Slide 14

ELA/ELD Framework

English Language Arts/
English Language
Development Framework
for California Public Schools
Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve

Contents

Slide 15

ELD

Slide 16

D I S C U S S :

How are you supporting the implementation of standards?
- Literacy across the content areas
- ELD in all content areas

What resources do you have or need?
- Library
- Curriculum
- Professional learning

Slide 17

Slide 18

Slide 19

Slide 20

Slide 21

Math

Slide 22

Math

Slide 23

Math

Standards for Mathematical Practice

1. Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.

2. Reason abstractly and quantitatively.

3. Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.

4. Model with mathematics.

5. Use appropriate tools strategically.

6. Attend to precision.

7. Look for and make use of structure.

8. Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.

Slide 24

Productive vs. Unproductive Beliefs

CARD SORT

Slide 25

Slide 26

Slide 27

Slide 28

Slide 29

Slide 30

Slide 31

Slide 32

Slide 33

What if...

Slide 34

Conditions of Learning

Accelerated
Learning
Framework

Further LCAP
Considerations

Slide 35

Measurement
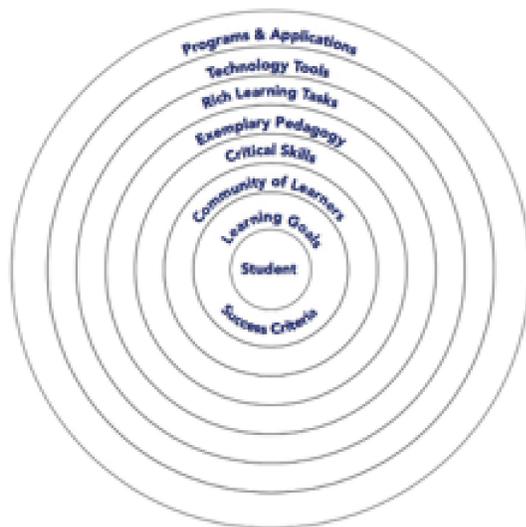
Slide 36

L E A R N I N G   &   L E A D E R S H I P
F O R U M

LCAP: Your Plan. Your Journey.

Small Schools Professional Learning Network Meeting

Agenda: March 2018   9:00 am – 10:30 am

Purpose:
- To build capacity of leaders as instructional leaders
- To increase leader knowledge about changing educational reforms and the new accountability system

Learning Outcome:
- Reflect on the data and plan for implementation of standards – LCAP Section 2

Participants Bring:
- Data pertaining to implementation of standards

9:00   Coffee and Chatter
              Welcome
              Review Norms

9:15   Implementation of Standards – The conditions of learning
              Guiding Questions:
              - *How are you measuring the implementation of standards?*
              - *How have you analyzed this data? With whom?*
              - *What is your plan for responding to the data?*
              - *How do you plan to communicate this to stakeholders?*

10:20   Next Steps
              Needs for next session or further discussion at breakfast
              Collect Quick Writes

Small Schools Professional Learning Network Breakfast

Date: March 2018   7:00 am – 8:00 am
Location: TBD

Learning Outcome:
- Reflect on the data and plan for implementation of standards – LCAP Section 2

Informal discussion:
Come with your own topics to discuss and questions to ask so we can continue to support each other as instructional leaders.

Learning and Leadership Forum Session 4 – April 27, 2018
Learning Outcomes:
- Share strategies for engaging parents in school – LCAP Section 2
- Use a rubric created by the PTA to assess your current parent engagement practices and plan for improvement where needed – LCAP Section 2

Participants Bring:
- Data pertaining to parent engagement

Detailed Agenda and Trainer Notes:

Time	Slide #	Notes
8:30	1-7	Welcome and Introductions Reviewing our purpose and goals Open to discussion about what everyone has been up to since our last session
9:00	8-12	Briefly show the state priorities Focus today is on parent involvement and how this can connect to school climate, which was discussed earlier in the year. Talk about statistic from John Hattie of the importance of parent involvement. Task: Talking Points – Teams of 4 work together to respond to one quote at a time. One person draws a quote, reads it aloud and follows instructions for round 1 – each person responds in the same fashion to that quote. Then they follow instructions for round 2 and finally round 3. Instructions for each round are on slide 12.
9:45	13-18	Discussion of Engagement vs. Involvement How do we reach families that are not involved with school? How do we use other families to reach out to those families?
BREAK		
10:30	19-23	Share the PTA resource on slide 19 – link is available on the slide. This is a rubric for parent engagement. Point out the "10 ways to use the guide" section Point out the 6 standards that PTA has for Family-School Partnerships Task: Instructions are on slide 22. Using 2 different colored highlighters. Participants highlight one color for similar actions they are doing. They use the other color to highlight actions they may like to consider. Share and discuss with table groups and then whole group.
11:10	24-25	Share the importance of identifying how parents are

		involved throughout the LCAP. Give time for groups to discuss where it is, what they are doing, and how they are doing it. Also to hear other ideas of how they might look at engaging parents.
11:45	26	Using a Google Doc. Participants will share what their next steps will be. Link to the doc is on slide 26.
11:55	27	Wrap up and invitation to complete feedback form electronically

Talking Points Quotes for Session 4

"Parents are really interested in activities and events that involve interaction with teachers," says Elena Lopez, associate director of the Harvard Family Research Project, a national platform for family and community engagement research. "Administrators need to think about how to integrate family engagement in all departments, so it's not just siloed in one office, but championed throughout the district."

"Schools should not just have random acts of family engagement, but really have family engagement as a core strategy that schools develop and support in order to achieve school goals," Lopez says.

"The goal is to professionalize how parents and teachers come together to map out the success of every child in the classroom, and to turn the tide on educators thinking they have to create festivals and dinners to attract families," Paredes says. "When parents are involved and have the right information and resources, they become critical in improving student achievement and transforming schools."

But Oscar Cruz, executive director of Families in Schools, said that too often schools have a "compliance-based" approach to parent involvement – such as simply getting parents to a meeting – without forging deeper relationships between parents and their child's school. "Moving from policy to implementation – that is where there is a huge gap," Cruz said.

Cruz's organization differentiates parent *involvement*, which it defines as actions parents take to support their child's education at home and at school, from parent *engagement,* which refers to what actions schools take to involve parents in their child's school and in decision-making there.

"In some districts, we see that administrators are using LCFF funds to expand parent engagement programs, add new services for foster youth, or improve school climate," a 2015 Education Trust-West report found.

Learning and Leadership Forum Session 4 Presentation Slides

Slide 1

LCAP: Your Plan. Your Journey.

Edmodo Group Code: **3fa29v**

Slide 2

today's agenda

1	Review our purpose
2	Parent Involvement (State Priority 3)
3	School Climate (State Priority 6)
4	Explore tools and resources
5	Share ideas, tools, and resources

Slide 3

Slide 4

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Slide 23

D I S C U S S :

What are you currently doing to involve parents?

What additional actions/ideas might you consider to deepen engagement of parents in your school?

Slide 24

Parent Engagement strategies should be embedded throughout the LCAP

"While parent engagement is specifically identified as one of the eight priority areas that all LCAPs must address, it is important to recognize that parent engagement is also a strategy that will enable school districts to achieve their goals in each of the other priority areas. As such, districts should be sure to embed parent engagement components throughout their entire LCAP plans."

~PTA National Standards from Family-School Partnerships Assessment Guide

Slide 25

Slide 26

Slide 27

LEARNING & LEADERSHIP FORUM

LCAP: Your Plan. Your Journey.

Small Schools Professional Learning Network Meeting

Agenda: May 2018   9:00 am – 10:30 am

Purpose:
- To build capacity of leaders as instructional leaders
- To increase leader knowledge about changing educational reforms and the new accountability system

Learning Outcome:
- Reflect on the data and plan for parent engagement – LCAP Section 2

Participants Bring:
- Data pertaining to parent engagement

9:00   Coffee and Chatter
             Welcome
             Review Norms

9:15   Parent Engagement
             Guiding Questions:
             - *What parental engagement activities or tasks are you currently doing?*
             - *How have you used the PTA Assessment Guide to plan for other activities and assess your current engagement system?*
             - *What is your going forward?*
             - *How do you plan to communicate this to stakeholders?*

10:20   Next Steps
             Needs for next session or further discussion at breakfast
             Collect Quick Writes

Small Schools Professional Learning Network Breakfast

Date: May 2018   7:00 am – 8:00 am
Location: TBD

Learning Outcome:
- Reflect on the data and plan for parent engagement LCAP Section 2

Informal discussion:
Come with your own topics to discuss and questions to ask so we can continue to support each other as instructional leaders.

Appendix B: Participant Communication Form

Systems of Support for Elementary Principals

You are invited to take part in a research study of support systems for elementary school principals. The purpose of this case study is to explore how systems of leadership support impact the work of principals at their school sites. If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:
1. Participate in an interview that will be recorded by the researcher for no more than 1 hour at a time and place is that is convenient for you.
2. You may also review the transcripts from the interview to ensure accuracy of your thoughts and provide clarification if needed.

* Required

WALDEN UNIVERSITY
A higher degree. A higher purpose.

1. **Are you interested in participating in this study?** *
   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ YES   *Skip to question 2.*
   ◯ NO   *Stop filling out this form.*

Participation Information

2. **Name** *

   ....

3. **Email Address** *

   ....

4. **Preferred phone number for researcher to contact you** *

   ....

5. **Would you be available during the week of May 9 for an interview?**
   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ YES   *Skip to question 6.*
   ◯ NO   *Skip to question 7.*

Week of May 9 Availability

The researcher will contact you to confirm a date and time for the interview. The information below will help with planning.

6. **Select which date and time frame(s) work best for you**

Mark only one oval per row.

	Morning, before lunch	Afternoon, after lunch	During lunch	Afterschool
May 9	◯	◯	◯	◯
May 10	◯	◯	◯	◯
May 11	◯	◯	◯	◯
May 12	◯	◯	◯	◯
May 13	◯	◯	◯	◯

Stop filling out this form.

Interview Availability

The researcher will contact you to confirm a date and time for the interview. The information below will help with planning.

7. **What would be a good date for an interview? ***

Example: December 15, 2012

8. **When would be a good time for an interview? ***

Example: 8:30 AM

Appendix C: Semistructured Interview Protocol

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR PRINCIPALS

Interviewee:_____ Interviewer:_____

Place/Setting:_____ Date:_____

Introductory Protocol:

To facilitate note taking, I would like to audio tape our conversation today. You previously signed a consent form. Do you have any questions about your participation in this research study or today's interview? I just want to reiterate that I am the only person who will have access to these tapes and the transcription of our conversation. I will be happy to provide a copy of the transcript to you if you so desire.

I have planned for this interview to last no longer than one hour. During this time, I have several questions to discuss. I value your participation, and it is important for me to respect your time. If it appears that we will run out of time, I may have to interrupt you in order to move forward with the questions so we can complete all the questions in this time frame.

Introduction:

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study by signing the consent form and meeting with me today. You have been selected to speak with me today because you have been identified as someone who can share a great deal about the system of support provided by your school district to help develop your skills as an instructional leader. This research project is designed to describe the system of support provided to you and other leaders in your school district in order to identify elements that could become part of other systems of support in other organizations. Your input will help to describe this system as you provide your perceptions of different elements and how they have impacted your practice. This study is not intended to evaluate any individual's skills or strategies of practice. Instead, I am trying to learn more about what supports leaders and what does not support leaders as they work to improve student learning at their school site. I will be recording today's interview to assist with transcription later. Once the transcription is complete, I will share it with you to ensure that your responses are accurately noted for analysis.

A. Interviewee Background

Question	Response	Notes
How long have you been… -In your present position? -In this school district? • Prior to this position, what was your role?		
Could you describe the kind of preparation program you were or currently are a part of for your Administrative credential? **Probe:** • Online, local university, internship		
What motivates you to learn and apply new learning in your work? **Probe:** Why do you do what you do?		

B. Systems Perspective

Question	Response	Notes
How would you describe the system of support for school-site leaders used in this school district? **Probe:** What activities or structures are used with all leaders? Is it working or not? Purpose, development, leadership, strategies		

Does the system provide support for your unique needs? **Probe:** Differentiation? Coach/mentor? Professional growth plan?		
What impact have you noticed within the learning community of principals? **Probe:** • Positive or negative • Accomplishments • Challenges • Lessons learned Networks developed beyond the learning community		
How do you know that your leadership practices are successful? **Probe:** Measures of success? Rubric? Evaluation and feedback?		

Conclusion:

I would like to thank you for taking the time to speak with me today and provide more insight into the system of support for your school district. Once a transcript of this interview is available, I will contact you to provide you with a confidential copy so you have the opportunity to review. Before we wrap up, do you have any questions or other comments?

Appendix D: Unstructured Interview Notes

NOTES FOR UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEW WITH DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR

Objectives:
- Provide a timeline of development – evolution of the system of support
- Brainstorm a list of possible documentation that could be useful in describing the system of support
  - Job description of those who coordinate the system of support
  - Professional growth plans
  - Calendars, agendas
  - Flow chart of system's structure
  - List of resources used to support principals
  - Measures of success – evaluation instruments for principals and/or those supporting the system
  - Feedback, survey results, etc.
- List the key elements of the system as found in documentation or through discussion
- List the resources and research used in development

Open-ended discussion questions:
- Tell me about yourself and your role in the district.
- Describe your district's system to support principals to build their instructional leadership skills and knowledge.
- What questions would you want answered through this case study?

Other Optional Questions:
- When did your district begin developing and implementing a structured system of support for school-site leaders?
- Is there a particular curriculum used for the professional development with leaders?
- Do you have any protocols and/or agendas used for the work with leaders?
- How do you differentiate support for leaders?
- Who plans and leads the system of support?
- How would you describe the collaboration in your district? (include principals, district personnel, and other partners – university, consulting, etc.)

Appendix E: Documentation Log

1. How does the Filigree School District provide professional development plans to support principals in building knowledge and strengthening their instructional leadership skills?			
Agendas	Meeting Minutes	Sample PD Plans	Other

2. How does the Filigree School District provide principals with coaching and mentoring to support principals in building knowledge and strengthening their instructional leadership skills?			
Job Descriptions	Protocols	Coach/Mentor Logs	Other

3. How does the Filigree School District structure their principals' network to support principal learning and collaboration?			
Calendars	Schedules	Agendas	Other

4. How do principals in the Filigree School District perceive their district's system of support?			
Feedback Forms	Other		

Appendix F: Data Collection Log

Type of Data Sample (Interview, Document)	Date/Time Location if applicable	Participant	Comments	Location of data Include file folder name

Appendix G: Transcript Samples of Principal Participants

Interview Question #1. How would you describe the system of support for school-site leaders used in this district?

Participant	Response Excerpt
Principal 1	One thing that … I'd probably say, it's now 5 or 6 years that we've been using our AALT [academic achievement leadership teams]. I guess as far as the most demographically similar sites. They're their own PLC, so they don't … they don't want it to have schools that look nothing alike, trying to solve each of their site problems and learning from each other when we don't look the same, as far as our demographics. That's where they matched up, I think, very well the sites that look demographically similar. We have our AIM and our LT meetings, again, more acronyms that … Administrator information meeting, and then we also have our Administrator PLCs once a month. Each of those serve different purposes.
Principal 2	Okay, systems of support. I think it starts before you actually become an Administrator. Something that I noticed when I was in the classroom was there is these patterns of how you became an Administrator, and it was usually you would become a coach and then a VP at a school. You would really learn the systems and then you ultimately got your school. I knew that's the path I wanted and I knew our middle school. I mean you would just see the middle school. You would see CSP [Curriculum Support Provider], VP [Vice Principal], and then I thought that's where I want to be. I knew there was some support and I knew it was a lot about relationships and who do you know and what can you learn from them.
Principal 3	Well, currently the system of support is through our PLCs. I mean obviously our PLCs play a big part in where our district has gone, in our success. I mean, PLCs apply to every type of occupation we have within our district. For the administrators we have our SAALT team. Which is a PLC. You know, we are grouped by some characteristics of schools, you know, they group us and we share. We share about every 4-6 weeks, we'll visit each other's campus. The format has changed. We used to go in and do observations, and then sit down and reflect on what were our practices we identifying. Last year or two, it's been sitting down and just talking in general about some of the practical things that go on. Some of the experiences we share. That's been our vehicle the last 3-5 years, I'd say, where we are grouped together and we just talk and experience.
Principal 4	We're a PLC district, a professional learning community district. So number one right off the bat, that is one of our initiatives that started 8-10 years ago through EDI. Way before Common Core, we have always been a district where we pull together teams and we collaborate and we look at both collective data and we look at individual data in order to work through curriculum, instruction, lessons. We're very data-driven and

the only way we could possibly do that is if we come together as a team. That collaborative culture is right off the bat set in place.

Interview Question #2. How does the system provide support for your unique needs?

Participant	Response Excerpt
Principal 1	I would say by, giving us that autonomy to go out and innovate and try things. Quite frankly, our district-office bosses, so to speak, have been off their school sites, I want to say the most recent … the newest of them, probably hasn't been on a school site in 4 going on 5 years. I think the fact that they understand that as far as the expert in the fields are their site leaders, as far as where their teachers are at, what they can handle.
Principal 2	I think we have formal meetings and so forth. We have our Administrator PLC where VPs, everybody attends. Then you have other meetings where it's just for the leaders. Then because our district is huge on relationships, and I can honestly say that I can call any principal right now. If I had a need, they would just give me the time and talk to me. It's built on a really positive … I don't know how to explain it. It's competitive, but I don't feel that in a negative way. When another school is doing well, you celebrate them and so forth. You have actually built relationships with all of these people where you sit at meetings with them, you've learned with them, you've had experiences with them. There's a lot of reaching out. One of the principals at Lincoln, I call on him a lot. We have some similarities, some differences.
	I've called them about all kinds of different things and he always answers very professional, just he coaches me, "well, what do you think? Think about this. What are some other things?" I feel like those were some of the things that are there. I feel like anybody that's higher than me, I can call on and they've been at a similar situation, they've been a principal, they've had a school, they've had some of the same issues, so that's helpful, and even with the other principals. In the end, they are all dealing with teachers and parents and students. It's a same concern, same challenges. Our kids look a little bit different, but everybody is trying to get to the same end result.
Principal 3	Well, our EL coordinator here and my leadership team here, we work a lot, very closely with the district-level leadership as far as language development. And so there are about four schools that are looked upon as sister schools. I mean, three other schools, we're the fourth. Our district is well aware that overall our language development is important, you know at every school site, at every level, but our emphasis is placed on making sure that we are up to speed as far as ELD training. Had training this past year on language development, designated, integrated time. So the district is aware, and that training was not just for the four

	schools, it was for all the schools. Every school has language development needs. They met or assisted us in helping support students.
Principal 4	I think they make that extra effort. It really comes down to the one-on-one. Every site is different, even right down to the teaching team. I think they keep a pulse on the teams by really developing those relationships with us. For example, I'm an overcrowded school and I'm building a brand-new wing. Well, we're heavily delayed, and that wing isn't going to be ready for next year. I had to make a very difficult decision and send another grade level to another school site. No other school has had to do that, and that wasn't a very popular place to be with my community, especially since I'm sending little guys. I'm sending first grade because of the logistics, there's a whole long story about that, but I ended up making a tough decision. That's where that AALT team comes in. They make sure I'm cocooned by not other new principals but very much veteran principals. I have an area superintendent who is also my mentor. He's basically there for us 24/7, and if he needs to come, he comes. The mentor comes through two … The district provides those opportunities, but also the county and the district assigning me somebody. They make sure there's a wide range.

Interview Question #3. What impact have you noticed within the learning community of principals?

Participant	Response Excerpt
Principal 1	I would probably say as far as moving principals, is with more around the math and common and the high-leverage team actions. I'd probably say this is the third year, I would say that, that's been a district focus. When they put in a district focus, and if they're going to send us to Davis or Long Beach, that's pretty much a … "I should probably remember this;" it's not for the sake of whatever. We get a lot of visitors from all over the state. Just hearing their questions and their need for answers around certain things, it really allows you to see like, wow, there's … our brothers and sisters out across the state… as far as like the infancy stages of even just PLCs, things that been around at least, for us for like 10 years. Things that we're so deep in it, that we just figure this is just how it is everywhere. Where it's not always like that, and so that's where I think, what the district's philosophy is, we're not going to go send you out to go … we have the answers right here in this room, so let's see what we can do around this, try it out, learn from making mistakes and that motto of just getting better at getting better has been something that's really helping.
Principal 2	I would say tremendously because you don't have all the answers. If it was just you by yourself, you would just keep doing the same thing over

	and over. I think sharing best practices, we always do that. Then you know that people go out and try it. They give you feedback. You notice all the good things that people are doing. Whenever we go like in our SAALT team to go visit a school and you're just impressed by the work that they're doing, I think I would say all of our principals, we're just very positive with each other. When I go to a school, I never think oh of course they can do this because it's these kids. It's always like, "this is amazing work, I'm proud of them. I want to take some of that stuff back to our site. Yeah, we're seeing the same problems. Yes, some of my teachers are doing some of this stuff too."
Principal 3	And, it's changed a lot. Now, even those who are not yet administrators, but are CSPs or want to be CSPs, want to break into the upper ranks, are pretty well versed. They understand all the components, the conceptual components of being an administrator. I think the only thing that might be lacking is the practical experience of working in school sites. The stresses that come, being at a high-school level, for a few years like I was, out of elementary, and that was a big learning experience for me in the mid-90s. I would think that's the only thing that still in progress, I would say is that. Knowing the nuts and bolts of being a principal during the day, what you do. As far as the others, we have a lot of people that are very knowledgeable.
Principal 4	It's interesting that they still have some of the same questions I have. Things I struggle with as a new principal are some of the very same things they're still struggling with. I think Common Core and the way we handle curriculum in the Common Core has been a question. How we deal with formative assessment and benchmark throughout the district, those have been common topics that we're all in a learning curve with. I'm coming in at a time where everybody has the same questions, so whether I'm new or not, I think long-term principals feel like … I heard a lot, "we feel like first-time principals because we haven't had to deal with this. We haven't had these kinds of questions."

Question #4. How do you know that your leadership practices are successful?

Participant	Response Excerpt
Principal 1	That's the thing too, is that … I do get evaluated every year and a lot of the … they're always good, which is good, but if they weren't, a lot of it would be, "how do you know? You're not around enough to see all the things that we do or this or that. Or to get defensive around a certain … we don't really wait for that to be our driver. For me, it's more of the expectations that I set with … even on my to-do list up there on the … that's more of the check-ins with myself and my CSP. We schedule in those, take a step back, and reflect on how our systems are doing. It's real easy to intend to, and then next thing you know, 3 months have flown by,

	and you have accomplished nothing. It's just because with the grind of things, days turn into weeks, weeks turn into months, and next thing you know, you look up and it's May and you haven't done any of the things that you said you were going to do, or those goals for the year.
Principal 2	Of the system. When we do our summits, when we present, you have to present the data, and sometimes the questions are posed in a way that you do have to look at certain things and certain indicators. Yes, it gets down to the data, but even this year, we looked at a lot of the data. Then at one point, it was so much that it's like, "you know what, just what are you doing different from last year? What worked? What doesn't work?" Just some point. I think even when I speak to some of my mentors, it's not just where I wanted to take the conversation. Sometimes they have leading questions too, so then it makes you go a different way. Let me see. I'm trying to think how else would I know if my leadership is working and when have I known it's not working.
Principal 3	I think the reception you get from staff, they feel empowered to do their job. One thing I've learned from the first 20 years to now is that I've less control. Before, it was, "you just do it this way." And I realized over the years that you've got to let people, give them support but get out the way. And so, when I see the teachers, the staff members are empowered to do their job, then I know that I'm doing a good job. When I hear from parents that they feel good about their campus, whether it's the school I had been a part of those 10 years or this school, then I know that I'm doing my job. Can't make everybody happy, but I think that... And I don't survey my teachers all the time, but I think that they feel that I have their back.
Principal 4	You have to look at your … I would have to go back to what were my goals at the beginning of the year. I did have some goals set out, and how were those measurable. One of the goals I shared with you in the beginning was to really sit back …This year for me was I wanted to get a layout of the land. So how do I measure that? It's been a year, and I look at now minutes, agendas, the way conversations go. I very much look at feedback and really what they're saying to my leaders above me. What feedback my superintendents are giving me and what they're saying thank you for, or what they notice, or even listening to my community and hearing from my PTA. That's how I know they're pleased with the changes.