2019

Characteristics of Successful Elementary Principals as Instructional Leaders

Phonecia Wilson
Walden University

Walden University

College of Education

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Phonecia Wilson

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee

Dr. Jerry Collins, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty
Dr. Joel Goodin, Committee Member, Education Faculty
Dr. Karen Hunt, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

The Office of the Provost

Walden University

2019

Abstract

Characteristics of Successful Elementary Principals as Instructional Leaders

by

Phonecia Wilson

Ed. S, University of West Georgia, 2008

MA, Mississippi State University, 1997

BA, Mississippi State University, 1994

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

October 2019

Abstract

The problem addressed in this study was the lack of consistency of implementation of instructional leadership practices by elementary principals. Little research existed at the time of this study to inform current practitioners about specific instructional leadership practices that positively effect student growth based on the perceptions of successful practitioner. The purpose of this study was to describe specific instructional leadership behaviors perceived by elementary school principals to have a positive effect on student growth and to describe the contextual factors that affect the different levels of implementation of these behaviors. The conceptual framework for this study was instructional leadership. The research questions were created to collect data that described specific instructional leadership practices as well as contextual factors that positively affect student growth and influence the different levels of implementation of instructional leadership practices. Using qualitative case study design, data were collected from a sample of 16 elementary principals serving students in 1 school district in a southeastern state identified by student consistent performance on the Progress and School Climate components of the College and Career Readiness Performance Index. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews. Coding and thematic analysis were used to analyze interview data. Key themes included an emphasis on data driven decision making, the importance of a clearly defined mission and a positive school climate. This research may contribute to positive social change as consistent implementation of the specific instructional leadership practices identified in this study could have a positive effect on student growth and learning in elementary schools.

Characteristics of Successful Elementary Principals as Instructional Leaders

by

Phonecia Wilson

EdS, University of West Georgia, 2008

MA, Mississippi State University, 1997

BA, Mississippi State University, 1994

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

October 2019

Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to my mother, Maxine Whitcomb, who passed away in the middle of my academic program at Walden University. She was my biggest fan and knew I could be an accomplished educator even on days when I had doubts. I miss her every day. This study is also dedicated to my husband, Kinley, and our two children, Shauna, and William, who have been so patient with me while I spent countless hours just trying to "get it right" and set a standard for them that we finish what we start.

Acknowledgements

I would like thank and express my sincere appreciation to Dr. Jerry Collins, my committee chairperson, who always pushed me to trust the process as well as Dr. Noel Goodin and Dr. Karen Hunt who read and reviewed my work and provided me with fire-refining feedback. It has been an honor to work with all three of you. All three of you have labored over this work with me helping to refine it until it was exemplary and representative of the high standard expected of a Walden Crusader.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Historically, the role of the school principal has been described using dual terms: building manager and instructional leader (Terosky, 2016). As a result of the passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation of 2002 and the subsequent passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015), school principals have been under increased scrutiny, charged with overseeing academic achievement and expected to assume the role of the school's instructional leader (Husband & Hunt, 2015). Principals were once expected to assume the roles and responsibilities of the building manager (Heaven & Bourne, 2016). They are now also expected to shift between the roles and responsibilities of the building manager and the school's chief instructional leader (Heaven & Bourne, 2016). Principals must focus on the work of school improvement which is often defined as improved student outcomes and positive school climate (Day & Sammons, 2016).

The belief that effective school leadership has a positive influence on student outcomes is not new (Osbourne-Lampkin, Sidler-Folsom, & Herrington, 2015). New accountability and a redefining of the principal's role have resulted in an abundance of literature on the role of the principal on student outcomes (Day, Qing, & Sammons, 2016). For example, Day et al. (2016) wrote that the behaviors of the school principal rank among the top two factors affecting student outcomes, second only to teachers. Without effective school leadership, increased academic performance cannot be realized (Heaven & Bourne, 2016).

Effective principals understand how to identify and prioritize instructional leadership behaviors that best meet the needs of the institution (Heaven & Bourne, 2016). Previous researchers wrote that a school's leader can increase the likelihood of having a positive influence on student outcomes when he or she can focus on the "quality of learning, teaching, and teacher learning" (Murphy, Neumerski, Goldring, Grisson, & Porter, 2015, p. 456). Instructionally focused or learning-centered principals are committed to and knowledgeable about effective teaching and learning practices (Murphy et al., 2015). Learning-centered leadership originated from earlier work in instructional leadership and transformational leadership (Shengnan, 2016). To compare, the instructional leadership framework emphasizes the role of leaders as it pertains to enabling and supporting teachers to enhance student learning whereas transformational leadership placed a priority on the practices and behaviors of school leaders that built a broader capacity for learning and change in schools (Shengnan, 2016). Different from both theoretical frameworks is the emphasis on building capacity for all learning community members (Shengnan, 2016). The instructionally focused leader prioritizes their leadership practices and behaviors in ways that allow them to create and implement structures, operations, procedures, and practices that are inextricably linked to learning (Murphy et al., 2015).

Although there has been a considerable amount of research that defined and clarified the role of the principal as the instructional leader, the role of the principal has only demonstrated marginal shifts from that of building manager to school instructional leader (Murphy et al., 2015). Many principals still spend very little of their school day on

issues that result in improved teacher quality or increased student outcomes just as they did 30 years ago (Murphy et al., 2015). Evidence of the disconnect between the research and today's school principal behaviors can be seen when analyzing student performance data for American students (The nation's report card, 2018). Using a sample size of 149,400 fourth-graders from 7,840 schools across the country and 144,900 eighth graders from 6,500 schools, student performance results from 2017 assessments revealed no significant changes from assessments administered in 2015 (The nation's report card, 2018). Students tested were scored using a performance appraisal that included three categories: basic, proficient, and advanced. Results of student performance were described using a range between 0-500 (The nation's report card, 2018). Statistics from 2015 showed that not more than 40% of America's fourth and eighth graders demonstrated proficient performance in reading, math, science, and writing based on the most current national statistics (The nation's report card, 2018). Results from assessments administered in 2017 showed that while there was some increase for high performing students, performance for low-performing students defined as being in the 10^{th} to 25^{th} percentile range decreased when compared to 2015 assessment results (The nation's report card, 2018).

The connection between the marginal implementation of instructional leadership practices and low student performance can also be seen when examining student performance statistics in Georgia (Georgia Department of Education, College and career readiness performance index, 2017). The College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) is Georgia's tool for reporting how effective its schools are at preparing

its students for the world of work and post-secondary education. Careful analysis of trend data from the CCRPI described inconsistent student performance for students in tested grades (GADOE, College and career readiness performance index, 2017). In fact, analysis of the current data revealed that one school district in Georgia has consistently scored in the C-D range with regard to its efforts to prepare its students for the world of work and post-secondary education (GADOE, College and career readiness performance index, 2017). Despite the inconsistent performance of the district as a whole, there are some elementary principals who, according to the College and Career Readiness Performance Index, 2015-2017, demonstrated consistent performance on the key measures used to determine how well Georgia students are being prepared (GADOE, College and career readiness performance index, 2017). This study described the instructional leadership practices of 16 elementary principals within that Georgia school district who served in schools where students demonstrated consistent performance on the College and Career Readiness Performance Index (GADOE, College and career readiness performance index, 2017). The 16 elementary principals who participated in the study as the sample population were identified after a careful review of the College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) for the study period 2015-2017. After sorting all elementary schools within this Georgia school district, 16 schools and principals emerged as having consistently demonstrated proficiency in both areas under study, school climate and progress, when compared to their elementary school neighbors over the three-year period for which trend data were reviewed. Table 1 is a list of each

school's average performance for the CCRPI components that were the the focus of the current study (GADOE, College and career readiness performance index, 2017).

Table 1

Average Performance for Sample Study Populations for CCRPI

School	Average CCRPI Score, School Climate	Average CCRPI Score, Progress
1	3	30.27
2	3	34.23
3	3.67	31.6
4	3.33	37.3
5	3.33	28.7
6	4.67	34.5
7	3.67	36.87
8	3.67	31.13
9	3	31.93
10	4.33	30.5

table continues

School	Average CCRPI Score, School Climate	Average CCRPI Score, Progress
11	3.33	35.87
12	3.67	35
13	3.33	31.43
14	3.67	35.1
15	3.67	32.83
16	3.33	31.47

The purpose of this research was to describe the specific instructional leadership behaviors perceived by successful elementary school principals to have a positive effect on student outcomes and school climate.

Background

For the past two decades, there have been consistent by legislators to raise the quality of education and the standard of achievement for America's students through a variety of school reforms (Day et al., 2016). Accompanying the new legislation was the

increased scrutiny and accountability for building-level principals and studies about the effects of principal leadership on student outcomes and school climate (Ross & Cozzens, 2016). Researchers have interpreted the findings from some previous studies and posited that principals directly influence student achievement and school climate through direct interactions with students and leadership decisions about class sizes, other researchers have posited that the principal influence is indirect (Ross & Cozzens, 2016). To clarify, indirect influences of school principals as referred to previous researchers included building relationships with teachers, encouraging teacher reflection, and advising teachers on pedagogical matters (Ross & Cozzens, 2016).

During the 2011-2012 school year, Georgia began using the College and Career Readiness Performance Index as a communication and school improvement tool to describe the influence of principals and district leadership on student growth and performance (GADOE, College and career readiness performance index, 2017). The College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) is a comprehensive school improvement, accountability, communication tool and platform designed to be used by all educational practitioners aimed at promoting college and career readiness for Georgia students (GADOE, College and career readiness performance index, 2017). The CCRPI was designed to describe the extent to which schools, districts, and the state are effective at providing high-quality educational opportunities for students throughout Georgia (GADOE, Accountability, 2018).

Originally, this comprehensive communication tool included four components with 21 scorable indicators for elementary schools (GADOE, Redesigned college and career ready performance index, 2018). Recently redesigned, the CCRPI has four scorable components with eleven indicators (GADOE, Redesigned college and career ready performance index, 2018). The previous index was a summary that included a description of school performance with a scale score ranging from 0-100 with the possibility of earning additional points. However, the most recently designed tool includes a description of a school's performance based on a score ranging from 0-100 without the option of earning additional points. The major components of the recently designed tool include (a) Content Mastery which accounts for 30% of the scaled score, (b) Progress (Growth) which accounts for 35% of the scaled score, (c) Closing Gaps which accounts for 15% of the scaled score, (d) Readiness which is reflected as 20% of the scaled score.

Information from the College and Career Readiness Performance Index should be shared with all stakeholders within the school's learning community as school leaders work collaboratively with stakeholders to set goals and improve student outcomes (GADOE, College and career readiness performance index, 2017). School results on the CCRPI are published by the Accountability Department of the Georgia Department of Education (GADOE, Accountability, 2018). Each Georgia school district also employs a system accountability specialist (GADOE, Accountability, 2018).

The growth measure as reported by the CCRPI can be analyzed through a review of the Progress component of the CCRPI which reports student growth in Mathematics, Reading and English Language Proficiency (GADOE, College and career readiness performance index, 2017). As the researcher, I analyzed elementary school performance through a careful review of the student growth or Progress component of the CCRPI instead of achievement because the growth component allowed for a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of how the specific instructional leadership practices of school-level principals directly or indirectly influenced student outcomes and school climate (GADOE, College and career readiness performance index, 2017). Describing school and student growth also allowed for a review and description of contextual factors such as schools characterized by high achieving students or Title I schools that served students in higher poverty areas (Fast facts: Title 1, 2016).

The idea that principals must embrace their role as the school's instructional leader is critically important in this era of accountability if they are to have a positive influence on student outcomes (Heaven & Bourne, 2016). It is the principal who is held responsible for the total success of a school and likewise, it is the principal who is held accountable for a school's failure (Heaven & Bourne, 2016). A gap in the literature was discovered based on the literature review for this research. While there has been a great deal of research previously conducted that identified leadership styles and practices, there is a limited number of studies that have been conducted on the different levels of implementation for specific indirect and direct instructional leadership practices by

successful principals in schools with stable or consistent student growth versus the instructional leadership practices of principals in low performing schools (Quin et al., 2015). Descriptions of the measurable effect on student achievement is described in previous literature. However, very little is known about why, when and how principals guide teachers' work in the classroom and implement instructional leadership practices that directly or indirectly affect student growth (Salo et al., 2015). Therefore, this study was needed to add to the literature concerning the high impact instructional leadership practices of principals in high performing schools.

The findings of this study added to previous research because it addressed the gap in the literature regarding the perceptions of elementary school principals about their instructional leadership practices, by collecting data from high performing elementary principals concerning specific instructional leadership behaviors perceived by elementary school principals to positively affect student performance and school climate. For this study, high performing principals are those that, when compared to other elementary schools within the district, have consistently implemented specific instructional leadership practices and behaviors which have resulted in consistent student performance on specific measures of the College and Career Readiness Performance Index. This study is important because it described specific strategies for prioritizing and implementing instructional leadership practices perceived to be effective by elementary school principals. In other words, this study bridged the gap between the specific practices identified and described by previous research and the real-life strategies of current

practitioners from varying contexts or school settings. This study contributed to positive social change because the findings provided deeper insight into the specific instructional leadership practices of successful elementary principals that could assist emerging, new, and veteran principals with prioritizing and implementing instructional leadership strategies that could contribute to positive and productive learning environments that support all stakeholders within their learning communities.

Problem Statement

For the past 20 years, there has been an increased emphasis on educational policymakers to increase student performance for all students through a variety of school reforms (Day et al., 2016). While these school reform efforts have changed the profile of school leaders, what has not changed is the consensus that effective school leadership is directly connected to positive student outcomes (Day et al., 2016). I conducted a systemic, comprehensive review of volumes of research and found that, next to effective teaching practices, effective instructional leadership is the second most powerful influence on student outcomes (Day et al., 2016). However, the same volume of research does not exist with regards to the specific instructional leadership practices of the principal to determine how the principal as instructional leader guides and directs the work of the teacher (Salo et al., 2015).

Although previous researchers agreed that the instructional leadership behaviors of the principal can have a positive influence on student achievement, the problem is the lack of consistency with regards to the level of implementation of instructional leadership practices that have a positive influence on student outcomes resulting in marginal student

growth evidenced by trend data (Hitt & Tucker, 2015). There are many frameworks and guiding documents that define instructional leadership and identify the instructional leadership behaviors encompassed within the instructional leadership framework (Hitt & Tucker, 2015). Frameworks such as the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards (ISLLC) now known as the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (Professional standards for educational leaders, 2017) and Public Impact (Public impact, 2018) all represent different perspectives as to which leadership behaviors should take priority with regards to having the greatest influence on student achievement (Hitt & Tucker, 2015).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe the specific instructional leadership strategies perceived to be effective by successful elementary principals or elementary principals who have consistently implemented effective instructional leadership practices that have resulted in consistent student performance based on specific measures reviewed from the College and Career Readiness Performance Index (GADOE, College and career readiness performance index, 2017). There is an abundance of research that described the practices and behaviors associated with effective instructional leadership and the positive influence of effective instructional leadership practices on student outcomes and school climate (Mestry, 2017). Missing from the research are descriptions and explanations as to why, when and how principals guide teachers' work in the classroom and implement

instructional leadership practices that directly or indirectly affect student growth (Salo et al., 2015).

This study was based on the qualitative case study design, a “detailed and intensive analysis of a particular event, situation, organization, or social unit” (Burkholder, Cox, & Crawford, 2016, p. 227). The qualitative case study has become a comprehensive methodological approach for describing and exploring complex issues (Houghton, Murphy, Shaw, & Casey, 2015). This method allowed for flexibility and creativity, but it is also a rigorous approach to gaining an in-depth understanding of the field of interest (Houghton, Murphy, Shaw, & Casey, 2015).

Using the qualitative case study approach for the proposed study allows the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of the perspective of elementary principals within a specific space and time frame (Burkholder et al., 2016). The case study approach also provided the opportunity to study the phenomenon-the inconsistent implementation of instructional leadership practices perceived by elementary principals to increase and improve student outcomes and maintain positive school climates-within the real-life context (Yazan, 2015). The case study approach was appropriate for this study because it allowed the researcher to describe the context wherein the study participant practiced and made instructional leadership decisions (Burkholder et al., 2016). The case study approach was designed to answer the “how or why” questions of this study (Yazan, 2015). The qualitative case study can involve a single case, a specific role, a group, organization, community or nation (Yazan, 2015).

Study participants for this study included 16 elementary principals identified as successful based on data collected and reviewed from the growth or progress component and the School Climate Star Rating scores reported by the College and Career Readiness Performance Index (GADOE, College and career readiness performance index, 2017). Participants were selected based on their students' consistent performance on the College and Career Readiness Performance Index and their school's School Climate Rating which is also a specific measure on the College and Career Readiness Performance Index. Both, student outcomes or growth and establishing and maintaining a positive school climate are indicators of effective instructional leadership by principals (Pietsch & Tulowitzi, 2017).

The primary method of data collection for this qualitative research was semistructured face to face interviews, document reviews and surveys used to collect perception data. Data collected was used to identify common themes to describe how successful elementary principals used instructional leadership practices to create and maintain positive school climates, and increase or improve student outcomes. Data collected were used to describe the strategies used by successful elementary principals to balance the instructional leadership expectations of the principalship against the managerial tasks associated with the job.

Research Questions

To describe specific instructional leadership practices perceived by successful instructional leaders for improving student outcomes, maintaining a positive school

climate, and for describing strategies used by successful elementary principals to manage instructional leadership responsibilities and the managerial tasks associated with the principalship, this study used the qualitative case study design to explore the phenomenon. This study was guided by three research questions.

RQ1: Which direct and indirect instructional leadership practices are perceived by elementary principals as most important for ensuring the success of each student?

RQ2: How do successful elementary principals balance their dichotomous role of instructional leader and building manager?

RQ3: What are the specific contextual factors that influence the consistent implementation of instructional leadership practices by elementary principals?

These three research questions guided the qualitative data collection for this study which included unstructured face to face interviews and document analysis.

Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this study was to describe the specific instructional leadership behavior perceived by successful elementary principals to have a positive effect on student outcomes and school climate. Therefore, the conceptual framework most appropriate for the study of the perceptions of elementary principals as instructional leaders was instructional leadership, a model and framework that evolved from the work of Phillip Hallinger (2018). For this study, the definition of instructional leadership was a term used to describe the principals' practices and behaviors that resulted in high levels

of achievement for all students (Mestry, 2017). In practice, instructional leadership refers to the direct and indirect behaviors of the principal that affect the quality of instruction and, as a result, the quality of the learning (Mestry, 2017).

Instructional leadership is linked to the effective schools' movement in the 60s and 70s (Kyriakides & Creemer, 2017). Instructional leadership and its associated practices evolved because of two studies conducted by Coleman et al. (1966) and Jencks et al. (1972). These researchers concluded that schools accounted for and directly influenced student achievement very little (Kyriakides & Creemer, 2017). Specifically, these researchers claimed that after considering the influence of student background characteristics, such as ability and family background (e.g., SES, gender, ethnicity), schools and school processes could be credited with only a small amount of variation as it related to student achievement (Kyriakides et al., 2017). Consequently, Brookover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer, and Wisenbaker (1979) conducted the first two studies on school effectiveness in the United States (Kyriakids et a., 2017). These researchers aimed to uncover evidence in support of the potential power that schools could make in the lives of students (Kyriakides et al., 2017). Several researchers in different countries also demonstrated the impact of teachers and schools in promoting student learning outcomes (Kyriakides et al., 2017).

During this time, research was also being conducted that offered a portrait of the principal's workday (Sebastian, Camburn, & Spillane, 2017). Researchers showed that principals' work was characterized by long hours, numerous tasks, a frenzied pace,

brevity, and fragmentation (Sebastian et al., 2017). Various researchers found that principals spent very little time involved in instructional leadership activities due to the managerial demands of principalship (Pietsch & Tulowitzi, 2017).

While interest in other models for school leadership has waned, scholarly interest in the practices associated with the model of instructional leadership that was the offshoot of the two previously mentioned studies remains strong (Pietsch & Tulowitzi, 2017). Research on different leadership styles showed that effective school leadership is reflective of the degree of influence and collaboration between teachers and principals around the core business of schools which is instruction or learning (Urich, 2016). Successful instructional leaders are concerned with teachers and the school's impact on instructional issues and student learning (Hattie, 2015). Hattie conducted a meta-analysis of 55,000 studies which included a quarter of a billion students to determine the effects of principal leadership on student outcomes. To determine the influence of school practices on student learning, Hattie used a measurement known as effect size. Effect size is a standardized method of measurement that describes the strength or magnitude of a relationship between the specific school practice or policy and student growth or achievement (Hattie, 2015). Setting the average effect size of .40, Hattie found that the average effect size for principal leadership was .36. Most of the principal participants identified themselves as transformational leaders instead of instructional leaders.

To compare instructional leadership to another popular model, transformational leadership stresses that the attention of the building leader should be focused on satisfying basic needs and meeting higher desires of the members of the learning community by inspiring followers to provide newer solutions which could lead to creating a more positive work environment (Ghasabeh, Claudine, & Carmen, 2015). Technically, transformational leadership is defined as the leader's ability to motivate teachers to rise above their own personal goals and direct their energies to those behaviors that are for the greater good of the organization (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017). Previous research has linked transformational leadership with greater teacher motivation, commitment, and effort (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017).

There are four major dimensions or influences of transformational leadership including idealized influence, individualized influence, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation (Ghasabeh et al., 2015). The idealized influence concerns developing a shared vision and focuses on improving relationships within the learning community; individualized influence focuses on identifying the individual or unique needs of the members of the learning community and empowering each member through relationship building; through empowerment, intellectual stimulation promotes the development of new ideas to build a stronger, more productive learning communities while inspirational motivation emphasizes setting high expectations (Ghasabeh et al., 2015). In contrast, instructional leadership behaviors focus on defining the school's

mission, monitoring instruction, and building and maintaining a positive school climate (Leithwood & Sun, 2015).

Hattie (2015) identified seven major mindsets of high impact instructional leaders. Successful instructional leaders: (a) understand the need to focus on learning and teaching, (b) assumes the fundamental task of evaluating the effect of every team member on student learning, (c) see themselves and all team members as change agents, understanding increased student outcomes or the lack thereof is directly connected to what teachers or leaders did or did not do, (d) view assessment as feedback on their impact, (e) understand the importance of listening to the voice of teachers and students, (f) set challenging for those in the school community to maximize student outcomes, and (g) embrace errors to create environments in which teachers and students can learn. Leaders who placed evaluation of the impact of each team member and who rallied everyone together such they also knew their impact had an effect size of .91. Leaders who clearly defined what success looked like had an effect size of .77 and leaders who went beyond "just do your best" and established challenging goals had an effect size of .57. The highly effective instructional leader is not afraid to define success even though they may fall short of the target (Hattie, 2015).

Previous researchers also identified the following characteristics to describe principal practices as it pertains to instructional leadership within the school building: defining the school's mission, managing curriculum and instruction, understanding and supervising teaching ensuring that students have access to best practices as it relates to

teaching pedagogy, monitoring student progress, and creating and maintaining a school climate that promotes learning (Pietsch & Tulowitzi, 2017). All instructional leadership practices can be categorized into three major categories: (a) defining the school's mission, (b) managing the instructional program, and (c) promoting a positive school learning climate (Pietsch & Tulowitzi, 2017). These three categories contribute to the specific focus of effective instructional leadership which is a focus on improving student outcomes or learning (Urich, 2016).

While some researchers focused on instructional management components, effective instructional leadership also includes the incorporation of structured activities that promote a positive school environment that is conducive to teaching and learning (Brabham, 2017). Creating and maintaining a successful school learning climate has since long been regarded as an important task for instructional leaders and an essential element for improving student learning and achievement (Price & Moolenar, 2015). Recognized as an opportunity to improve student outcomes, reduce dropout rates and decrease problem behaviors, improving a school's climate also improves the quality of the interactions of all students, teachers, parents, and school personnel (Wang & Degol, 2016)

The instructional leadership model coordinates the core business of schools (Urich, 2016). This model has been linked to factors that have the largest effects on student outcomes (Urich, 2016). Since the researcher seeks to describe effective instructional leadership practices based on the perceptions of successful elementary

principals, instructional leadership, as a model and framework, was appropriate for the current study. The different components that make up the framework for instructional leadership also guide principals in building a positive school climate (Urich, 2016). For this study, the instructional leadership framework is also useful because it also helped to identify the specific instructional leadership behaviors that consistently had the greatest influence on student achievement based on the perceptions of the practitioner. The components of the instructional leadership framework will be used to develop key research questions for this study and will also inform the data collection and analysis plan. Chapter Two will provide a more extensive overview of the specific concepts related to the instructional leadership framework.

Nature of the Study

This descriptive case described the use of instructional leadership practices as perceived by elementary school principals to improve student outcomes and create a positive school climate. The participants incuded 16 elementary principals identified through a careful analysis of trend data from the College and Career Readiness Performance Index. Since the researcher focused on the use of instructional leadership behaviors to improve student growth and create and maintain a positive school climate, the specific categories of the CCRPI reviewed included (a) the category titled Progress and (b) the category titled School Climate. To describe a consistency of practice, each of the 16 principals identified as the study's participants or sample population served students in their learning community consistently over the past three years with the

students served demonstrating consistent performance according to the Progress component of the College and Career Readiness Performance Index. In addition, the schools wherein the 16 principals served also consistently earned School Climate Ratings of 3 or more stars for the period under review.

Data was collected by me, the researcher, only. Each principal was interviewed using researcher-created questions. The basis of the questions was the major categories of instructional leadership identified by Pietsch and Tulowitzki (2017) which include defining the school's mission, managing instruction, understanding best practices as it relates to teaching pedagogy, analyzing data as it relates to student progress, and creating and maintaining a school climate. I asked additional probing questions to gain a deeper insight into the daily instructional leadership practices of the 16 elementary principals and to understand how each principal prioritized their instructional leadership behaviors with the managerial tasks that are also a part of the normal school day. Participant responses were collected using an interview protocol, audio recording device, and field notes. Data collected and analyzed from the interviews was used used to identify and describe common themes as it related to how principals used instructional leadership practices to improve student growth and create and establish and maintain a positive school climate. Themes were identified through multiple cycle coding

Operational Definitions

College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI): CCRPI is a comprehensive tool used for school improvement, increase accountability for student

learning and it serves as a communication platform for all educational stakeholders (GADOE, College and career readiness performance index, 2017). The CCRPI is based on a 100-point scale wherein schools earn points in the following categories: Achievement, Progress, Achievement Gap, and Challenge Points (GADOE, College and career readiness performance index, 2017).

Elementary school: Elementary schools prepare the nation's students for success in fundamental skills and knowledge areas (Elementary education, 2018). Elementary schools represent the early stages of formal education before secondary school (Elementary education, 2018). Elementary schools typically serve students older than toddlers but younger than adolescents and include grades 1-5 (Elementary school, 2018). For this study, elementary schools refer to grades Kindergarten through fifth.

Instructional leadership: Leadership includes developing effective relationships between and among individuals (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Coming to focus during the mid-80s, instructional leadership, for this study, refers to the practices and behaviors of the school principal as well as the actions that the school principal delegates to promote growth in learners' learning (Mestry, 2017).

School climate: The "quality and character of school life" (GADOE, School Climate, 2018). Influenced by the norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, instructional practices, and organizational structures within a school, schools with positive school climates tend to have better test scores (GADOE, School Climate, 2018).

Student growth: Provides a more comprehensive view of the academic performance of students (GADOE, A guide to Georgia's student growth model, 2017). When comparing achievement to growth, achievement provides information about where a student ends up whereas growth provides more information about a student's progress (GADOE, A guide to Georgia's student growth model, 2017). Growth describes a student's change in achievement over time (GADOE, A guide to Georgia's student growth model, 2017).

The Progress component of the College and Career Readiness Performance Index: Measures how much growth students are making from year to year in English Language Arts and Mathematics and how well English learners are demonstrating progress towards English language proficiency (Understanding the 2018 CCRPI for mygadoe portal users part 3, 2018). Student growth percentiles are used to report progress in English Language Arts and Mathematics. Progress for students classified as English language learners are reported based on the students' movement from one performance band to another or are moving towards proficiency which is the expected and acceptable performance measure for all students (Understanding the 2018 CCRPI for mygadoe portal users part 3, 2018).

School Climate Rating component of the College and Career Readiness Performance Index is a score or rating derived from analysis and review of four sets of school-level data (GADOE, School Climate, 2018). Each elementary school must administer a variety of surveys including student surveys in which students are able to

provide their perception of the school's climate-the Georgia School Health Survey 2.0. Other surveys include the Georgia Parent Survey and the Georgia School Personnel Survey or GSPS. In addition to the required surveys, other items of consideration such as student discipline which reviews each school's suspension rate; Safe and Substance Free Learning Environment which counts the number of incidents involving violence, bullying, and other unsafe events; and Attendance which examined the average daily attendance or teachers, administrators, and staff members along with the percentage of students with less than six unexcused absences (GADOE, School Climate, 2018). Georgia is one of the first states to include school climate as an early indicator of academic accountability (Benefield & Hodges, 2018). Communicated through the College and Career Readiness Performance Index, the score for the School Climate Star Rating component which is reported using one to four stars, is a diagnostic tool to determine if a school is on the right path to school improvement (GADOE, School Climate, 2018) (Benefield & Hodges, 2018).

Assumptions

Two major assumptions formed the basis of this study. First, instructional leadership is contextual and influenced by culture. Previous researchers examined the connection between school characteristics and the principal's influence on student outcomes (Hallinger, 2018). The Far West Laboratory, charged with bridging the gap between research and practice, distinguished between personal context or the principal's personal lens through which all experiences are filtered and interpreted and the widely

shared school context (Hallinger, 2018). The widely shared or school community context included demographics such as the socio-economic status of parents, parent and community involvement in the school, as well as the geographic location of the school. Contextual features influence or shape the practices of the principal (Hallinger, 2018). Furthermore, successful principals understand how to adapt their instructional leadership behaviors to meet the needs, opportunities, and challenges that may characterize their specific school community (Hallinger, 2018).

Khalifa, Gooden, and Davis (2016) conducted a meta-analysis of previous research to expand the research on the topic of culturally responsive school leadership. The researchers located 37 articles using web searches and scholarly academic search engines (Khalifa et al., 2016). The study was situated at the school level with a primary focus on principals as instructional leaders (Khalifa et al., 2016). Khalifa et al. (2016) framed their study around 4 basic premises: (a) the degree to which the principal critically self reflects on his or her instructional leadership practices and behaviors, (b) the degree to which the principal is committed to developing culturally responsive teachers, (c) the degree to which the principal is committed to developing an inclusive, culturally responsive climate and culture, and (d) the degree to which the principal is committed to engaging students and parents and all school community members. The researchers found that a culturally responsive school is led by a culturally responsive principal. Culturally responsive school leaders are (a) willing to examine their own biases and the influence of those biases on the school community, (b) willing to mandate

a culturally responsive approach to teaching and learning such as developing relationships with students and their parents and choosing and embracing culturally responsive pedagogy, and (c) willing to address the needs of the marginalized student by having high expectations regardless of their racial and ethnic backgrounds (Khalifa et al, 2016). Further, the researchers found that culturally proficient school leaders also find strategies for overlapping school–community spaces (Khalifa et al., 2016).

The second assumption that undergirded this study was that effective instructional leadership practices can be learned and developed. Young (2015) wrote that the changing conditions of schools, school populations and increased accountability for student achievement has generated not only an evaluation of the challenges and barriers to student growth but there is also an increased interest in increasing the quality of leadership. As it pertains to student growth and achievement, the quality of the school's instructional leaders matter (Young, 2015). Amanchukw et al. (2015) analyzed models or frameworks about instructional leadership. Based on the premise that the nation's growth is connected to the quality of its instructional leaders, Amanchukwu et al. (2015) wrote that to be a good leader, one must have the experience, knowledge, commitment, patience, and most importantly, the skills to collaborate with others to achieve common goals. "Good leaders are thus made, not born" (Amanchukwu et al., 2015, p. 6). Effective leadership, according to Amanchukwu et. al (2015) is learned and developed through a continuous process of self-reflection, education, training and relevant experience.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study included one school district in Georgia comprised of twenty-seven elementary schools (Fast facts: Title 1, 2016). The demographics of the suburban school district in which this study is situated during the time frame of this study included 52% African American, 32% Caucasian, 9% Hispanic/Latino, 4% Multi-racial, and 3% Asian (Fast facts: Title 1, 2016). The poverty rate for the district during the time frame of the study was 51 %. The student population or membership for the district was 42, 000 which included 5, 460 students or 13% of the students were categorized as a student with a disability (Fast facts: Title 1, 2016). The district also provides English Language Learner services to 2% of the student population and gifted services to 13% of the student population (Fast facts: Title 1, 2016).

The 16 elementary principals identified participants served schools with varying demographics. The schools wherein the study participants served during the time frame analyzed for this study were identified only as a number ranging from one to 16 to maintain confidentiality. Figure A is a display that contains information that serves as a description of the varying ranges for enrollment for the 16 schools during the time frame of the study (NCES, 2017). The schools were also different in that some schools with smaller enrolments received funding under Title I while the schools with the larger enrollments did not (NCES, 2017). Title I funding is the nation's oldest and largest federally funded program, according to the U.S. Department of Education. These funds were enacted by the Elementary Schools and Secondary Act of 1965 and are allocated to

schools to ensure that all children have fair, equal, and significant access to a quality education so that each student can reach proficiency on state standardized assessments (USDOE, 2018). Based on trend data from the College and Career Readiness Performance Index, seven out of 16 of the participating schools received Title I assistance which means that nine out of 16 schools did not receive Title I or additional funding authorized by the Elementary Schools and Secondary Act of 1965 (NCES, 2017).

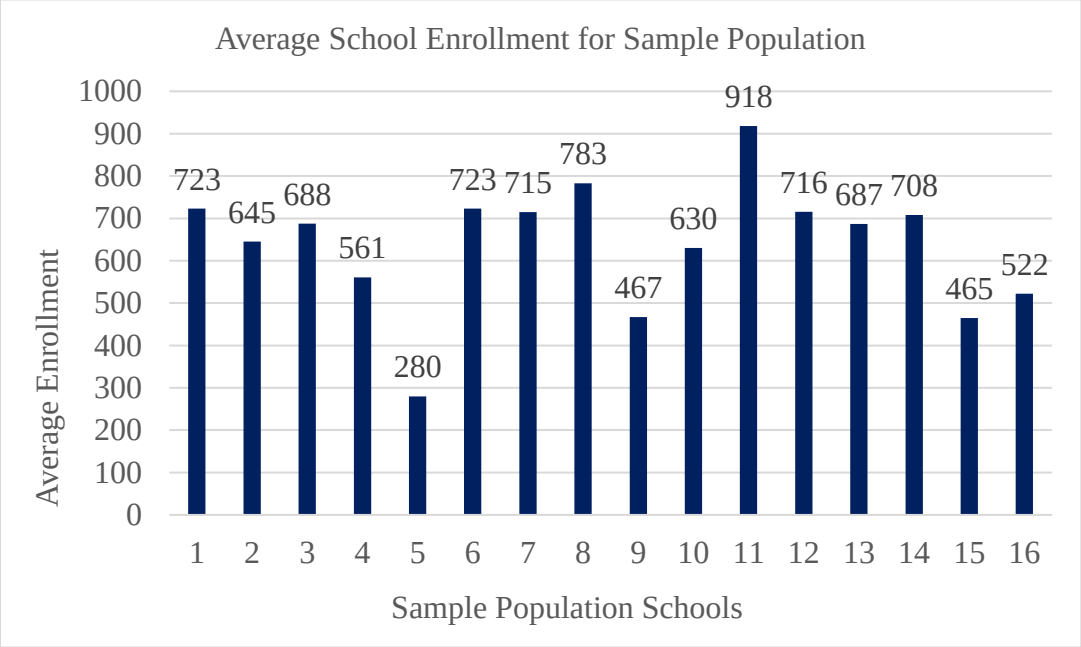

Figure 1. Average enrollment for sample population schools.

The study was delimited to successful principal perceptions about effective leadership practices. I chose not to collect data from elementary principals serving in schools with inconsistent progress because I assumed that to identify themes that described specific instructional leadership practices perceived by principals as having positive effects on student outcomes, interviews needed to be conducted with principals

whose students demonstrated stable or consistent student growth further assuming that this was an indicator of the consistent implementation of effective instructional leadership practices. The aim of this study was to describe specific instructional leadership practices based on the perceptions of successful principals because it was my hope that by identifying practices based on the perceptions of successful principals who were consistently implementing effective instructional leadership practice in a variety of settings, less successful principals serving students in learning communities with similar demographics might find the results of the study worthy of implementation and useful for improving student outcomes and creating positive school climates. The study was not confined to principals only serving students in Title I schools or schools with low socioeconomic backgrounds but also included principals serving students from communities that would be considered high socioeconomic or affluent backgrounds.

The literature review was delimited to a review of literature that focused on the evolution of instructional leadership as a term and the specific characteristics of effective instructional leadership behaviors, the relationship between instructional leadership and student growth and the relationship between instructional leadership and school climate. The researcher chose not to focus solely on the specific characteristics of instructional leadership because the researcher located volumes of research on this topic but found a gap in the literature as it pertained to effective instructional leadership practices based on the perceptions of successful elementary principals. The researcher also chose to focus on the successful instructional leadership practices of elementary school principals because

elementary schools in the district wherein the study was situated demonstrated only a marginal increase of 0.5% over the past three years after showing a significant decrease of 7.7% during the 2015 school year.

Duston and Wilkins (2015) examined the link between college readiness and the gap between students' academic preparedness and the rigor of college work. The following factors were found to be critical to college readiness and degree attainment: (a) proficiency in literacy at early grade levels, (b) knowledge of expository texts, (c) study strategies, and (d) personal behaviors such as paying attention, completing assignments, persisting in difficult tasks, and self-regulation also contribute to academic success (Dunston et al., 2015). When elementary stduents do not learn to read, that inability to read with understanding and write with clarity and purpose can present a nearly insurmountable obstacle to students' achievement in college-level courses (Dunston & Wilkins, 2015). Volumes of research exist that establish a connection between principal leadership and student growth and achievement (Darling-Hammond et al, 2016). Improving student achievement and outcomes has become the primary work of the principal as the instructional leader (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Not only do leaders create a vision for the school, but they are also critical to improving the quality of instruction through professional development opportunities and teacher collaboration (Hitt & Tucker, 2016).

Data collection was limited to surveys, interviews and a document review because data collection methods are in alignment with the methods which can be used with

qualitative case studies (Burkholder et al., 2016) and due to time constraints. The chosen data collection methods for the current study were also selected over other data collection methods because these methods were appropriate for the research questions that framed this study.

Limitations

The limitations of this study were related to methodological concerns that might influence the results of the study. One limitation of this study was the limited number of study participants. While Boddy (2016) wrote that the sample size for qualitative research depends largely on contextual factors and the research paradigm, the sample size of 16 successful elementary principals may make the description of the practices perceived to be effective by elementary school principals difficult to generalize.

Data collection in qualitative research is executed by a single person which means that the study lacks inter-rater reliability techniques. Since I have served students in the district wherein the study was situated, study participants may be limited in their responses and descriptions of their daily practices. As the person solely responsible for data collection, the potential for error as it pertained to the data analysis was present.

Significance

The idea that principal behaviors affect student achievement is not new (Osbourne-Lampkin, Sidler-Folsom, & Herrington, 2015). There is a growing body of research that supports the principal's influence on student performance (Osborne-

Lampkin et al., 2015). With the increased accountability for student achievement, there has also been heightened attention placed on the role of the principal as an instructional leader (Murphy et al., 2015). Test scores have become the measuring stick to which a principal's effectiveness as an instructional leader is determined and principals are expected to improve failing schools and increase student achievement (Murphy et al., 2015).

This study addressed a local problem by focusing on specific instructional leadership behaviors from the perspective of successful elementary school principals which have been shown to have a positive influence on student achievement as measured by student performance on the College and Career Performance Index.

Findings from this study may be used by systems or districts to support principals as instructional leaders (Francone, 2017). The findings from this study could assist school districts in moving toward a more integrative leadership approach wherein the focus is on collaboration across boundaries (Louis, 2015). In the case of this study, the specific boundaries included differences in schools, and the different perspectives of administrators when analyzing school problems (Louis, 2015). Louis (2015) cited research that focused on less effective schools or schools that were not making sufficient progress with regards to improving student outcomes. The study noted that in less effective school leaders, even when faced with the increased emphasis on accountability, school leaders in ineffective schools focused on improving test scores for students in tested grades while leaders in effective schools and districts focused on initiatives that were comprehensive and had a positive effect on all schools (Louis, 2015). Effective

leaders are skilled at working across boundaries and able to collaborate with multiple colleagues and partners (Louis, 2015).

The findings from this study could provide an opportunity for elementary principals to be reflective about their current practices and gain an understanding of how to prioritize instructional leadership behaviors replicating the positive influence on student achievement experienced by the principals who served as the units of analysis for this study (Barnes, 2018). This study addressed a gap in the literature by collecting data from high performing elementary principals concerning specific behaviors that research participants chose to prioritize that positively influenced student progress and achievement during the time frame of this study.

Summary

Included in Chapter 1 was an introduction to the study including relevant research that was presented to highlight a gap in practice. Chapter 1 also included the problem statement and the three research questions that would the data collection for this study. The conceptual framework of the study was presented with research assumptions, the scope, delimitations, and limitations of this study. Chapter 2 will include the literature search strategy that describes the research strategies used to locate relevant background information and research related to the topic of study, a conceptual framework for this study, key variables and relevant concepts. Following Chapter 2, Chapter 3 includes specific information about the research methods utilized in this study including the role of the researcher and the rationale for the study. Included in Chapter 4 is a description of

the results of the data collection phase of the current study including a description of the setting and other information as it pertains to the data collection process. Chapter 5 is a summary of the results including a discussion of the results, conclusions, and recommendations.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Introduction

For more than 20 years, there has been an increased emphasis on raising the standard for education and achievement for students across the world (Day, Qing, & Sammons, Impact of leadership on student outcomes: How successful school leaders use transformational and instructional strategies to make a difference, 2016). Paralleling the emphasis on raising the standards of achievement for students is a focus on principal accountability and performance, and assessments (Day, Qing, & Sammons, Impact of leadership on student outcomes: How successful school leaders use transformational and instructional strategies to make a difference, 2016). Global research confirms that the instructional leadership practices of the principal can have a positive influence on student achievement (Day et al., 2016). There is consensus throughout the international research community that the quality of the principal as an instructional school leader is one of most influential factors influencing quality and character of the school (Allen, Grigsby, & Peters, 2015). Although previous research has provided generic descriptions of behaviors and practices associated with effective instructional leadership (Truong, Hallinger, & Sanga, 2017), the problem is the lack of consistency with regards to the level of implementation of instructional leadership practices that have a positive influence on student outcomes resulting in marginal student growth evidenced by trend data (Hitt & Tucker, 2016).

The work of the principal is complex and involves coordinating with a variety of stakeholders including parents, central office personnel, school staff, and personnel as well as community stakeholders (Sebastian, Camburn, & Spillane, 2017). The purpose of this study was to describe the instructional leadership behaviors perceived by successful elementary school principals to have a positive effect on student outcomes and school climate. Instructional leadership tasks and responsibilities as it relates to the principal have come under increased scrutiny by politicians and other entities dedicated to improving the educational experience of students from pre-k through twelfth grade (Hitt & Tucker, 2016).

The literature review is a written approach for providing the reader with scholarly research about a specific topic creating a basis for the research by providing the reader with knowledge about the current state of the topic (LaVerne, 2018). The literature review for this study includes a description of strategies used to locate current and relevant research about (a) specific instructional leadership practices of elementary principals that positively affect student achievement and (b) specific instructional leadership behaviors that promote a school climate conducive to positive student growth and academic outcomes. This section of the research also includes a description of the conceptual framework for the current study and as well as a description of key variables and concepts related to specific instructional leadership behaviors and practices.

Literature Search Strategy

The strategy used to locate current research relevant to the phenomenon under study involved an extensive search using books which were used to identify specific

research sources, Google, Google Scholar, and the Walden Library. Using the Walden Library provided access to specific search engines such as the Walden Digital Dissertations portal, and Thoreau Multidisciplinary search engine. These search engines were also used to locate relevant scholarly research related to specific instructional leadership practices shown to positively influence student outcomes and school climate. Using keywords and phrases such as instructional leadership, elementary principals and student outcomes, elementary principals and instructional leadership, principals and school climate, principal leadership, effective school leadership, instructional leadership and student growth, instructional leadership and student achievement, school climate, instructional leadership and school climate, school climate and student achievement, principal perceptions of instructional leadership, and principal effect on student achievement, I was able to locate volumes of research related to the current study. To describe the iterative process, when using Google scholar, terms and phrases such as instructional leadership and student growth, contextual factors and instructional leadership, or instructional leadership and school climate were entered to generate a search for scholarly resources which could then be accessed through the Walden University library. Once relevant articles written within the last five years were located, the titles of those articles were then entered into the Walden Library search engine to ensure that the articles were peer-reviewed.

I was able to locate an abundance of research that described instructional leadership by definition as well as the specific practices that described effective

instructional leadership. However, missing from the literature review was a vast amount of research or current literature that specifically addressed the contextual considerations that influence instructional leadership and student outcomes. Also missing from the literature review was a large amount of research that focused on the specific practices and leadership behaviors found to positively influence student outcomes and that are used to create and maintain a positive school climate as perceived by elementary school principals. To address the lack of research about principal perceptions of effective instructional leadership practices for improving student achievement and maintaining a school climate conducive to learning and increased student achievement, the research expanded the search to include global research especially as it pertains to the contextual influences that influence effective instructional leadership and instructional leadership decisions. Also, to address the lack of research as it pertains to principal perceptions and contextual influences, this qualitative case study included scholarly research from a variety of research designs which included qualitative and quantitative research. This research addresses that gap in the literature by describing the specific instructional leadership behaviors and practices of elementary principals perceived by the study participants to positively affect student growth and school climate.

To address saturation issues involving locating appropriate amounts of scholarly sources, two Skype conferences were scheduled and occurred with the librarians from Walden University. Utilizing this resource supported my current strategies of locating scholarly resources and provided additional strategies for moving beyond issues of

saturation especially as it pertained to specific concepts. Participating in the Skype conferences broadened my perspective as it pertained to relevant scholarly resources.

Literature Review related to Key Concepts and Variables

Increasing student achievement is critical in this age of accountability but principals cannot learn for their students (Spillane, 2015). However, principals in their role as instructional leaders can create opportunities within a conducive learning environment in which students can learn (Spillane, 2015). Hallinger, Pietsch, and Tulowitski (2017) identified three categories into which instructional leadership practices can be viewed: (a) defining the school's mission, (b) managing instruction and (c) building and maintaining a positive school climate. Defining the school's mission includes framing and communicating the goals and expectations of the school; managing instruction within the school consists of practices associated with being actively involved in supervising and evaluating instruction as well as monitoring the student's progress towards curriculum mastery; and establishing and maintaining a positive climate includes those practices and policies that protect instructional time, promote professional development, maintains high and consistent visibility, providing incentives for teachers and students who are learning and developing and communicating high expectations (Ng, Nguyen, Wong, & Choy, 2015).

Conceptual Framework

Conceptual frameworks serve as a type of scaffolding for the researcher that highlights specific aspects of the phenomena under study (Spillane, 2015). The

conceptual framework serves as a “skeletal structure” that enables the researcher to focus on specific aspects of the research (Spillane, 2015). Three concepts describe the foci or the major aspects of the conceptual framework for this study: (a) the core instructional leadership practices identified by Pietsch and Tulowitzki which include defining the school’s mission, managing instruction, and creating a positive school climate (Pietsch & Tulowitzi, 2017); (b) the contextual influences cited in the research of Phillip Hallinger (Hallinger, Bringing context out of the shadows of leadership, 2018); (c) the Progress and School Climate components of the College and Career Readiness Performance Index (GADOE, Georgia's student growth model, 2017) (GADOE, School Climate, 2018).

Defining the School Mission

Comprehensive research supports the notion that the principal’s practices are the second biggest influence on pupil achievement and growth (Day, Qing, & Sammons, Impact of leadership on student outcomes: How successful school leaders use transformational and instructional strategies to make a difference, 2016). The first and most important influence on pupil achievement is the teacher (Day et al., 2016). However, the instructional leadership practices and behaviors of the principal have been described as those practices that directly influence student achievement and growth and those practices that have an indirect influence (Ng et al., 2015). Instructional leadership practices that directly influence student growth and achievement include practices such as monitoring instruction while indirect influences result from indirect practices such as

creating and maintaining a positive school climate and articulating the school mission (Ng et al., 2015).

Mission statements have been considered as an important starting point for successful strategy implementation (Rey & Bastons, 2018). Articulating the mission of the school is essential to strategic planning for any organization (Gurley, Peters, Collins, & Fifolt, 2015). The broadest definition of a mission statement includes essential elements such as a sense of moral purpose and possibilities (Murphy and Torre, 2016). More specifically, the school's mission or unified purpose promotes targeted discussion and the selection of relevant, productive school practices and behaviors (Gurley et al., 2015). Defining the school mission involves articulating and reflecting the principal's responsibility for collaboratively building a school-based vision that is contextually appropriate (Ng et al., 2015). The influence of the school principal's practices and behaviors on student achievement and growth should be seen as a mutual influence whereby principals or instructional leaders influence student outcomes through the shaping of the school's mission and by aligning the school's structure and culture (Day, Qing, & Sammons, Impact of leadership on student outcomes: How successful school leaders use transformational and instructional strategies to make a difference, 2016). Effective schools include specific elements in their mission statements. Such elements as (a) a sense of hope, (b) norm of commitment, (c) asset-based thinking, (d) student focus, (e) academic anchoring, (f) outcome focus, (g) norm of continuous improvement, and (h) norm of collective responsibility are elements that should be embedded into the school

mission statement (Murphy & Torre, 2016). Several previous studies reported on the importance of the shared emphasis and pursuit of academic excellence (Leithwood & Sun, 2015). This shared or collective emphasis has been described using terms such as academic press or shared mission and vision (Leithwood & Sun, 2015). Although often used synonymously, the mission and vision statement are different and distinct (Gurley et al., 2015). The mission statement is a proclamation that describes why the school exists (Gurley et al., 2015). The mission also provides a conceptual framework that can be useful for the school's internal and external operations (Al-Ani & Ismaail, 2015). While the mission statement can be easy to create, maintaining a consistent focus on the school's mission and aligning the school's resources and policies can be more difficult (Al-Ani & Ismaail, 2015).

The principal is the person charged with ensuring that a school vision is created (Murphy & Torre, 2015). Other researchers wrote that the school mission rarely evolves without the principal (Murphy & Torre, 2016). Principals must understand the school's mission and be able to articulate the mission of the school to promote school achievement (Gurley et al., 2015). Gurley et al. (2015) conducted a literature review and found that predominant in the literature was the understanding that successful principals understand and articulate a clear mission that is communicated to all stakeholders within the learning community (Gurley et al., 2015). Defining the school's mission effectively involves a focus on two specific leadership practices: (a) framing the school's goals and (b) communicating the school's goals. To effectively define the school's mission the school

principal must collaborate with staff to ensure that the mission is clear and focused on student achievement and progress (Leithwood & Sun, 2015).

School mission statements provide valuable data about the purpose of the school (Allen, Kern, Vella-Broderick & Waters, 2018). Most schools have a mission statement which should be used to guide principal activities such as planning for instructional strategies, budgeting decisions, and directing action (Allen et al., 2018). Intxausti et al. (2016) conducted a mixed methods study to identify and describe best practices in high performing schools (Intxausti et al., 2016). To identify highly effective schools, the researchers used a multilevel statistical approach but used qualitative techniques to collect data regarding the best practices common in 32 schools (Intxausti et al., 2016). The researchers recorded responses regarding the perceptions of management teams, educational advisors and inspectors within the participating schools.

The quantitative portion of the study sample included the whole school-going population in year 4 of primary and year 2 of secondary in public or partially state-funded private schools from 2009-2010. This study was census-based with an analysis of 409 primary schools along with 324 secondary schools. The sample included 33,500 students in 2009 and 36,500 in 2010. The qualitative portion of the study, three groups were selected schools participated: educational inspectors, advisors and school management teams. Intxausti et al. (2016) used questionnaires to collect information regarding the main contextual variables for both families and schools.

Defining a clear mission can also positively influence student achievement because it influences the instructional program and the learning climate which affects the behaviors of teachers and students (Murphy & Torre, 2016). One finding of the research by Intxausti et al. (2016) was that a clearly defined mission, communicated and shared by all professionals and to all stakeholders for the schools participating in the study was a common theme identified when interpreting and analyzing the data. The majority of the stakeholders within the learning communities of the highly effective school had a clear understanding of the school's mission and core values (Intxausti et al., 2016). Intxausti's (2016) work supports research previously mentioned in this study because it supports the importance of defining the school's mission as an effective instructional leadership practice for improving student achievement. Practically speaking, an implication of this research is that it provides more support for previous research concerning the relationship between high performing schools as it relates to a communicated school mission.

The goal of instructional leadership is to facilitate the improvement of teaching and learning (Backor and Gordon, 2015). While principals are held accountable for student learning in the school building, there is research that suggests that the principal's impact on student achievement is largely indirect (Tschannen-Moran and Gareis, 2015). Defining the school's mission falls under the category of indirect leadership practices that influence student growth and achievement (Ng, Nguyen, Wong, & Choy, 2015)Effective principals must work collaboratively with teachers and the members of the learning community in pursuit of the educational mission of their schools (Tschannen-Moran and

Gareis, 2015). Hitt et al. (2016) conducted a meta-analysis of over 100 studies to put forth a unified framework for effective instructional leadership practices (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). The explicit purpose of the Hitt & Tucker's research was to synthesize the empirical research about the effects of school leaders and school leadership on student achievement (Hitt et al., 2016). The researchers conducted a literature review which included studies from 2000-2014. The researchers discovered 56 relevant empirical research studies with 3 frameworks consisting of clustered practices. The researchers categorized those practices and identified five domains of practice (Hitt et al., 2016). Hitt et al. (2016) also consulted experts within the field for additional guidance with regards to the research.

Through their meta-analysis, Hitt et al. (2016) identified 5 overarching domains that described effective instructional leadership practices. Included in the five overarching domains were 26 specific instructional leadership behaviors that were predominant in the literature. The five overarching domains included (a) establishing and conveying the vision, (b) facilitating a high-quality learning experience for students, (c) building professional capacity, (d) creating a supportive organization for learning, and (e) connecting with external partners (Hitt and Tucker, 2016). Specific instructional leadership behaviors related to establishing and conveying the school vision were creating and articulating the school mission and vision (Hitt and Tucker, 2016). Hitt and Tucker (2016) wrote that it was not enough for the principal to craft the mission and vision in isolation. The principal must also clearly articulate the mission and vision,

model the mission and vision and promote the use of data for continuous improvement (Hitt and Tucker, 2016). In this age of accountability, principals have the responsibility for influencing student performance by shaping the school's learning-focused mission and aligning the school's structures and culture to empower the school mission (Tschannen-Moran and Gareis, 2015). Effective leaders understood the importance of identifying and communicating a shared mission thereby unifying stakeholders towards the same goals. This work also supports the work of previous scholars whose research established a connection between effective instructional leadership practices and the principal's ability to communicate a shared mission. The relevance of this work to the current study is that it supports the current study's framework which includes an emphasis on defining the school's mission as an important component of effective instructional leadership.

Previous research on school development emphasized the influence of principal leadership on the effectiveness of schools (Salo, Nylund, & Sternstrom, 2015). Much of the previous research has sought to identify and measure which leadership practices have the greatest influence various intangible school-level variables, which in turn affect student learning (Salo, Nylund, & Sternstrom, 2015). Facilitating continuous school improvement and improving the quality of the teaching and learning processes in the school building are the main issues of the school mission and tasks for school development. (Ludvik, Ergova, & Pisonova, 2018). Leithwood and Sun (2015) reviewed volumes of evidence about how direction setting influences school

outcomes including student achievement. The researchers conducted a standard meta-analysis, narrative review, and effect size summation of 110 studies. Distinguishing between the mission and vision, the researchers wrote that the mission is what we expect all students within the learning community to do whereas the vision is the how or the strategies that are chosen to move the learning community from its present stats towards the mission (Leithwood & Sun, 2015). The school mission exists when the "personal visions of a critical mass of people" come together into a common sense of purpose within the school learning community (Leithwood & Sun, 2015, p. 502).

The researchers conducted a standard meta-analysis, narrative review, and effect size summation and averaging during their review of 110 studies. Setting and communicating goals for teachers and student learning outcomes was a common theme noted as it pertains to effective instructional leadership practices (Leithwood & Sun, 2015). The researchers reported a substantial amount of research that found that setting the school goals and mission is a key avenue through which school principals influence academics in the school environment (Leithwood & Sun, 2015). The implications of this study inform future research and the development of models for successful instructional leadership practices. The findings of this study can also inform the body of work that contributes to the development of models of successful school leadership practices. This work informs the current research because it further supports the work or Pietsch and Tulowitzki (2017) whose major components of instructional leadership serve as a part of the conceptual framework for the study.

Worldwide efforts by educational policymakers to raise the standard for student achievement for all students has emphasized increased accountability and performativity (Backor & Gordon, 2015). Policy changes have culminated in a changing profile of school leadership. International research supports the potential positive and negative impacts of leadership, particularly the school's principal on school organization, culture and conditions, each of these factors influences the quality of teaching and learning and student achievement. Effective principals (a) seek out highly-qualified teachers, (b) are able to craft and articulate instructional goals, (c) they are visible, (d) they consistently choose and implement effective teacher development programs, (e) and are recognized by their teachers as being strong instructional leaders (Backor & Gordon, 2015).

Using empirical data from a three-year mixed methods Impact Study, Day and Sammons (2016) attempted to illustrate how successful leaders combine both instructional and transformational leadership practices as a basis for improving student outcomes (Day & Sammons, Successful school leadership, 2016). The researchers began with a survey of relevant literature and followed up with a close examination of a survey that explored principals' perceptions about school improvement strategies (Day & Sammons, 2016). The sample for this study included 20 schools. This research provided evidence of how successful principals, directly and indirectly, achieve and sustain school improvement over time (Day and Sammons, 2016). Principals are consistently able to create and sustain school improvement efforts through a combination of both transformational and instructional leadership strategies (Day and Sammons, 2016). In

addition, to sustain school improvement, principals must be able to understand and diagnose the needs of the school coupled with clearly "articulated, organizationally shared educational values through multiple combinations and accumulations of time and context-sensitive strategies that are layered and progressively embedded in the school's work, culture, and achievements" (Day & Sammons., 2016, p. 252). The findings of this work support Hallinger's work concerning the influence of context on instructional leadership practices but also supports the conceptual framework of the study wherein the components of instructional leadership are highlighted and clarified.

Utilizing qualitative methods and techniques, Balkar (2015) aimed to describe the profile of an empowered school from the perceptions of teachers. The explicit purpose of the study was to determine the profile of an empowering school culture based on teacher perceptions. The research questions addressed the characteristics of empowering school cultures and teachers' reflections and perceptions of empowering school cultures.

Study participants included 43 secondary teachers working in a province in Turkey. Balkar (2015) used content and frequency analysis after conducting semi-structured interviews. Interview questions were prepared by an exhaustive literature review. Prior to the interview, the researchers gave each participant a speech lasting about 20-25 minutes regarding school culture empowerment. Study participants' answers were audio recorded and transcribed for thematic analysis.

The findings of this research described an emphasis on a sense of confidence, change, innovation, and systematic collaboration. Further, the results of this study

described the following themes as being characteristics of an empowering school culture: teacher efficacy, job satisfaction, strong social relationships, and strong principal leadership. Supporting the importance of a clearly defined mission, Balkar (2015) also found that to empower teachers and other team members there should be a focus on setting the direction of the school through the school's mission and vision. Empowered school cultures are characterized by clarity about the roles and expectations of each team member driven by the school's mission statement (Balkar, 2015).

This research is relevant to the current study because it highlights the importance of defining the school's mission when attempting to empower the school's culture and create a climate that is conducive to the core business of education which is learning. The results of this qualitative study also add to the work of Pietsch and Tulowitzki (2017) regarding defining the school's mission, a core component of the instructional leadership framework. The major implication of this study is that defining the school's mission is a necessary component for empowering a school's culture and creating a conducive learning environment.

The principal serves as the catalyst of the school as it pertains to transforming the culture of the school and improving student learning (McKinney, Labat, & Labat Jr., 2015). The ability of a principal to lead today's students is based on his or her ability to collaboratively set goals for teachers, students, staff and themselves (McKinney, Labat, & Labat Jr., 2015). For example, Quin, Deris, Bischoff and Johnson (2015) conducted a quantitative study and found that the two factors that have the greatest impact on school

improvement about increasing academic achievement and maintaining positive changes were the principal's ability to inspire a school vision and challenge the processes that would hinder progress. Yasser and Amal (2015) also conducted a quantitative study that examined teachers' perceptions of their principals' instructional leadership and the impact of conducted a gender on the teachers' perceptions. Using a statistical analysis, the researchers for this study sought to answer two guiding research questions that addressed the perceptions of Omani teachers regarding their principals' implementation of the the components of the instructional leadership framework (defining the school's mission, managing instruction and creating and maintaining a positive school climate) and to what extent is there a difference in practice between males and females principals (Yasser & Amal, 2015). Using the Instructional Management Rating Scale, Yasser and Amal (2015) collected data from 368 teachers in Omani schools. Using statistical analysis, the data revealed that the teachers perceived a moderate level of instructional leadership as practiced by their principals with the most practiced dimension of instructional leadership as perceived by the teachers being the creation of the school's mission (Yasser & Amal, 2015). The least practiced dimension was managing the instructional program (Yasser & Amal, 2015).

The results of the study described the importance of defining the school's mission and also revealed the importance of the need for training and professional development programs that focus on a more well-rounded approach of implementation of instructional leadership practices by principals. Effective instructional leadership practices are based

on trust building and knowledge integration as it relates to specific school tasks (Salo, Nylund, & Sternstrom, 2015). Some have even presented instructional leadership as a combination of assumptions and a variety of leadership approaches such as distributed and transformational (Salo, Nylund, & Sternstrom, 2015). This study is relevant to the current study because it supports the work of Pietsch and Tulowitzki (2017) whose work in the area of instructional leadership focused on three main dimensions of instructional leadership: managing instruction, defining the school's mission and creating a positive climate. This study also provides another lens through which instructional leadership practices specifically defining the school's mission, can be viewed-considering the impact of gender on teachers' perceptions of instructional leadership efficacy as it pertains to the principal.

With the increasing attention to the role of the principal's leadership practices and the effects of those practices on student achievement, there has also been increasing attention on the principal's ability to roll out and implement new initiatives. Therefore, many leadership models have focused on how principals support teachers' implementation process (Brezicha, Bergmark, & Mitra, 2015). The instructional leadership practices of the principal can work to improve the degree to which teachers work together to improve instruction and thereby increase student performance (Goddard, Goddard, Eun, & Miller, 2015). Hallinger, Hosseingholizadeh, Hshemi, and Kouhsari (2018) attempted to fill a gap in the literature in Iran wherein there is no formal training about instructional leadership for their principals. The researchers acknowledged that

although knowledge base for instructional leadership is well established in western societies, this work has only recently begun to emerge in developing societies such as Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This quantitative study aimed to understand the relationship between principal self-efficacy, instructional leadership, teacher collective efficacy and teacher organizational commitment in Iranian primary schools.

Collecting survey data from 111 principals and 345 teachers which was analyzed using confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling (SEM), the findings of this study extended previous research as it further established strong relationships between the constructs of instructional leadership-defining the school's mission, creating a positive climate and managing instruction-and teacher self-efficacy. Regarding the school's mission, the researchers analyzed this data from the perspective of the principal's responsibility for articulating and communicating a direction for learning and providing support for enacting the defined mission. The data for this component indicated that, based on the perspectives of the teachers involved in the study, there was a need for principals to model the vision by implementing practices and behaviors that demonstrated the core values of the school's mission and provide support to individual teachers.

This research indicates the need for more formalized training and support in the core areas of instructional leadership. Today's principals are being encouraged to move away from the traditional approach of school leadership to a more well-rounded, collaborative approach (Mitchell, Kensler, & Tschannen-Moran, 2015). Many instructional leadership models recognize the value of teachers as educational

practitioners (Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016). The study is significant because it confirms the relationship between instructional leadership practices and teacher self-efficacy, student learning and school improvement. This study is relevant to the current study because it supports the conceptual framework for this study which evolved out of the work of Pietsch and Tulowitzki whose work was studied to identify the core components of instructional leadership-defining the school's mission, managing instruction creating a positive school climate and Hallinger who provided research on the contextual factors that impact the consistency of implementation as it pertains to instructional leadership practices.

Managing Instruction

Instructional or school improvement cannot be separated from the intent to improve instruction and the academic achievement of students (Murphy, Neumerski, Goldring, Grisson, & Porter, 2015). The intent to improve instruction and increase academic achievement for students involves a combination of processes such as building linkages with parents, building instructional capacity for teachers (Murphy, Neumerski, Goldring, Grisson, & Porter, 2015) and the second dimension of instructional leadership identified by Pietsch and Tulowitzki (2017) which is managing instruction. Within the context of instructional leadership, managing instruction includes the practices and behaviors of the learning-centered leader that aim to influence or improve instruction while considering the importance of collaborative leadership practices (Wierczorek, 2017).

There is a need for greater understanding of how school leadership practices influence achievement (Boberg & Bourgeois, 2015). Lee, Cheng, and Ko (2018) examined curriculum reform by researching two primary schools in Hong Kong using a case study approach. The researchers proposed a new theoretical framework conceptualizing the interaction between the school leadership, functional, structural and cultural aspects of school autonomy, accountability structures, and other contextual factors. The sample for the study consisted of two schools included in the case study approach.

The results of this study indicated some key challenges with regards to curriculum management. The researchers found that intellectually, there was a lack of a shared knowledge base for curriculum development which resulted in fragmented curriculums (Lee et al., 2018). Lee et al. (2018) also found that there was the lack of a structural component for curriculum management and monitoring which caused teachers to spend time attempting to create relevant curriculums for implementation. Also, a major reliance on the principal as the primary source for curriculum reform left the teachers with diminished autonomy to adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of the student which has yielded marginal gains with regards to student achievement. The major implication of this study is that it suggests a more cooperative and collaborative platform between the principal and teachers to sustain curriculum reform efforts. This work is relevant to the current study because it provides another view of curriculum management

as a cooperative, distributive process instead of being the sole responsibility of the principal.

School improvement is big business (Spillane, 2015). To improve schools and establish high performing schools, it is essential for principals to focus on instruction or the teaching and learning that occurs in the school (Spillane, 2015). Managing instruction is a complex task because it involves understanding what to teach and how to teach, selecting materials and resources to use, differentiating or understanding how to group students for mastery and defining acceptable levels of mastery instruction (Spillane, 2015). Voluminous research exists that suggests that there is a positive link between effective schools and high-quality leadership (Mestry, 2017).

Previous research on school development emphasized the influence of principal leadership on the effectiveness of schools (Salo, Nylund, & Sternstrom, 2015). Much of the previous research has sought to identify and measure which leadership practices have the greatest influence various intangible school-level variables, which in turn influences student learning (Salo, Nylund, & Sternstrom, 2015). For example, one previous study identified the following five common characteristics of school principals in high performing schools: strong principal leadership, establishing and maintaining high expectations, a strong emphasis on academics, creating and maintaining an orderly learning environment, and frequent and systematic student assessment (Mitchell, Kensler, & Tschannen-Moran, 2015). Some researchers have gone as far as positing that a focus

on instructional leadership, coupled with high expectations, is essential for schools to be successful (Mitchell, Kensler, & Tschannen-Moran, 2015).

Dr. Goldy Brown III (2016) also sought to identify the specific instructional leadership supports of a high performing principal of fifteen years using a qualitative study approach. Dr. Brown III (2016) conducted a document analysis coupled with interviews and analyzed data that could be used or replicated at other school sites. Specifically, the researcher conducted three one-hour interviews with the school principal; one-hour interviews with six teachers in the building; and one-hour interviews were conducted with two district office administrators for a total of 11 hours of interview data (Brown, 2016). The researcher also reviewed documents such as building plans and PTO agendas. Recorded findings were then transcribed.

Data analysis for this specific study highlighted the following principal supports or behaviors that were shown to be effective in increasing student achievement and improving the school's climate: (a) aligning the curriculum to state standards, (b) data-driven instruction efforts, (c) the development of common assessments, (d) the creation and maintenance of professional learning communities, (e) an effective, operational, parent-teacher organization, (f) positive behavioral program, (g) budgeting that supports the school goals, and (h) creating learning spaces with uninterrupted instruction (Brown, 2016). The study participant for this research was data-driven, using models such as the professional learning community to consistently examine student data to determine necessary adjustments to increase teacher and student performance (Brown, 2016). The

highly effective principal sets schoolwide behavioral expectations and approaches scheduling and budgeting in ways that move the school toward the accomplishment of the school's mission (Brown, 2016).

Dr. Brown's provided insight through his research into the specific practices of a school leader as it pertains to instructional leadership. While the limitations of this study included the small sample size and that most of the data collected were self-reported, this work is relevant to the current study because it illuminated specific practices which can be used as a resource to guide face to face interviews with study participants. This study also supported the conceptual framework for the current study which placed emphasis on a clearly defined mission, focus on managing instruction in addition to creating and maintaining a positive school climate (Pietsch & Tulowitzi, 2017).

Some scholars have suggested that successful school reform is dependent on teacher change which includes all of the activities designed to improve the knowledge, skills, and understanding of teachers in ways that lead to changes in how they provide instruction in the classroom (Tam, 2015). Currently, the focus is on teacher change that focuses on 'teachers as learners' and 'schools as learning communities. Common elements that comprise professional learning communities include a (a) shared purpose, (b) shared values, (c) shared leadership, (d) a collaborative culture, (e) collective inquiry, and a (f) focus on continuous improvement (Carpenter, 2015).

Brown, Bynum, and Beziat (2017) conducted a quantitative survey of 120 teachers in six elementary schools using the Qualtrics Online Survey System to explore

principal supports aimed to promote student achievement in public schools attended by low-income students (Brown et al., 2017). The researchers sought to answer three research questions that served as the basis of the study: (a) “Do categories used in previous research, pertaining to the principal’s indirect influence on student achievement for all students also apply to low-income students, and if so, (b) which categories are more important with regards to principal leadership and low-income students” (Brown et al., 2017, p. 69)? Survey questions focused on five areas: (a) instruction, (b) professional community, (c) shared leadership, (d) instructional leadership, and (e) trust in the principal.

The professional learning community (PLC) framework was used because previous researchers have demonstrated its effectiveness as it relates to improved instruction and increased student achievement (Brown et al., 2017). There has been a global recognition of the importance of the implementation of PLCs for two main reasons. First, there is a vast amount of evidence that demonstrates that teachers in PLCs can effectively improve classroom teaching which can result in enhance student achievement (Yin & Zheng, 2018). It has also been established that building PLCs in schools could improve school culture and learning environments while strengthening the school’s capacity for organizational learning (Yin & Zheng, 2018). Principals must take the lead in establishing and sustaining a conducive learning environment and appropriate school conditions that promote learning for all teachers in the learning community with a sustained focus on enhancing student learning (Yin and Zheng, 2018). The survey results

for this study yielded two important areas of focus that, based on teacher perceptions, are most important when improving the academic achievement for low-income students: (a) the principal's ability to implement the components of the professional learning community, and (b) the principal having a strong vision for the school (Brown et al., 2017). More specifically, trust in the principal and the implementation of the professional learning community framework was shown to be most influential in increasing student achievement based on teacher perceptions (Brown et al., 2017).

Utilizing qualitative methods and techniques, Balkar (2015) described the profile of an empowered school from the perceptions of teachers. The explicit purpose of the study was to determine the profile of an empowering school culture based on teacher perceptions. The research questions addressed the characteristics of an empowering school culture and teachers' reflections and perceptions of an empowering school culture.

Study participants included 43 secondary teachers working in a province in Turkey. Balkar (2015) used content and frequency analysis after conducting semi-structured interviews. Interview questions were prepared by an exhaustive literature review. Prior to the interview, the researchers gave each participant a speech lasting about 20-25 minutes regarding school culture empowerment. Study participants' answers were audio recorded and transcribed for thematic analysis.

The findings of this research included a description of the importance of emphasizing a sense of confidence, change, innovation, and systematic collaboration. Further, the results of this study included a description of the following

themes as being characteristics of an empowering school culture: teacher efficacy, job satisfaction, strong social relationships, and strong principal leadership. Balkar (2015) also found that empowering teachers and other team members was important as it pertains to moving toward the direction of the school's mission and vision. Empowered school cultures include clarity about the roles and expectations of each team member driven by the school's mission statement (Balkar, 2015).

While teaching has been done in isolation, finds from previous research included evidence that transforming schools into places where teachers work collaboratively may increase student achievement (Ronfelt, Farmer, McQueen, & Grissom, 2015). This study is relevant to the current research because it highlighted the importance of establishing and maintaining conditions through which instruction can be consistently monitored especially since it is a data-driven process. The findings from previous studies have also included descriptions of the clear connection between the implementation of professional learning communities and the use of quality and timely data that allowed principals and teachers to regularly monitor student learning (Antinluoma, Ilomaki, Lahti-Nuuttila, & Toom, 2018). In the professional learning community, teachers and principals can transform student performance data into actionable steps aimed to increase learning and achievement (Antinluoma, Ilomaki, Lahti-Nuuttila, & Toom, 2018). This research also provided evidence that by implementing the components of the professional learning community which includes a focus on data-driven instruction, principals can have a direct influence on student achievement and progress.

In previous decades, scholars have sought to determine and describe the nature of instructional leadership practices that have the greatest impact on student learning (Hallinger, Nguyen, Truong, & Nguyen, 2017). While researchers identified a core set of practices that comprise the instructional leadership framework, the degree of implementation varies greatly depending on the practitioner's context (Hallinger, Nguyen, Truong, & Nguyen, 2017). Terosky (2016) conducted a qualitative study to highlight the effective instructional leadership practices of K-12 principals. Grounded in the concept of agency, the researcher examined the instructional leadership practices of 18 New York City principals through a four-phase study with data collections strategies that consisted of interviews, time surveys, document reviews, and observations (Terosky, 2016). The concept of agency highlighted the principals' assumption that instructional leadership practices were grounded in learning which required time for planning for principals and the teaching staff, and that these instructional leadership practices were also influenced by teachers and staff (Terosky, 2016).

One result of this study was that effective instructional leaders prioritized instructional matters, carefully planning their own time and schedules (Terosky, 2016). Study participants also noted that if their time was not intentionally scheduled wherein instructional leadership practices were prioritized, that noninstructional matters such as emails and meetings would consume the entire school day (Terosky, 2016). Participants in this study implemented four types of behaviors that prioritized learning or instructional leadership practices: (a) participants implemented practices that allocated most of their

time during the day to working and collaborating with individual teachers or teams of teachers on instructional goals or professional development, teacher observations, and spending time with students; (b) principal's instructional time was structured such that formal accountability measures around instructional goals were the focus; (c) developing and implementing systems aimed at minimizing distractions, streamlining routines, and communicating areas of responsibility; and (d) delegating managerial tasks that would distract from implementing instructional leadership behaviors (Terosky, 2016).

One implication of this study is that the results could be used to inform future professional learning for new and veteran principals. In addition, the work of Terosky (2016) highlights specific instructional leadership practices implemented by successful principals which are an implication of this work, but this also justifies the relevance of this work to the current study. This work supports previous research regarding specific principal behaviors deemed to be effective for improving student achievement. This work also supports the conceptual framework for this study.

Effective instructional leadership practices are an important aspect of the principal's role because it can lead to improved student performance and increase the quality of education for students (Ghavifekr, Ibrahim, Chellapan, Sukumaran, & Subramaniam, 2015). In order for principals to succeed at creating quality educational opportunities for students, they must be effective and efficient instructional leaders (Ghavifekr, Ibrahim, Chellapan, Sukumaran, & Subramaniam, 2015). Effective leaders

align their instructional leadership practices with the goal of increasing student performance (Hvidston, Range, McKim, & Mette, 2015).

Ghavifekr, Ibrahim, Chellapan, Sukumaran, and Subramanian (2015) conducted a quantitative study to identify the factors affecting the instructional leadership practices of principals in vocational and technical colleges based on the teachers' perceptions. The researcher's aim for this study was to also investigated the relationship between instructional leadership practices with (a) shared mission and clear goals, (b) continued monitoring of teachers' progress, and (c) promotion of professional growth. The sample population included 80 teachers in vocational and technical colleges in Kuala Lumpur.

The researchers used a questionnaire as the research instrument. The questionnaire consisted of three items measured using a 5-point Likert scale that ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The researchers employed stratified random sampling as the quantitative research method because stratified random sampling is an appropriate data collection strategy for collecting samples and responses from a scattered population. Multiple regression analysis was also used.

The data analysis for this study included a description of the perceptions of teachers about the four most effective instructional leadership practices were (a) professional leadership, (b) a shared mission and clear goals, (c) continuous monitoring of teachers' progress, and (d) professional growth of the teachers. Specifically, monitoring teacher's progress included regular classroom visits, assessing the effectiveness of the instructional program and observing and supporting the improvement

of classroom instruction. Principal practices such as the ability to clearly articulate the school's mission and vision and organize activities around the mission; the principal's willingness to consistently visit the classroom to observe instruction; designing relevant professional development activities; and organizing workshops around the teachers' interests were all principal leadership behaviors that were most influential based on the perspectives of the 80 teachers that comprised the sample population.

This study is relevant to the current study because the findings support the conceptual framework for this study includes an emphasis on the importance of managing or monitoring instruction as an effective instructional leadership practice. The results of this study can be beneficial for policy and decision makers who plan professional development for school principals and other instructional leaders. In addition, this study can help current practitioners prioritize their daily school practices such they are in alignment with the core tenets instructional leadership framework which include defining the school mission, maintaining a positive school climate and monitoring instruction.

Previous research has shown that school principals who positively influence student achievement insist on and expect high performance (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). After establishing the goals and objectives of the schools, effective principals not only communicate those high expectations for learning but they also regularly monitor student performance and provide regular feedback to teachers (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Consistently and systematically monitoring instruction provides the teacher with the sense he or she is supported and expected to accomplish (Hitt & Tucker, 2016).

Onuma (2016) conducted a quantitative study to examine principals' performance as it related to monitoring and supervising instruction in public secondary schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Onuma (2016) sought to answer research questions that pertained to the impact of monitoring instruction on staff development and the impact of ineffective monitoring of instruction by principals. In other words, how does monitoring instruction influence staff development and what happens when principals ineffectively monitor instruction in the school building? Monitoring instruction clearly defined for this study included the perspective that the principal is the change agent who is responsible for overseeing and inspecting the academic instruction of teachers to determine weak areas, facilitate the selection of a plan for change and observe to ensure that the change has been implemented to increase the quality of instruction for students.

The research by Onuma (2016) was descriptive in nature and employed the use of stratified random sampling as the research method. The sample population included teachers who provided instruction in urban settings and 301 rural teachers. The research instrument was a questionnaire titled principals' performance of supervision of instruction in secondary schools in the Central Education Zone of Ebonyi State.

The findings from Onuma's (2016) study revealed that the failure of the school principal to effectively monitor instruction has a negative impact on teaching and learning as well as curriculum implementation. In addition, this study revealed that the lack of effectively monitoring instruction in the school building could indicate poor instructional leadership skills as it pertains to the principal. If principals aim to improve

student achievement, they must ensure that the school's curriculum is being implemented correctly because this improves teaching and learning increasing the overall quality of education for students. The results of the study supported the conceptual framework of effective instructional for the current study which posits that effective instructional leadership includes defining the school mission, creating a positive school climate and effectively monitoring instruction. This study also helps to solidify the work of previous researchers who also emphasized the importance of monitoring instructions. For example, Day, Qing, Gu and Sammons (2016) also found that in high performing schools, systematic classroom observations and increasing the use of data-informed decision making to improve the quality of teaching and learning were consistent practices. More specifically, these researchers (Day, Qing, & Sammons, Impact of leadership on student outcomes: How successful school leaders use transformational and instructional strategies to make a difference, 2016) found that in high performing schools, principals used the practice of monitoring instruction to collect data which was then utilized to identify teachers who needed extra classroom support.

There is no shortage of research that stresses the importance of the building level principal as it pertains to developing students academically and improving the quality of teacher instruction (Leo, 2015). To improve student achievement, principals must provide support and guide teachers to ensure that teachers are focused on the real work in schools which is learning (Carpenter, 2015). Real teacher work must have a direct impact on student learning and achievement (Carpenter, 2015).

Leo (2015) conducted research to identify and analyze the professional norms regarding school improvement focusing on the pedagogical leadership of school principals. Leo wrote that norms are important in human interaction because they reduce uncertainty, they set standards and provide a clear understanding of appropriate behaviors for given situations (Leo, 2015). Pedagogical leadership refers to the learning processes scrutinized to meet student learning targets (Male & Palailogou, 2015). More specifically, leadership pedagogy can be understood as those practices that align the school with activities and practices that enhance teaching and learning to improve student outcomes (Male & Palailogou, 2015). It involves the principal's understanding as to how learning occurs and those practices that improve student learning (Male & Palailogou, 2015).

Leo (2015) used a web-based questionnaire to collect data in this quantitative study. The questionnaire was sent to 4,071 school leaders with a response rate of 57 percent. The questionnaire consisted of 37 questions in total, answered by 1,940 school leaders, principals, and pre-school directors. Participant responses were processed and coded using SPSS statistical software package. This research was guided by three major research questions which addressed the following: (a) which tasks principals prioritized as pedagogical leaders, (b) what the source of external expectations was as it pertained to principals, and (c) with whom school principals communicated about pedagogical leadership issues.

The results of the study revealed that with regards to the most important professional norms of the principals, principals in the study prioritized three major tasks

or practices: (a) presence or being close to teaching and learning processes; (b) quality development which included monitoring instruction, analyzing and evaluating student performance measures; and (c) creating and implementing regular performance-based student assessments, including formative assessment and grading of students. Consistently, principals in Leo's (2015) study responded that monitoring instruction was and should be a professional norm. This study supports the current work on the instructional leadership practices of successful principals because it adds to the emphasis on monitoring instruction as an important and effective aspect of instructional leadership.

Time is the scarcest resource and unless it is managed, nothing else can be managed (Khan, Khan, Ahmad, & Naseer-ud-Din, 2015). Effective time management by school principals requires self-awareness, personal commitment, discipline, good organizational skills, and planning (Khan et al., 2015). Grisson, Loeb, and Hajime (2015) explored principal time management by administering a time management inventory to about 300 principals in Miami-Dade County Public Schools. The explicit purpose of this research was to investigate the non-education related research that suggested that effective time management skills may help principals meet job demands, reduce job stress, and improve their performance. Scores were analyzed descriptively and used predict time-use data collected via in-person observations, a survey-based measure of job stress, and measures of perceived job efficacy administered to assistant principals and teachers in the school.

The findings of the research conducted by Grisson et al. (2015) demonstrated that principals who utilized effective time management skills were able to spend more time monitoring and managing instruction and less time developing interpersonal relationship in the school building. Perhaps because of this tradeoff, the authors find that associations between principal time management skills and subjective assessments of principal performance are mixed. In addition, the results of the research indicated that effective time management skills are associated with lower principal job stress.

The practical implication of this research may be that building principal capacity in effective time management strategies may assist principals in knowing how to increase time spent on high priority tasks such as managing instruction. This work is relevant to the current study because it provides insight as to how to increase efforts to manage instruction, a core component of instructional leadership identified by Pietsch and Tulowitzki (2017) who identified the core components of instructional leadership that serve as a part of the conceptual framework for this study. Previously cited research has established the connection between managing instruction and positive student outcomes.

Understanding the role that school leadership plays in school improvement, it is necessary to develop deeper insight into the practices of building principals. Cosner and Jones (2016) conducted a meta-analytic research review to explore the schoolwide improvement efforts of low performing schools. The researchers identified three broad categories that describe considerations and actions for principals seeking to increase student performance student learning in low-performing schools facing conditions of

accountability. The categories included goal setting and planning for goal achievement; promoting and participating in teacher learning; and planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and curriculum. Relevant to the concept of managing instruction, the researchers found that it is important for leaders to create and maintain a laser-like focus on teaching and learning. Specifically, implementing school procedures that promote high levels of learning among faculty and students and that protect instructional time are paramount for school improvement efforts. Other strategies necessary for the effective management of instruction include creating a master schedule that maximizes instructional time, reducing transition time, and modeling and promoting a "bell to bell" instructional mentality are all important actions for managing and monitoring instruction. The practical implication for this research is the needs to offer more targeted support to school principals in low performing schools. This research is relevant to the current study because it supports the need to focus on managing and monitoring instruction to generate increased student outcomes and increased academic growth which supports the conceptual framework for the current study.

Positive School Climate

School climate has been studied extensively because of the connection between positive school climates and positive student outcomes with regards to academic performance, positive behavior and social-emotional outcomes for youth (O'Malley, Voight, Renshaw, & Eklund, 2015). If school principals aim to improve student achievement, both a strong sense of academic press and a sense of community are

necessary (Seashore, Murphy, & Smylie, 2016). To improve student performance, a strong sense of academic press is necessary (Seashore et al., 2016). It is also clear that establishing clear expectations about the environment in which students and teachers work is also critical to the academic success of the student (Seashore et al, 2016). To neglect either strong academic press or the importance of establishing schoolwide expectations through the sustaining of a positive school climate would be deleterious (Seashore et.al, 2016).

Creating and maintaining a positive school climate that is conducive to learning is the third dimension of the conceptual framework for this research (Gurley, Anast-May, O'Neal, Lee, & Shores, 2015). Effective instructional leaders model and demonstrate behavior that shows that learning is the top priority of the school. School climate factors are directly associated with student achievement (Alhosani, Singh, & Al Nahyan, 2017). Positive school climates provide a safe and secure environment for students (Alhosanni et al., 2017). Creating a positive school climate involves increasing and maintaining parental involvement and building positive relationships between teacher and student and between student and his or her peers and peer group which has been solidly connected to positive student outcomes by previous research (Alhosani et al., 2017). Alhosani et al. (2017) sought to develop a conceptual model of students' academic achievement related to school climate by conducting a literature review of previous research pertinent to factors that influence the academic achievement of the students.

Alhosani et al. (2017) conducted an exhaustive search of previous research and found that the combination of school leadership and climate affect student achievement and academic outcomes. Understanding how to create a positive school climate that is balanced with a strong sense of academic press can be difficult (Seashore et al., 2016). However, the results of this study support the conceptual framework of the current study which purports that creating and maintaining an effective school climate has a positive effect on student achievement. This finding also substantiates the importance of effective instructional leadership practices when attempting to create a positive school climate and create school environments where students learn at high levels. The results were also mediated and influenced by the level of parental involvement in the education of the student. The implication of this research is that it provides a framework concerning the factors influencing academic growth and achievement. In addition, this research could also serve as a reference for which school leaders and policy-makers can consider enhancing the academic achievement of students within the context of the school environment.

With the increased emphasis on improving the quality of education for students worldwide, there has also been increased emphasis on the importance of school leadership practices as it relates to creating conducive learning environments for teachers and students (Hitt and Tucker, 2016). O'Malley, Voight, Renshaw, and Eklund (2015) also studied the effects of creating and maintaining a positive school climate on the academic performance of homeless students and students from low socio-economic

backgrounds. The researchers tested a hypothesis that stated that a positive school climate negates or lowers the risk factor associated with home-school effects by examining the moderating effects of students' school climate based on the perceptions students who represented the sample or target population for the study (O'Malley et al., 2015). This quantitative study included 902 public high schools in California wherein the researchers analyzed responses from over 490,000 students in Grades 9 and 11 using a multilevel, random-intercept approach (O'Malley et al., 2015).

The major variables in the study conducted by O'Malley et al. (2015) were family dynamics and school climate. Digging deeper into the family dynamic variable, O'Malley et al. (2015) closely examined the following: single and two-parent households, homelessness, and the perceptions of students living in foster care settings. The results of the study were that students who learned in schools wherein a positive school climate were characteristic of the school self-reported higher-grade point averages and overall school satisfaction (O'Malley et al., 2015).

This study is relevant to the current research because it provides evidence of the positive effects of school climate on academic performance and other desirable student outcomes. Pietsch and Tulowitzi (2017) proposed that one of the three major components of instructional leadership included creating and maintaining a positive school climate. The major implication of this research is that the findings of this research can be used to support administrative efforts to prioritize the maintenance of a positive

school climate when attempting to improve student performance and increase the students' overall satisfaction with their school experience.

School climate includes almost every aspect of the school learning community (Wang & Degol, 2016). Some researchers have defined school climate as including the academic, community, safety, and institutional environment dimensions of the school which would include features of the school environment that influence the student's cognitive, behavioral and psychological development (Wang & Degol, 2016). Positive school climate has been associated with improvements in the academic performance of students along with increases in student engagement (Shukla, Cornell, & Konold, 2016)

Although previous literature has made a solid connection between student outcomes and a positive school climate, there may be within school differences to be considered as it relates to creating and maintaining a positive school climate conducive to learning for all students (Shukla et al., 2016). Shukla et al. (2016) conducted a study to examine the within-school differences of school climate as it relates to student outcomes and at-risk behaviors. The study participants included 47,631 high school students who provided information about the perception of school climate within each school through survey analysis and multilevel latent class modeling. Latent class modeling allowed the researcher to identify underlying subgroups who share distinctive perceptions of their school climate.

The results of the research revealed four significantly different student profile types that were labeled positive climate, medium climate-low bullying, medium climate-

high bullying, and schools with positive school climates also reported earning higher grades than did students with negative perceptions of their school's climate. The major implication of this study is that provides additional insight about the importance of a positive school climate and how focusing on various factors associated with school climate can allow students to develop a sense of belonging in school environments. This study is relevant to the current research because it provides more detailed information through which the research can explore the various parameters and characteristics of school climate across multiple contexts.

When students perceive a school climate and learning environment where teachers are supportive and characterized by high expectations of all students, student achievement increases, and dropout rates decrease (Jia, Konold, & Cornell, 2015). The systematic analysis of school climate began in the 1980s (Kwong & Davis, 2015). Since then, research on the influence of school climate on various aspects of a school's learning community has found links between school climate and (a) teacher commitment, (b) motivation to learn, (c) student identity development, (d) student dropout rates, (e) sense of school community, (f) school satisfaction, (g) school violence, and (h) academic achievement (Kwong & Davis, 2015). Studies conducted by researchers such as Vasant Borkar (2016) and Warner et al. (2017) all support the premise that creating and maintaining a positive school climate is helpful for addressing a myriad of school problems faced by today's students. Previous studies have found that creating and maintaining a positive school climate helps to decrease student and teacher retention

helps to decrease suspensions and bullying while increasing student achievement, motivation to learn, and the students' psychological well-being (Borkar, 2016) (Warner and Heindel, 2017).

Kwong and Davis (2015) used the Educational Longitudinal Survey to explore and describe the relationship between school climate and academic press. The researchers collected data from 16, 258 students in 1954 schools nationwide. The two major variables for this study was school climate and student academic achievement and involved a survey of a nationally representative cohort of students beginning in their sophomore year of high school (Kwong & Davis, 2015). The researchers also examined survey data in two additional waves when the students were seniors in high school and two years after their senior years.

The results of this research indicated that how students perceived the school climate was predictive of academic success in mathematics and reading. In schools where students had a negative perception of their learning environment or school climate, lower levels of academic achievement were observed in the same content areas (Kwong & Davis, 2015). The implications of this research emphasized the importance of school climate and student achievement which pointed to the need by instructional leaders to focus on creating school climates that are safe, encouraging, challenging and empowering (Kwong & Davis, 2015). This research reinforces the previous research that described a positive relationship between student achievement and school climate (Kwong & Davis, 2015).

School climates are the products of a school's "attention to fostering safety; promoting a supportive academic, disciplinary, and physical environment; and encouraging and maintaining respectful, trusting, and caring relationships throughout the school community" (Berkowitz, Moore, Astor, & Benbenishty, 2017, p. 431). The website for the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments posited that creating a positive school climate is critical to the success of a school (NCSSLE, 2018). Effective principals foster cooperative efforts and maintain an ideal working climate because research demonstrates that creating and maintaining a positive climate promotes optimal growth for teachers and students (Kempa et al., 2017). However, creating a positive school climate is a complex process (NCSSLE, 2018). In addition, in schools wherein the school's leader is attempting to transform the school environment to increase student achievement, student satisfaction, and teacher satisfaction, research supports the following characteristics as being desirable of a transformational leader: leaders who desire a greater connection with staff, leaders who promote collegiality, build capacity for change, provide opportunities for teacher growth and professional development (McCarley, Peters & Decman, 2016).

Research on the use of the professional learning community framework has shown the effectiveness of using this model to improve school climates and cultures and increase student achievement (Carpenter, 2015). Common elements that comprise professional learning communities include a (a) shared purpose, (b) shared values, (c) shared leadership, (d) a collaborative culture, (e) collective inquiry, and a (f) focus on

continuous improvement (Carpenter, 2015). Brown, Bynum, and Beziat (2017) conducted a quantitative survey of 120 teachers in six elementary schools using the Qualtrics Online Survey System to explore principal supports aimed to promote student achievement in public schools attended by low-income students (Brown et al., 2017). The researchers sought to answer three research questions that served as the basis of the study: (a) "Do categories used in previous research, pertaining to the principal's indirect influence on student achievement for all students also apply to low-income students, and if so, (b) which categories are more important with regards to principal leadership and low-income students" (Brown et al., 2017, p. 69)? Survey questions focused on five areas: (a) instruction, (b) professional community, (4) shared leadership, (5) instructional leadership, and (6) trust in the principal.

The professional learning community framework was used because previous researchers have demonstrated its effectiveness as it relates to improved instruction and increased student achievement (Brown et al., 2017). The survey results yielded two important areas that, based on teacher perceptions, are most important when improving the academic achievement for low-income students: (a) the principal's ability to implement the components of the professional learning community, and (b) the principal having a strong vision for the school (Brown et al., 2017). More specifically, trust in the principal and the implementation of the professional learning community framework was shown to be most influential in increasing student achievement based on teacher perceptions (Brown et al., 2017).

There is conclusive research that supports the premise that school and classroom climates can have a positive influence on the academic outcomes of students, thus potentially reducing academic achievement gaps between students and schools of different socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds (Berkowitz, Moore, Astor, & Benbenishty, 2017). Conducting a meta-analysis of research dating back to the year 2000, Berkowitz et al. (2017) sought to discover whether a positive school climate can disrupt the associations between low SES and poor academic achievement (Berkowitz et al., 2017). The results of the meta-analysis revealed that positive climate was found to mitigate the negative contribution of weak SES background on academic achievement resulting in a positive influence on student achievement (Berkowitz et al., 2017). This study is relevant to the current study because it supports the conceptual framework for this study that highlights the components of instructional leadership which includes creating and maintaining a positive school climate.

Seeking to present a conceptual model on student achievement and consolidate the research findings into a comprehensive model, Ali, Singh and Al Nahyan (2017) conducted a literature review to identify factors that influenced students' academic achievement. The empirical literature was analyzed to present a comprehensive, working model (Ali et al., 2017). The study concluded that that school leadership and climate together had a positive influence on the academic achievement of the students, but was this influence was mediated by the involvement of the parents of the students (Ali et al., 2017). In sum, efforts to create a positive school climate should focus on creating a

school environment wherein the students and the parents can come together to create a school-parent relationship.

The study by Ali et al. (2017) found that student growth is increased when students, the parents, and the teachers come together in a classroom situation and all have shared goals (Ali et al., 2017). The relevance of this work to the current study and the study implication is that it provided additional support for the previous research that established the importance of creating a creating and maintaining a positive school climate as a component of effective instructional leadership practices. The work of Ali et al. (2017) also supports the framework of the current study that established a connection between shared values, a clearly defined school mission and desirable student outcomes.

Shindler, Jones, Williams, Taylor, and Cardenas (2016) also examined the relationship between school climate and student achievement (Shindler et al., 2016). The purpose of the study by Shindler et al. (2016) was twofold: (a) to explore the relationship between student achievement and various elements within the domain of school climate, and (b) to examine the nature and potential causality of that relationship. This study also sought to derive practical implications which included a conceptual framework for school climate quality and the creation of an operational roadmap for moving from a less functional to more functional climate.

Shindler et al. (2016) used a sample size of 230 schools drawn from a large, diverse geographical area which included urban school districts in five states.
The school assessment team administered the Alliance for the Study

of School Climate (ASSC) School Climate Assessment Instrument (SCAI). Each assessment team also incorporated a standard protocol. Focus group data were also collected.

The results of the study confirmed a strong, positive relationship between the quality of a school's climate and student academic achievement levels (Shindler et al., 2016). This study is relevant to the study because it substantiates the importance of creating and maintaining a positive school climate when attempting to increase student achievement. Practical implications from this study promoted a mindset that prompted a "psychology of success" rather than a psychology of failure which often resulted in underperformance as it related to student achievement (Shindler et al., 2016).

With the renewed interest in improving students' academic performance, there has also been increased interest in the various factors impacting student performance in schools (Goddard, Goddard, Eun, & Miller, 2015). While guiding theories differ, many studies examining the relationship between school characteristics and academic achievement generally tend to rely on the argument that the normative environments of schools have the power to influence group members to behave in ways consistent with group norms (Goddard, Goddard, Eun, & Miller, 2015). The school's climate can positively or negatively influence students in two ways: (a) it can promote or hinder the acquisition of knowledge and skills; and (b) it can promote or hinder the transmission of societal norms, values, and ideas (Maxwell, 2016).

Positive school climates can shape the quality of the interactions of all students, teachers, parents, and school personnel (Wang & Degol, 2016). Creating and maintaining a positive school climate should involve a reflection of the norms, values, and goals that represent the broader educational and social missions of the school (Wang & Degol, 2016). Wang and Degol (2016) evaluated the existing literature on school climate to highlight the strengths, weakness, and gaps in the ways researchers have approached school climate as a construct (Wang & Degol, 2016). The researchers defined school climate from the perspective of examining its four areas: academic, community, safety, and institutional environment (Wang & Degol, 2016).

Based on a review of the literature, Wang and Degol (2016) found that high achieving schools-elementary through high school- emphasize the importance of establishing a positive school climate by emphasizing a commitment to high academic standards. Further, high performing schools are characterized by effective leadership from teachers and principals who believe in their ability to improve student outcomes (Wang et al., 2016). Students in elementary schools where teachers set high but reasonable goals, possess a positive belief system about their students and are committed to students' academic success consistently have higher standardized test scores (Wang & Degol, 2016).

The research by Wang and Degol (2016) is relevant to the current study because it supports the current study's framework that supports the connection between a positive school climate and student achievement. The implications of this research include (a) a

suggested area of focus for district professional development for new and veteran principals, (b) and a suggested area of focus for school leaders whose goals include increasing student achievement. This study also informs my own school leadership efforts because this research, along with the research previously mentioned, emphasizes the importance of a positive school climate as it relates to school improvement efforts.

Turnaround programs for consistently low performing schools have also become a central focus since the passage of No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top programs (Heissel & Ladd, 2018). Schools that serve as the focus of turnaround initiatives experience a range of problems such as low test scores, chronic student behavior problems, poor school leadership, and high staff turnover rates (Heissel & Ladd, 2018). While there have been piecemeal efforts to address such aspects as class size and teacher turnover, whole-school reform efforts aim to address the range of problems such schools face, including weak leadership, low teacher morale, low expectations for students, and poor school climate (Heissel & Ladd, 2018).

Cucchiara, Rooney, and Robertson-Kraft (2015) explored school turnaround and climate or positive working conditions as a strategy for school reform. The researchers used interviews and focus groups that included 86 teachers from 13 schools during the beginning stages of a turnaround in large urban districts (Cucchiara et al., 2015). Interviews were taped, transcribed, and coded to identify themes (Cucchiara et al., 2015).

The findings of the study revealed that more effective school turnaround efforts were those with positive school climates and positive working environments (Cucchiara

et al., 2015). Teachers serving in learning communities identified as having positive working conditions indicated that they appreciated the organizational stability, support from administrators, and the clear focus on instruction and climate which contrasted with teachers serving in schools that reported higher levels of (Cucchiara et al., 2015). Stable environments were organized with clear communication with high levels of predictability (Cucchiara et al., 2015). Expectations were spelled out at the beginning of the year and expectations were modeled consistently throughout (Cucchiara et al., 2015). A major implication of this research is that turnaround schools cannot succeed without addressing teachers' concerns and create conditions school climates wherein they feel supported, respected, and capable in their work (Cucchiara et al., 2015). This study is also relevant to the current study because it emphasizes the importance of school climate with regards to its linkage to a variety of school aspects that could positively influence student performance and increase the quality of the student's educational experience.

The value of professional development as a component of establishing a positive school climate has also been well documented in the literature. School and district leaders play an integral role in the planning and implementation of professional development that supports teacher growth and change (Whitworth & Chiu, 2015). Teacher changer represents a change in beliefs, understandings, and practices (Whitworth & Chiu, 2015). Understanding the critical role of school district leaders, it is important to understand that school district leaders are more than contextual factors (Whitworth & Chiu, 2015). Effective professional development can result in increases in teacher learning and

changes in attitudes and beliefs which subsequently changing teacher practices. Changes in teacher practices can ultimately lead to increased student achievement (Whitworth & Chiu, 2015). Supporting the impact of continuous professional development (CPD) on teacher practices and student learning is a study conducted by Goodyear (2017) which addresses the potential of continuous professional development to offset and cause more positive, sustained effects on teacher practices and student learning when compared to traditional one-time professional development sessions (Goodyear, 2017). The focus for the continuous professional development sessions was cooperative learning. Cooperative learning is a pedagogical model focused on students working in small groups to learn optimally (Goodyear, 2017). Small groups are organized so that students work independently in positive interdependent learning groups wherein learning occurs when students engage in promotive interactions such as encouraging each other's efforts (Goodyear, 2017). Using a qualitative case study design, Goodyear sought to examine the impact of a sustained school-based, tailored, and supported CPD program on teachers' practices and students' learning. The researcher collected data from six case studies from 29 video-recorded sessions, 108 interviews, and 35 journals.

The results of Goodyear's study revealed through continuous professional development, teachers could improve their pedagogical approach to instruction and advance student learning (Goodyear, 2017). This study contributes to the already existing literature that supports the potential of continuous professional development to improve teaching practices and increase student learning. The results of this study also support the

conceptual framework for the current study wherein managing and monitoring instruction was listed as a major component of effective instructional leadership practices. Creating a variety of opportunities for sustainable, relevant professional development includes behavior and practices consistent with monitoring instruction.

Contextual Influences

School leadership styles and approaches must be adapted to meet the needs of the context in which styles and approaches must be adapted to fit the needs of the specific schools in which they serve (Bush, 2018). There is a large amount of research that describes the generic practices and behaviors associated with instructional leadership as it pertains to the principal (Hallinger, Bringing context out of the shadows of leadership, 2018). However, missing from the research is a comprehensive framework that presents the influence of various contexts or contextual influences on instructional leadership behaviors and practices (Hallinger, Bringing context out of the shadows of leadership, 2018).

Hallinger (2018) examined the following factors or contextual influences on instructional leadership: institutional contexts, national contexts, economic contexts, political contexts, and school improvement contexts. After a comprehensive review of previous literature, Hallinger (2018) concluded that instructional leadership behaviors and practices, especially instructional leadership behaviors as it related to the amount of time that principals could allocate towards these practices were influenced by contextual influences such as centralized districts, resources allocation, parental involvement, school

location, political and national climates as well as the historical context of each school (Hallinger, Bringing context out of the shadows of leadership, 2018).

The implications of Hallinger's (2018) research on contextual influences is that this work could provide the reader with information as to how to adapt and refine leadership practices to the needs, constraints, resources, and opportunities of specific schools (Hallinger, Bringing context out of the shadows of leadership, 2018). Hallinger's research also adds to the limited research on each of the contextual factors explored. Hallinger's work is relevant to the current study which addresses the characteristics of successful elementary principals as instructional leaders because it provides additional factors worthy of consideration when describing the characteristics of successful elementary principals as instructional leaders. Considering context also informs the current study because it addresses the question of whether successful principals were successful because of the characteristics or prior achievement of the students enrolled or because of the principals' ability to adapt to the needs of their schools.

While there has been an increasing interest in the effectiveness of principal leadership as it pertains to student achievement, the issue of principal leadership must not be constrained to the examination of a generic set of principles. Rather, these practices must be examined and explored the various context in which the leader practices (Truong, Hallinger, & Sanga, 2017). Adapting leadership to context requires the application of a variety of leadership styles instead of a singular approach (Bush, 2018). Effective or successful school leaders engage within the school context to influence the

core business of schools which is learning (Gurr, 2015). Successful school leaders use interventions to build capacity in teaching and learning within the learning community where he or she serves students (Gurr, 2015). Instructional leadership must be context specific and reflective of the unique structure that supports the school as well as reflective of the barriers or limitations to shared responsibility, developing leadership capacity and positively influencing student progress (Costello, 2015).

Using semi-structured interviewing as part of their phenomenological, qualitative study, Wieczorek and Manard (2018) analyzed data from the reflective responses of six novice principals serving students in a rural state in the United States. The researchers posited that transitions in all contexts are difficult but focused their research on the contextual considerations of principals serving in rural communities (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). The researchers sought to describe how principals serving in rural setting interpreted and managed their instructional leadership responsibilities (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). The research questions for this study addressed the leadership challenges faced by rural principals as they transition to the principalship and how rural principals interpret the instructional leadership challenges.

The findings of this study indicated that principals found it very difficult to balance their professional and personal lines in these small communities (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). The principal's difficulty with balancing their professional and personal lives was especially difficult because of the community's expectation that the principal is visible and engaged in the community (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). Due to budgetary

constraints, these novice principals also wrestled with having to manage overlapping district and building level responsibilities (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018).

The implications of this study demonstrated the need to build capacity in novice leaders serving learning communities in rural settings. Specifically, this study demonstrates the need to help rural leaders understand their instructional leadership expectations and develop strategies for managing those expectations against the social context and community expectations. This study is relevant to the phenomenon under study in the current research because it adds to the previous research pertaining to the influence of context and contextual considerations and on instructional leadership practices.

Findings from a growing number of studies have increased attention and appreciation of the linkage between the practices of leaders and school contexts Clarke and O'Donoughue (2017) wrote that the amount of research that explores the influence of context on principal or leadership behaviors is not great. To bring more attention to this topic, Clarke and O'Donoughue (2017) conducted a meta-analysis of the existing literature to stress the importance of context as it relates to principal leadership. The researchers defined the context and provided the reader with a variety of studies or previous research on each of the contextual influences examined in their study. Topics explored by Clarke and O'Donoughue (2017) included material or resources allocation and external influences including the national and political climate.

The researchers, Clarke and O'Donoughue (2017), concluded that effective leaders are not only sensitive to the contexts that influence their leadership practices but they also possess the necessary skill to be able to adapt to the contextual influences to meet the needs of their students. The researchers wrote that while their research was not exhaustive, their study added to the limited research that exists concerning the influence of context on the instructional practices of principals. This study is relevant to the current study because as with the other research on contextual influences, it stresses the need for effective principals in their role of instructional leaders to be able to recognize and be knowledgeable about the contextual influences that impact their practices as well as the importance of their adaptation to the influences that impact their instructional leadership decisions.

In school communities, structural, compositional and other school dynamics influence variance in school outcomes (Bellibas & Liu, 2018). The work of the school principal involves engaging within the school context to influence student growth and school outcomes through interventions in teaching and learning, school capacity building, and the wider context (Gurr, 2015). Tan (2018) explored the influence of community context on principal leadership behaviors. Community contexts refer to factors such parental involvement, SES status of the students, where the school is situated (urban versus rural), community conflicts and the amount of diversity present in the school community (Hallinger, Bringing context out of the shadows of leadership, 2018). Effective leadership strategies with regards to community context are crafted and

personalized based on the community context in which the principal serves (Hallinger, Bringing context out of the shadows of leadership, 2018).

Examining the indirect effects of principal leadership on math achievement for 254, 475 students, all around 15-years old and enrolled in 10, 313 schools, Tan (2017) framed his work using contingency theory which asserts that the principal agency and the effectiveness of leadership is the contingent upon the community and environmental challenges. Students were divided into three categories- disadvantage, average and privileged. Participants included school principals and students who participated in PISA 2012 which measured the 15-year old's proficiency in applying their knowledge and skills learned in reading, mathematics, and science to authentic problems. PISA also collected data from students regarding their educational experiences and attitudes, and from school principals concerning school contexts.

Results also showed that principal leadership effects accounted for a greater proportion of between-school achievement variance for all three groups-disadvantaged, average, and privileged. Specifically, instructional leadership behaviors had the largest positive effect on all three groups overall for all categories explored. This study contributed to the literature by examining contextual influences on the leadership–achievement relationship, specifically when exploring principal adaptability to various socio-economic groups and contextual influences such as community influences on principal leadership behaviors. The research conducted by Tan (2017) that explored the influence of community context on principal leadership behaviors is relevant to the

current research because it supports the work of Hallinger who highlighted the contextual influences on instructional leadership behaviors and practices. Contextual influences as it relates to instructional leadership practices make up a portion of the conceptual framework for the current study.

In present-day Vietnam, Confucianism is still widely prevalent. “Confucianism has been defined as a worldview, an ethical system, a political ideology and a scholarly tradition developed from the teachings of the Chinese philosopher Confucius” (Truong, Hallinger, & Sanga, 2017, p. 79). In Confucianism, the individual is not seen as a detached entity, but as a reflection of his/her human relationships (Truong, Hallinger, & Sanga, 2017). To add to the limited research related to principal decision making in various social-cultural context or national cultural context, Truong et al. (2017) conducted an in-depth qualitative study to explore the decision-making practices of Vietnamese school principals respond about their socio-cultural context.

Troung et al. (2017) used Hofstede’s ‘dimensions of national culture’ to support the analysis of Vietnamese school leadership. The researchers constructed case studies of principal decision-making in three Vietnamese schools with findings that highlighted the influence of socio-cultural values on school leadership in Vietnam. Data collection methods used in the study included interviews, observations, questionnaires, and document analyses, but the data presented in this report are largely drawn from interviews.

Results of the study revealed that while leaders participating in this study indicated that teacher involvement in decision making was beneficial for motivating teachers' sense of responsibility to the school, mobilizing collective brainpower, and expanding grassroots democracy (Truong, Hallinger, & Sanga, 2017). However, seeking actions or decisions by school principals to seek staff input was very limited (Truong et al., 2017). Further, the researchers reported that seeking out divergent opinions of subordinates was conflicted not only with the Confucian norm of deference to age and hierarchical status but also with assumptions underlying the political authority of the single Party state (Truong et al., 2017). It was understood that empowering subordinates incurred the potential risk of threatening their legitimacy as leaders (Truong et al., 2017).

This study highlighted the relationship between Confucian cultural values and the influence of those cultural values on principal decision making. This study validated previous studies about the influence of national cultural context on principal decision making. This research is useful because it goes beyond much of the previous research that offered a generic set of instructional leadership behaviors examining the contextual influence of the sociocultural climate on principal leadership decisions.

Another example of how the principal's adaptability to the contextual influences can have a positive influence on student achievement can be found when reviewing the work of Reed and Swaminathan (2016). Reed and Swaminathan (2016) conducted a case study of an urban high school principal who worked to change the school climate and increase student achievement in an urban high school over a three-year period. Reed and

Swaminathan (2016) stated that because of recent legislation such as No Child Left behind and Every Student Succeeds Act, principals are pressed with ensuring that best practices for improving the school's climate and increasing student achievement are operational within the school. However, the researchers made the point that when choosing best practices, it is crucial for the principal to select those strategies that relevant and meet the needs of the students that they serve (Reed & Swaminathan, 2016).

Using a qualitative case study research design to address the question of how principals use distributed leadership, professional learning communities and social justice programs to improve the school's climate and increase student achievement, the researchers examined the day to day leadership practices of one principal to describe the progress and/or challenges faced by the study participant as he implemented strategies related to distributed leadership, professional learning communities and social justice practices (Reed & Swaminathan, 2016). Data was collected, analyzed and codified over a three-year period and then used to describe the community factors that characterized the school and that served as challenges to school improvement. Findings from the study revealed that significant improvements were made by using elements of Distributed Leadership, Professional Learning Communities, and Social Justice Leadership. The authors suggest that contextually responsive leadership practices rather than one best practice present better solutions to the complexity of urban school leadership.

Hallinger, Walker, Nguyen, Truong, and Nguyen (2017) conducted a study on how contextual influences affect instructional leadership. Hallinger et al (2017)

conducted a qualitative study in Vietnam. This research undertaking addressed the challenge of contextual influences on instructional leadership practices in Vietnam in light of the very limited formal knowledge base as it pertains to instructional leadership practitioners. The research by Hallinger et al. (2017) research aimed to describe the perspectives of Vietnamese primary school principals about their roles as instructional leaders, illuminate instructional leadership practices perceived by study participants to be important, and develop a preliminary model of instructional leadership practices within the Vietnamese context.

Data collection consisted of using semi-structured interviews with 27 primary school principals. The researchers also used grounded theory to summarize and synthesize results to create the preliminary conceptual model. The researchers used the western perspective of instructional leadership to guide the research. The western perspective includes three foundational practices for instructional leadership: defining the schools mission, managing instruction, and creating and maintaining a positive school climate (Hallinger et al., 2017).

With regards to defining the school's mission, the results of this study revealed that the school's mission was a "top-down" process (Hallinger et al., 2017). Setting the school mission was not based on the personal or professional perspective of the principal (Hallinger et al., 2017). Rather, the school mission was aligned with the targets and strategies found in the education bureaucracy as well as the Communist Party (Hallinger et al., 2017).

The researchers acknowledged that the limitations of the study were contextual or arose from the focus on primary schools, the small size of the sample, the absence of data from the Northern region of Vietnam, and lack of verification of principals' perspectives with data from other stakeholders (Hallinger et al., 2017). This study is relevant to the current study because it supports the conceptual framework by highlighting and providing additional insight into the importance of considering the contextual factors that influence instructional leadership practices.

Across the world, school leaders are having to re-imagine and re-invent their approach to school leadership (Miller, 2018). Some researchers argue that increased educational accountability policies encroach on principals' autonomy, thus rendering them less effective in governing their schools (Chang, Anderman, & Leach, 2015). Changing national priorities and policy contexts, competition between national education systems, competition within national education systems evolving systems of monitoring and accountability, the deepening of performativity cultures, and changes in the socio-political, economic, technological and cultural landscapes, nationally, reveal the complex demands and expectations associated with the practice of school leadership (Miller, 2018).

School autonomy has gained more attention in the context of educational reforms. Greater autonomy has been introduced and policymakers have chosen school autonomy as a strategy for increasing school accountability, increasing student achievement, and parental involvement and improving school effectiveness (Dou, Devos, & Valcke, 2017).

Chang, Anderman, and Leach (2015) examined the relationship between principal autonomy allowed by the district and principal job satisfaction and commitment.

Using a qualitative research design, the researchers analyzed data collected from the online surveys of 1, 501 principals, K-12. This study investigated principals' perceptions of autonomy support from their superintendents in relation to their affective commitment to their school districts and job satisfaction. In this study affective commitment is defined as the principals' feelings about their school districts, job satisfaction concerns their feelings toward their jobs as principals. The sample for this study consisted of K-12 public school principals in the United States. Data was first collected in the spring of 2011 from one large Midwestern state with the second wave of data collection that occurred in the spring of 2012 in 16 other states. Results of the study indicated that principals are likely to display a deeper commitment to school districts when given more job autonomy. These same principals expressed more job satisfaction when working in districts with more job autonomy.

The implications of this study provide district-level superintendent and leaders with discussion-worthy topics such as the perception of principals with regards to feelings of encouragement and decision-making support. This study is relevant to the current work the amount of school autonomy perceived by principals can influence the way the school leaders structure their schools and the school learning environments (Dou, Devos, & Valcke, 2017). Subsequently, perceived school autonomy as perceived by the principal is a contextual factor that could influence varying teacher outcomes and student

academic progress. His study supports the link previously established by Hallinger et al. (2018) between contextual factors and the level of implementation of instructional leadership practices.

Student Growth Model

Assessment of student learning and growth is complex (Anderman, O'Connell, & Gimbert, 2015). Throughout history, the concern has been about measuring student achievement at one point in time (Anderman et al., 2015). However, with an increased emphasis on accountability, the focus on student growth has gained in popularity (Anderman et al., 2015). Models that examine and measure growth serve as the foundation for understanding human learning (Anderman et al., 2015). Assessing growth describes student progress from one year to the next versus achievement which describes the student academic performance at one point in time such as on high stakes accountability testing day (Anderman et al., 2015). Assessing student growth can be used to measure a student's progress or as a comparison to similar or like peers (Anderman et al., 2015).

Georgia adopted the student growth model as an approach to describe student growth from year to year relative to academically similar peers (GADOE, Georgia's student growth model, 2017). Growth Percentiles are described using a range from 1-99 with students scoring in the lower percentiles demonstrating lower growth when compared to "like or similar" peers. Using student growth percentiles allows every

Georgia student to demonstrate growth regardless of current achievement or the starting point (GADOE, Georgia's student growth model, 2017).

The use of student growth percentiles to describe achievement and growth has increased for many reasons (Castellano & McCaffrey, 2017). Some view student growth percentiles as easily computable because this measure allows school leaders to calculate via the sample mean or median SGP (Castellano et al., 2017). MGPs are also on the familiar percentile rank, and when used as descriptive statistics and interpreted as "performance indicators", the assumption can be made that if an educator is effective at raising student achievement, then it can be assumed that the educator's students will score higher on standardized tests than students of comparable prior ability in other classes or schools; the students will have high SGP, resulting in a high MGP for the educator, and vice versa for ineffective educators (Castellano et al., 2017). Previous research has asserted that student growth percentiles may not be an accurate measure of the quality of teacher performance (Castellano et al., 2017). Castellano et al. (2017) investigated the accuracy of student growth percentiles used as an aggregated mean or median for students. Using analytic derivations, Castellano et al. (2017) found that measurement error contributes to variance in median growth percentiles in two ways: (a) through the bias that is a function of the students' mean prior achievement and (b) by inflating the sampling variability in the estimator. Also, the use of growth percentiles as a measure of educator effectiveness can cause bias in situations in which teachers serve students with higher prior achievement. One limitation of this study which also serves as

a limitation with the use of student growth percentiles is focusing on one score or assessment as a measure to determine educator quality. The results of this study are relevant to the current study because it presents another lens for viewing student growth percentiles which were used only to identify successful principals as participants in the study. Viewing student growth percentiles through a different lens also supports the use of face to face interviews and surveys as the data collection techniques to gather information to describe the specific instructional leadership practices used by study participants. This study conducted by Castellano et al. (2017) also supports Georgia's use of the student growth percentiles as one measure or data point used to measure growth over time. Georgia's Student Growth Model utilizes student growth percentiles to describe student growth, not to determine value-added as it relates to the teacher or principal. Georgia uses multiple ways of combining SGPs to summarize the growth of a group of students (GADOE, Methods of combining sgps, 2018). Georgia combines three different measures to gain a comprehensive view of student progress: mean, median and percent of students demonstrating typical or high growth (GADOE, 2018). While using multiple methods to describe student progress may be confusing, the different methods provide different types of information and are best suited for certain applications.

While there has been an increasing interest in the effectiveness of principal leadership as it pertains to student achievement, the issue of principal leadership must not be constrained to the examination of a generic set of principles. Rather, these practices must be examined and explored the various context in which the leader practices

(Truong, Hallinger, & Sanga, 2017). Effective or successful school leaders engage within the school context to influence the core business of schools which is learning (Gurr, 2015). Successful school leaders use interventions to build capacity in teaching and learning within the learning community where he or she serves students (Gurr, 2015). Instructional leadership must be context specific and reflective of the unique structure that supports the school as well as reflective of the barriers or limitations to shared responsibility, developing leadership capacity and positively influencing student progress (Costello, 2015).

Using semi-structured interviewing as part of their phenomenological, qualitative study, Wieczorek and Manard (2018) analyzed data from the reflective responses of six novice principals serving students in a rural state in the United States. The researchers posited that transitions in all contexts are difficult but focused their research on the contextual considerations of principals serving in rural communities (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). The researchers sought to describe how principals serving in rural setting interpreted and managed their instructional leadership responsibilities (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). The research questions for this study addressed the leadership challenges faced by rural principals as they transition to the principalship and how rural principals interpret the instructional leadership challenges. The findings of this study indicated that principals found it very difficult to balance their professional and personal lines in these small communities (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). The principal's difficulty with balancing their professional and personal lives was especially difficult because of the

community's expectation that the principal is visible and engaged in the community (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). Due to budgetary constraints, these novice principals also wrestled with having to manage overlapping district and building level responsibilities (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). The implications of this study demonstrated the need to build capacity in novice leaders serving learning communities in rural settings. Specifically, this study demonstrates the need to help rural leaders understand their instructional leadership expectations and develop strategies for managing those expectations against the social context and community expectations. This study is relevant to the phenomenon under study in the current research because it adds to the previous research pertaining to the influence of context and contextual considerations and on instructional leadership practices.

Clarke and O'Donoughue (2017) wrote that the amount of research that explores the influence of context on principal or leadership behaviors is not great. To bring more attention to this topic, Clarke and O'Donoughue (2017) conducted a meta-analysis of the existing literature to stress the importance of context as it relates to principal leadership. The researchers defined the context and provided the reader with a variety of studies or previous research on each of the contextual influences examined in their study. Topics explored by Clarke and O'Donoughue (2017) included material or resources allocation and external influences including the national and political climate. The researchers, Clarke and O'Donoughue (2017), concluded that effective leaders are not only sensitive to the contexts that influence their leadership practices but they also possess the

necessary skill to be able to adapt to the contextual influences to meet the needs of their students. The researchers wrote that while their research was not exhaustive, their study added to the limited research that exists concerning the influence of context on the instructional practices of principals. This study is relevant to the current study because as with the other research on contextual influences, it stresses the need for effective principals in their role of instructional leaders to be able to recognize and be knowledgeable about the contextual influences that impact their practices as well as the importance of their adaptation to the influences that impact their instructional leadership decisions.

Tan (2018) explored the influence of community context on principal leadership behaviors. Community contexts refer to factors such parental involvement, SES status of the students, where the school is situated (urban versus rural), community conflicts and the amount of diversity present in the school community (Hallinger, Bringing context out of the shadows of leadership, 2018). Effective leadership strategies with regards to community context are crafted and personalized based on the community context in which the principal serves (Hallinger, Bringing context out of the shadows of leadership, 2018). Examining the indirect effects of principal leadership on math achievement for 254, 475 students, all around 15-years old and enrolled in 10, 313 schools, Tan (2017) framed his work using contingency theory which asserts that the principal agency and the effectiveness of leadership is the contingent upon the community and environmental challenges. Students were divided into three categories- disadvantage, average and

privileged. Participants included school principals and students who participated in PISA 2012 which measured the 15-year old's proficiency in applying their knowledge and skills learned in reading, mathematics, and science to authentic problems. PISA also collected data from students regarding their educational experiences and attitudes, and from school principals concerning school contexts. Results also showed that principal leadership effects accounted for a greater proportion of between-school achievement variance for all three groups-disadvantaged, average, and privileged. Specifically, instructional leadership behaviors had the largest positive effect on all three groups overall for all categories explored. This study contributed to the literature by examining contextual influences on the leadership–achievement relationship, specifically when exploring principal adaptability to various socio-economic groups and contextual influences such as community influences on principal leadership behaviors. The research conducted by Tan (2017) that explored the influence of community context on principal leadership behaviors is relevant to the current research because it supports the work of Hallinger who highlighted the contextual influences on instructional leadership behaviors and practices. Contextual influences as it relates to instructional leadership practices make up a portion of the conceptual framework for the current study.

In present-day Vietnam, Confucianism is still widely prevalent. "Confucianism has been defined as a worldview, an ethical system, a political ideology and a scholarly tradition developed from the teachings of the Chinese philosopher Confucius" (Truong, Hallinger, & Sanga, 2017, p. 79). In Confucianism, the individual is not seen as a

detached entity, but as a reflection of his/her human relationships (Truong, Hallinger, & Sanga, 2017). To add to the limited research related to principal decision making in various social-cultural context or national cultural context, Truong et al. (2017) conducted an in-depth qualitative study to explore the decision-making practices of Vietnamese school principals respond about their socio-cultural context. The researcher used Hofstede's 'dimensions of national culture' to support the analysis of Vietnamese school leadership. The researchers constructed case studies of principal decision-making in three Vietnamese schools with findings that highlighted the influence of socio-cultural values on school leadership in Vietnam. Data collection methods used in the study included interviews, observations, questionnaires, and document analyses, but the data presented in this report are largely drawn from interviews (Troung et al., 2017). Results of the study revealed that while leaders participating in this study indicated that teacher involvement in decision making was beneficial for motivating teachers' sense of responsibility to the school, mobilizing collective brainpower, and expanding grassroots democracy (Truong, Hallinger, & Sanga, 2017). However, seeking actions or decisions by school principals to seek staff input was very limited (Truong et al., 2017). Further, the researchers reported that seeking out divergent opinions of subordinates was conflicted not only with the Confucian norm of deference to age and hierarchical status but also with assumptions underlying the political authority of the single Party state (Truong et al., 2017). It was understood that empowering subordinates incurred the potential risk of threatening their legitimacy as leaders (Truong et al., 2017). This study highlighted the relationship between Confucian cultural values and the influence of those

cultural values on principal decision making. This study validated previous studies about the influence of national cultural context on principal decision making. This research is useful because it goes beyond much of the previous research that offered a generic set of instructional leadership behaviors examining the contextual influence of the sociocultural climate on principal leadership decisions.

Another example of how the principal's adaptability to the contextual influences can have a positive influence on student achievement can be found when reviewing the work of Reed and Swaminathan (2016). They conducted a case study of an urban high school principal who worked to change the school climate and increase student achievement in an urban high school over a three-year period. Reed and Swaminathan (2016) stated that because of recent legislation such as No Child Left behind and Every Student Succeeds Act, principals are pressed with ensuring that best practices for improving the school's climate and increasing student achievement are operational within the school. However, the researchers made the point that when choosing best practices, it is crucial for the principal to select those strategies that relevant and meet the needs of the students that they serve (Reed & Swaminathan, 2016). Using a qualitative case study research design to address the question of how principals use distributed leadership, professional learning communities and social justice programs to improve the school's climate and increase student achievement, the researchers examined the day to day leadership practices of one principal to describe the progress and/or challenges faced by the study participant as he implemented strategies related to distributed leadership,

professional learning communities and social justice practices (Reed & Swaminathan, 2016). Data was collected, analyzed and codified over a three-year period and then used to describe the community factors that characterized the school and that served as challenges to school improvement. Findings from the study revealed that significant improvements were made by using elements of Distributed Leadership, Professional Learning Communities, and Social Justice Leadership. The authors suggest that contextually responsive leadership practices rather than one best practice present better solutions to the complexity of urban school leadership.

Hallinger, Walker, Nguyen, Truong, and Nguyen (2017) also addressed contextual influences on instructional leadership by conducting a qualitative study in Vietnam. The research addressed the challenge of contextual influences on instructional leadership practices in Vietnam in light of the very limited formal knowledge base as it pertains to instructional leadership practitioners. The research by Hallinger et al. (2017) research aimed to describe the perspectives of Vietnamese primary school principals about their roles as instructional leaders, illuminate instructional leadership practices perceived by study participants to be important, and develop a preliminary model of instructional leadership practices within the Vietnamese context. To collect data, Hallinger et al. (2017) used semi-structured interviews with 27 primary school principals. The researchers also used grounded theory to summarize and synthesize results to create the preliminary conceptual model. The researchers also used the western perspective of instructional leadership to guide the research. The western

perspective includes three foundational practices for instructional leadership: defining the schools mission, managing instruction, and creating and maintaining a positive school climate (Hallinger et al., 2017). With regards to defining the school's mission, the results of this study revealed that the school's mission was a "top-down" process (Hallinger et al., 2017). Setting the school mission was not based on the personal or professional perspective of the principal (Hallinger et al., 2017). Rather, the school mission was aligned with the targets and strategies found in the education bureaucracy as well as the Communist Party (Hallinger et al., 2017). The researchers acknowledged that the limitations of the study were contextual or arose from the focus on primary schools, the small size of the sample, the absence of data from the Northern region of Vietnam, and lack of verification of principals' perspectives with data from other stakeholders (Hallinger et al., 2017). This study is relevant to the research that serves as the focus of this study because the study provides additional insight into the importance of considering the contextual factors that influence instructional leadership practices.

Chang, Anderman & Leach (2015) examined the relationship between principal autonomy allowed by the district and principal job satisfaction and commitment. Using a qualitative research design, the researchers analyzed data collected from the online surveys of 1, 501 principals, K-12 (Chang et al., 2015). Results of the study indicated that principals are likely to display a deeper commitment to school districts when given more job autonomy (Chang et al., 2015). These same principals expressed more job satisfaction when working in districts with more job autonomy. The researchers also

described the relationship between principal turnover and the principals' perception of their level of autonomy (Chang et al., 2015). The implications of this study provide district-level superintendent and leaders with topics worth considering such as the perception of principals with regards to feelings of encouragement and decision-making support. This study is relevant to the current work because of the connection between principal turnover and an important component of instructional leadership-establishing a positive school climate.

Numerous other studies established that school climate is a leading factor in explaining student learning and achievement (Maxwell, Reynolds, Lee, Subasic, & Bromhead, 2017). One such study conducted by Maxwell, Reynolds, Lee, Subasic & Bromhead (2017) integrated multiple sources into a multilevel model that included self-reports from staff, students, objective school records, academic records and descriptive information that described socioeconomic demographics of 760 staff and 2,257 students from 17 secondary schools. Academic records included achievement in writing and numeracy. The researchers also used social identity theory to address research questions about school identity. The study conducted by Maxwell et al. (2017) supported the work of previous researchers with results that revealed that students' perceptions of school climate significantly explain writing and numeracy achievement. The connection between academic achievement and school climate was mediated by the students' psychological identification with the school (Maxwell et al., 2017).

Student Growth and The College and Career Performance Index

The College and Career Performance Index (CCRPI) was implemented in 2012 (GADOE, Accountability, 2018). The CCRPI is used solely to provide schools and school systems with an objective measure to describe if schools and school systems are succeeding in their efforts to provide quality opportunities and outcomes for students (GADOE, Accountability, 2018). This measure which is based on Georgia's large-scale assessment, The Georgia Milestone Assessment System, is used as one data source to guide school and school systems in their school improvement efforts (GADOE, Accountability, 2018). While the CCRPI was not intended to be the only data point or indicator of what is occurring within the school building, it is an indicator of a school's progress as it pertains to the work of preparing students for the next level of learning (GADOE, Accountability, 2018). The CCRPI focuses on universal goals and student outcomes for all students and schools instead of focusing on specific initiatives and programs which allow schools and school systems to have the flexibility to tailor their programs and policies based on the contextual needs of their local communities (GADOE, Accountability, 2018).

From 2012 through the end of school year 2018, the CCRPI consisted of one Total CCRPI score which reflected school, school system and state performance in six areas: Achievement, Progress, Achievement Gap, Challenge Points which included measures of performance for students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students and exceeding the Bar points which included measures of student participation in fine arts, world languages and other programs such as STEM); Financial Efficiency;

and School Climate (GADOE, College and career readiness performance index, 2017). The major data source for the CCRPI is the Georgia Milestone Assessment System, Georgia's large-scale assessment system. Many school districts and systems across the country have adopted large-scale assessment systems as a result of the increased emphasis on improving teacher quality and student achievement (Newton, Tunison, & Viczko, 2017). Data collected from large-scale assessments are now being used by schools, school systems, governments, international and transnational organizations to transform the way that learning occurs on school campuses (Sellars, 2015). The increased emphasis on accountability has changed the role of the principal (Newton et al., 2017). Principals must now acquire extensive knowledge about large-scale assessments and the processes and opportunities to use assessment data collected from large-scale assessments (Newton et al., 2017).

Newton et al. (2017) conducted an interpretive study with 25 elementary school principals. The study asked principals about their knowledge of and use of large-scale assessments and their perception of large-scale assessments. Results from the study revealed that based on principal perceptions, large-scale assessments had resulted in major shifts in their roles and responsibilities (Newton et al., 2017). Specifically, study participants suggested principals now faced the task of advocating for assessment, teaching the members of their learning communities about assessment, especially how to organize and manage the data. This study has the potential to restructure the roles and responsibilities of the principal. Practically, the study was informed by this work because

it (a) falls within the realm of one of the major components of instructional leadership-monitoring instruction; and (b) it also provides the reader with deeper insight as to how the implementation of large-scale assessments informs the work of principals as it relates to Hallinger's research about the effects of contextual influences on the consistent implementation of instructional leadership practices and principal decision-making (Newton et al., 2017) (Hallinger, Bringing context out of the shadows of leadership, 2018).

In 2018, the CCRPI was redesigned to reflect a more streamlined report describing stakeholder feedback and the recommendations of the ESSA Accountability Working Committee (GADOE, Redesigned college and career ready performance index, 2018). The new redesigned CCRPI consists of five component measures with only four measures applicable for elementary schools: Content Mastery, Progress, Closing Gaps, Readiness, and Graduation Rate (high school only) (GADOE, Redesigned college and career ready performance index, 2018). Measures or scores are reported using a rating scale that ranges from 0-100 with all components rounded to one decimal place, and all indicators and subindicators are rounded to two decimal places (GADOE, 2018 ccrpi elementary school calculation guide, 2018). Components are weighted and combined according to the weights defined in the table to the right to determine the overall CCRPI score (GADOE, 2018 ccrpi elementary school calculation guide, 2018). Component scores which derive the Total CCRPI score for schools, school systems, and the state are reported separately and disaggregated by subgroup (GADOE, 2018 ccrpi elementary

school calculation guide, 2018). (GADOE, 2018 ccrpi elementary school calculation guide, 2018). This study utilized two components of the CCRPI to identify successful elementary school principals as instructional leaders: Progress and School Climate.

The School Progress component of the CCRPI measures student growth in English Language Arts and Mathematics based on student growth percentiles. Even though the CCRPI has been redesigned, the major components of this measure remain intact (GADOE, Redesigned college and career ready performance index, 2018). The major shift or change in the Progress component of the CCRP was the addition of ACCESS assessment which is now used to calculate the score for this component (GADOE, Redesigned college and career ready performance index, 2018).

The School Climate component of the CCRPI is calculated using data from the (a) Georgia Student Health Survey 2.0, Georgia School Personnel Survey which is a measure of student, teacher, and parent perceptions of a school's climate; (b) Georgia Parent Survey, student discipline data which use a weighted suspension rate; and attendance records for students, teachers, staff and administrators and the percentage of students with less than six unexcused absences. Each component is weighted equally with each school receiving a one to five-star rating (GADOE, Redesigned college and career ready performance index, 2018). Schools receiving a five-star rating represent learning communities with effective school climates. There were no changes made to this component of the CCRPI.

Since the Progress component of the CCRPI relies on student growth percentiles, it is also necessary to highlight the concept of student growth and student growth percentiles. Georgia's Student Growth Model (GSGM) is designed to provide parents, students, and educators with information about student progress (GADOE, Georgia's student growth model, 2017). Sometimes confused with value-added, student differs from value-added measures in that student growth measures student achievement or growth over time (GADOE, A guide to Georgia's student growth model, 2017). It is only when student growth is ascribed and attributed to an entity such as a teacher or school or principal that it becomes value added (GADOE, A guide to Georgia's student growth model, 2017). Using GSGM, student growth percentiles (SGPs) describe student growth compared to academically similar peers (GADOE, A guide to Georgia's student growth model, 2017). SGP range from 1 to 99, with lower percentiles indicating lower levels of academic growth and higher percentiles indicating higher levels of academic growth (GADOE, A guide to Georgia's student growth model, 2017). GSGM uses SGPs as statistical, regression-based quantities used to describe student growth based on state-mandated assessments (GADOE, A guide to Georgia's student growth model, 2017).

Seo, McGrane & Taherbhai (2015) studied the role of student growth percentiles as predictors of learning outcomes. Student growth has been a topic in the conversation about student achievement for decades (Seo, McGrane, & Taherbhai, 2015). Student growth is the result of many variables, some external or outside variables occurring and existing outside of the school and some, such as the quality of instruction, occurring

within the school setting (Seo et al., 2015). One common indicator of student growth or achievement is past achievement or past academic performance (Seo et al., 2015). Using a randomly selected sample of 3,171 students selected from a large-scale reading test administered for three years (2009 –2011) to demonstrate the use of SGPs in a formative manner, used regression analysis to predict student growth percentiles (Seo et al., 2015). The researchers acknowledged the need for formative assessments, the researchers wrote about the importance of using methods that consider students' performance compared with academic peers and their propensity in achieving the target score (Seo et al., 2015). Student growth percentiles provide a comprehensive view of the student's academic standing because it provides information about patterns and performance over time (Seo et al., 2015). The results of the research by Seo et al. (2015) demonstrated that SGPs were accurate predictors of future performance. The implication of this research is that this research provides the reader with another lens with which to view SGPs as it pertains to predictors of student performance. This study informs the current research because the current study included an analysis the Progress component of the CCRPI to identify successful elementary principals as instructional leaders who have demonstrated consistent practices and instructional leadership behaviors that have resulted in establishing a school culture that is conducive to learning and student progress.

Summary and Conclusion

The literature review presented in Chapter 2 focused on scholarly research about the key concepts of the conceptual framework relevant to the behaviors and practices

associated with instructional leadership. Key concepts identified in the conceptual framework included (a) defining the school's mission, (b) managing instruction and (c) creating and maintaining a positive school climate. In addition to highlighting the key concepts relevant to the conceptual framework, specific strategies were provided in Chapter 2 that described how the researcher located relevant, scholarly research that highlighted the key concepts of the study.

Based on the work of Pietsch and Tulowitzki (2017) who identified three major components of instructional leadership, the conceptual framework also provided relevant scholarly research that highlighted the contextual factors that influence instructional leadership decisions which were based on the work Hallinger (Hallinger, 2018). Hallinger (2017) posited that contextual factors influence instructional leadership decisions and practices. Contextual factors identified by Hallinger included (a) political context, (b) institutional context, (c) community context, (d) economic context, and (e) school improvement. Effective principals as instructional leaders are aware of the contextual influences that influence instructional leadership decisions and understand how to adapt to meet the needs of the school learning community (Hallinger, Bringing context out of the shadows of leadership, 2018).

Another concept highlighted in Chapter 2 was the concept of student growth which has gained in popularity due to the increased emphasis on accountability and high stakes testing. Georgia adopted the College and Career Performance Index in 2012 (GADOE, College and career readiness performance index, 2017). The College and

Career Performance Index is comprised of several data points to include a measure of student progress which uses student growth percentiles as a measure of student growth (GADOE, College and career readiness performance index, 2017). Georgia adopted the student growth model as an approach to describe student growth from year to year relative to academically similar peers (GADOE, Georgia's student growth model, 2017). Student growth percentiles serve as a major focal point of the Georgia Student Growth Model. Student growth is described using a range of growth from 1-99 with student scoring in the lower percentiles demonstrating lower growth when compared to "like or similar" peers (GADOE, Georgia's student growth model, 2017).

Several themes were identified as a result of the literature review and a review of scholarly research related to the key concepts described in the conceptual framework. First, to promote student growth and achievement, effective principals as instructional leaders must be able to define and articulate the school's mission (Gurley, Peters, Collins, & Fifolt, 2015). Defining the school's mission includes being able to identify the goals appropriate for the school and also being able to communicate those goals to all stakeholders in the learning community (Gurley. et al., 2015).

Hitt and Tucker (2016) supported Pietsch and Tulowitzki's (2017) work when the results of their qualitative research indicated that effective leaders not only understood the importance of identifying the school's mission but effective leaders were able to unify stakeholders by effectively articulating the school's goals to all stakeholders. Intzausti, Joaristi & Lizasoain (2016) also conducted qualitative research aimed at identifying

highly effective schools and found that one characteristic of the highly effective schools that participated in the study was that the majority of the stakeholders in highly effective schools had a clear understanding of the school's mission and core values. Day and Sammons (2016) also found that the principal's leadership style did not serve as a basis for school improvement. Rather, the understanding and diagnosis of the needs of the school and articulating shared educational values using context-sensitive strategies that are embedded in the culture of the school appeared to be a more effective strategy (Day & Sammons, 2016).

Another theme that emerged during the literature review was that effective principals as instructional leaders understood how to manage the school's curriculum. Preston, Goldring, Guthrie, Ramsey & Huff (2017) expanded on the concept of curriculum management or managing instruction identifying specific behaviors inherent in the concept. Specific behaviors identified by Preston et al. (2017) were (a) establishing high expectations, (b) providing access to a rigorous curriculum, (c) providing access to quality instruction, (d) creating a culture of learning and professional behavior, (e) establishing effective relationships with external resources and (f) implementing a systematic accountability system including accountability processes and procedures for school leadership, teachers, and students.

Spillane (2015) wrote that school improvement requires principals to focus on instruction. Terosky (2016) confirmed and supported Spillane's position when the results of his qualitative study that examined instructional leadership practices in New York City

revealed that effective instructional leaders prioritized instructional matters. Dr. Goldy Brown III (2016) conducted qualitative research about instructional management supports implemented by a veteran elementary school principal that also supported the results of the previously cited research. Dr. Brown's (2016) research identified specific instructional supports such as the use of common formative assessment data to adjust instructional practices, aligning the curriculum to the state standards and data-driven instruction that was implemented by the study participant, the 15-year veteran elementary principal.

Studies located regarding establishing a positive school climate were also characterized by a common theme which is that when positive school climates are-established and maintained, student growth and achievement is likely to occur. Although systematic analysis of the relationship between school and student achievement only began in the 1980s, common links have been found between school climate and student achievement (Kwong & Davis, 2015). Kwong and Davis (2015) conducted a qualitative study to explore the relationship between student perceptions of school climate and student reporting of academic achievement. This research concluded that students who reported attended schools with positive school climates also reported higher academic achievement. In addition, students who reported attending schools with negative school climates also reported lower achievement (Kwong & Davis, 2015). Berkowitz, Moore, Astor, and Benbenishty (2017) also sought to discover whether positive school climates could mediate the effects of low socioeconomic status and poor academic achievement.

The researchers conducted a meta-analysis and found that positive school climates could mediate some of the effects of students with low academic achievement and low SES (Berkowitz et al., 2017). Using a sample size of 230 schools in an urban district, Shindler, Jones, Williams, Taylor, and Cardenas (2016) found that positive school climate was the single most predictive factor in school improvement.

Instructional leadership decisions can be influenced by contextual factors was also a major theme identified during the literature review and review of scholarly research about the key concepts in the conceptual framework. Gurr (2015) wrote that effective leaders understood how to engage stakeholders within the school's context to influence the core business of school which is learning. Effective instructional leaders adapt to the barriers and limitations and opportunities that exist within the learning community (Costello, 2015).

Using semi-structured interviews to explore the instructional leadership practices of 6 novice principals in rural settings, Wieczorek and Manard (2018) sought to describe how rural principals managed their instructional responsibilities. Study participants reported experiencing difficulty managing instructional leadership tasks and responsibilities in the rural context especially because of the expectation that the principal is visible and engage in the community. The rural principals who participated in the study conducted by Wieczorek and Manard (2018) also reported that due to budgetary constraints time was allocated to managing not only building level responsibilities but also overlapping district responsibilities.

Clark and O'Donoughue (2017) also conducted a meta-analysis to highlight and explore the influence of context on instructional leadership decisions. Clark and O'Donoughue (2017) examined topics such as the allocation of material resources and external influences on instructional leadership decisions. The researchers concluded that effective instructional leaders are sensitive to the contextual factors and influences present within the school and can also adapt to meet the needs of the members of the learning community (Clark & O'Donoughue, 2017).

Hallinger, Walker, Nguyen, Truon & Nguyen (2017) also explored the relationship between contextual influences and instructional leadership decisions. Hallinger et al. (2017) conducted qualitative research in Vietnam to describe the perspectives of principals in Vietnam regarding their instructional leadership roles. Hallinger et al. (2017) collected data using semistructured interviews and based the research on the western perspective of instructional leadership which included the three dimensions of instructional leadership identified by Pietsch and Tulowitzki-defining the school mission, managing instruction, and creating a positive school climate (Pietsch & Tulowitzi, 2017). The results of the study conducted by Hallinger et al. (2017) found many decisions originating from the top down with practices or expectations such as defining the school's mission being aligned and dictated by the Communist Party.

The purpose of the current study was to describe specific instructional leadership behaviors as perceived by successful elementary school principals to have a positive effect on student outcomes and school climate. This research addressed a gap in the

literature by describing the practices of principals in high performing elementary school principals based on the perceptions of the practitioner or study participants. This research also described potential contextual barriers to implementation based on the perceptions of elementary principals. Previous research identified leadership styles and practices, limited research exists that describes specific instructional leadership practices of elementary principals based on the perception of the practitioner.

Chapter 2 included scholarly research about instructional leadership and definitions of key concepts that make up the conceptual framework for the current study. In Chapter 3 I describe specific information about the Methodology for the current study. Specific topics to addressed include the (a) research design and rationale, (b) the role of the researcher, (c) the specific methodology which includes data collection, procedures for selecting participants, instrumentation, ethical considerations and issues concerning the trustworthiness of the study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

Previous researchers established the importance of the multidimensional role of the principal (Manna, 2015, p. 7). Principals are charged with the responsibility of being the school's instructional leader which involves defining the school's mission, managing the curriculum and creating and maintaining a positive school climate (Hussain, Haider, Ali, & Ahmed, 2016). Successful principals demonstrate confidence in their students, work effectively with the members of the learning community including external stakeholders, secure resources that promote the accomplishment of school goals and understand how to adapt to the contextual factor that influences the learning environment (Hussain et al., 2016). Effective principals, by implementing research-based instructional leadership practices can serve as "powerful multipliers of effective teaching and leadership" in their learning communities (Manna, 2015). The purpose of the current study was to describe specific instructional leadership behaviors as perceived by successful elementary school principals to have a positive effect on student outcomes and school climate.

The information in Chapter 3 includes a description of the methodology used in the current study along with the rationale for its use. Chapter 3 also includes a description of the study, research questions, identification of the population and a description of the setting, instrumentation, and interview protocol selected to be utilized during data collection. Included in this section is a description of specific issues and strategies related

to research reliability and validity, ethical protections as it pertains to the study participants, a description of the role of the researcher and the strategies to be used in data analysis.

Research Design and Rationale

The purpose of the current study was to describe the perspectives of successful elementary principals as it pertains to the different levels of implementation with regards to instructional leadership practices. The qualitative research design used in the current study because it is a holistic research approach that involves data collection from a variety of sources to gain a deeper understanding of the opinions, perspectives, and attitudes of study participants (Nassaji, 2015). Qualitative research is also appropriate for this study because it is exploratory in nature with the aims of gaining a deeper understanding of complex phenomena through observation. In addition, qualitative research is situated in the environment or the natural setting "sensitive to the people and places under study" and includes data analysis that establishes patterns or themes (Burkholder et al., 2016, p.67). Qualitative research design incorporates the voice or perception of the study participant. All qualitative research is descriptive (Burkholder et al., 2016). Qualitative data consists of words, pictures or other types of aural, visual or textual artifacts or evidence including interviews, videotapes, observations and documents (Burkholder et al., 2016).

There are five major categories of qualitative research: (a) case study, (b) ethnography, (c) phenomenology, (d) narrative, and (e) grounded theory (Burkholder et

al., 2015). A qualitative case study is the specific qualitative design used for the current study because this specific research design investigates the how and why research questions in qualitative research (Burkholder et al., 2015). The purpose of the qualitative case study is to "describe the interaction of a bounded unit" about some phenomenon. The phrase bounded unit could represent a single person or a group, institution, community or specific policy (Burkholder et al., 2015). The case in the case study refers to an existing phenomenon occurring within it real-life context wherein the boundaries that exist between the phenomena are not clear and the researcher has little control over the context or the phenomena (Yazan, 2015). The case study, then, is the description and analysis of a "bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit" (Yazan, 2015, p. 139). Case study research differs from other types of research that separates the phenomenon from its context (Morgan et al., 2017). In case study research, the phenomena and its context are linked which makes case study research ideal for studying real-world cases (Morgan et al., 2017).

Case study research has been around since history has been recorded (Harrison, Birks, Franklin, & Mills, 2017). While most attribute the origins of cases study research to studies undertaken in anthropology and social sciences in the early twentieth century, traditionally, case study research stems from a variety of disciplines including anthropology, history, psychology, and sociology (Harrison et al., 2017). Historically, sociologist and anthropologist described investigations into the lives of people, describing their experiences and their perceptions and understandings of their social and

cultural world (Harrison et al., 2017). These studies were conducted in the natural settings of the study participants with the most notable case study being a case study that described the loves of Polish peasants in Europe and America (Harrison et al., 2017).

During the period 1940-1960, positivism and the use of quantitative research increased with case study research used alongside quantitative research methods to study specific phenomena (Harrison et al., 2017). Although case study research was used alongside quantitative methods, the use of case study research was criticized because of its inability to support generalizability which caused some to consider case study research as a method that provided limited validity and value as a research design which led to a split with some researchers embracing qualitative research and some espousing the use of quantitative research (Harrison et al., 2017).

First generation case study research has been cited as being conducted at the Chicago School of Sociology between the 1920-1950s where anthropologists practiced their methods on university cultures or by conducting lengthy case studies involving field-based observations of groups with the aim of understanding their social and cultural lives (Harrison et al., 2017). Second generation case study research emerged with the development of grounded theory which merged qualitative and quantitative methods which led to the use of inductive methods that used detailed systematic procedures to analyze data (Harrison et al, 2017).

Paralleling the use of case study research in political sciences between 1980 and 1990 was the use if case study research in education to evaluate curriculum design and

innovation (Harrison et al., 2017). Development of case study research in education aimed to determine the impact of education and educational programs and provide evidence for decisions about policy and educational practices that supported social and educational change in the United Kingdom and the United States (Harrison et al., 2017). Since its early uses, case study research continues to be widely used in many disciplines such as education, health, and social sciences.

Research Questions

The aim of the current study was to describe specific instructional leadership practices perceived by successful instructional leaders for improving student outcomes and maintaining a positive school climate. This study was guided by three research questions.

RQ1: Which direct and indirect instructional leadership practices are perceived by elementary principals as most important for ensuring the success of each student?

RQ2: How do successful elementary principals balance their dichotomous role of instructional leader and building manager?

RQ3: How do contextual factors influence the implementation of instructional leadership practices by the elementary principal?

A descriptive case study was the research design used for this study. Qualitative data collection for this study included face to face interviews and document analysis which were guided by the three research questions written in previous sections.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher serves as the primary instrument of data collection in qualitative research (Burkholder, Cox, & Crawford, 2016). Through document analysis, direct observation, and interviews, the interviewer in the natural setting of the participants creates a duality of the presence of the researcher-participant an observer (Burkholder et al., 2016).

With regards to personal and professional relationships between the researcher and the study participants, I work in the same school district as the study participants. However, there were no issues as it relates to power relationships inherent in the current study. Although I am an assistant principal within the same school district as the study participants who are elementary principals, no supervisory relationship existed as the study participants do not serve students in the same school building as me.

Research bias addresses issues related to research questions. Specifically, bias answers the question of whether the research questions that encourage the respondents to answer questions in a way that would produce a specific or desired response (Babbie, 2017). Cultural bias and confirmation bias are two common types of bias in qualitative studies. Strategies used to address issues of bias in the current study included peer debriefing and member checking. Member checking involves systematically seeking participant feedback for the purpose of validating or verifying my interpretation of their responses (Babbie, 2017). Study participants could also provide additional points of clarity or expand upon their responses. Peer debriefing involves engaging a qualified

colleague in conversations about the progress of the study and the conclusions being drawn from the study (Babbie, 2017). The role of the colleague who was not involved in the study was to pose clarifying questions and alternate conclusions to exercise researcher bias (Babbie, 2017).

Methodology

Study participants for this study included 16 elementary principals selected through a careful review of trend data from the College and Career Performance Index (CCRPI), 13 school improvement, accountability, and communication platform (GADOE, College and career readiness performance index, 2017). The CCRPI is composed of five major components with several accountability measures to describe how well schools and school districts are preparing Georgia students for the world of work and the next educational level (GADOE, College and career readiness performance index, 2017). The five components that comprise the CCRPI include (a) Achievement, (b) Progress, (c) Closing Gaps, (d) Readiness, and (e) Graduation Rate. The Graduation Rate category is only applicable to high school students (GADOE, College and career readiness performance index, 2017). These components, encompassing multiple indicators, are combined for a total CCRPI score on a scale of 0 to 100. Study participants (16 principals) were identified based on steady and consistent growth in the Progress and School Climate Rating measures of the CCRPI. The Growth component of the CCRPI includes descriptive information and data that provides insight as to whether students are growing academically at a typical or high rate compared to academically

similar peers in Georgia (GADOE, Georgia's student growth model, 2017). Student growth percentiles that range from 1-99 describe the student's growth. Using student growth percentiles to describe student growth will ensure that each student has a starting point or baseline with which student growth or the lack thereof can begin (GADOE, College and career readiness performance index, 2017). Principals who can implement instructional leadership practices that result in student growth over time could be considered successful instructional leaders due to the principal's ability to diagnose and articulate the school's needs and organize school improvement efforts around shared values, and context-sensitive strategies (Day & Sammons, Successful school leadership, 2016). Based on my review of the trend data related to the Progress and School Climate components of the CCRPI, 16 elementary principals were identified.

There are two major types of sampling methods: probability and nonprobability sampling (Babbie, 2017). To distinguish between the two, probability sampling relies on the random selection of study participants whereas nonprobability sampling or nonrandom sampling involves selecting study participants based on the judgment of the researcher (Babbie, 2017). Purposive sampling, a type of nonprobability sampling technique, was used to select the 16 study participants in this study. Purposive sampling involves the selection of study participants based on the purpose of the research and the judgment of the researcher as to which participants would be most useful for the study. For example, the principals selected for the current study were selected because I sought to answer the research questions pertaining to the characteristics of successful elementary principals as instructional leaders based on the principals' perceptions. Based on the

research questions for this study, I used the Progress and School Climate Rating components of the CCRPI to identify study participants that could provide information that could be codified for thematic analysis.

Instrumentation

Instrumentation is concerned with data collection instruments and whether the instruments measure the intended phenomenon (Burkholder, Cox, & Crawford, 2016). The purpose of the current study was to describe the specific instructional leadership behaviors perceived by successful elementary school principals to have a positive effect on student outcomes and school climate. Long considered an essential component of qualitative research, the interview is the primary method of data collection for this study (Oltmann, 2016). For the current study, the interview protocol was the primary data collection tool used in the face to face interviews conducted. The interview protocol consisted of questions that I created to provide insight or answers to the research questions. Conducting face to face interviews allowed me to gather rich and detailed qualitative data that helped me understand the experiences of study participants (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Interviews have also been considered a viable strategy for entering and understanding the perspective of the study participant (Oltmann, 2016).

To ensure content validity and alignment of the instrument to the study's purpose, the interview protocol was constructed using a four-phase process known as the Interview Refinement Protocol (IRP), a systematic framework for vetting the interview protocol (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). The IRP is a process used to ensure that the instrument was

aligned to the study's purpose and to the research questions (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). The four-phase protocol consists of the following phases: (a) Ensuring interview questions align with research questions; (b) Constructing an inquiry-based conversation; (c) Receiving feedback on interview protocols, and (d) piloting the interview protocol (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

To ensure that the interview questions were aligned to the study's purpose and research questions, I created a table with three rows and three columns. I typed the purpose of the study in the first column, the research questions were typed into the second column and the interview questions flowed into the third column. Each interview question was created to provide specific insight into the research questions for this study. Creating a visual or flow chart helped to ensure that the interview questions were relevant and aligned to the research questions which resulted in descriptive, insightful data about specific instructional leadership practices thought to have a positive effect on student growth and school climate based on the perceptions of the 16 elementary principals who were the participants in the study. Creating interview questions that were aligned to the research questions also resulted in data that highlighted the specific contextual factors that influenced each elementary principal's instructional leadership practices.

To construct an interview protocol that was inquiry based, I created questions that were open-ended to stimulate conversation and that would not solicit yes or no responses. Inquiry based questions should not be written in the language of the research question (Castillo-Montoya, 2016), therefore, I developed questions that were written and

presented in the language that my study participants could understand and that were free of technical language. In order to create questions that were inquiry based, it was important to frequently reference the research related to the study's conceptual framework and to the research questions. Frequently reviewing the components of the conceptual framework promoted focus and clarity when creating the interview questions. For example, when creating questions about contextual factors, I had to develop a solid understanding of the different types of contextual factors referenced in Hallinger's research (Hallinger, 2018). From that understanding, I was able to create interview questions relevant to the school district that was the focus of this study and inquiry based questions aligned to the purpose of this study which was to describe specific instructional leadership behaviors as perceived by successful elementary school principals to have a positive effect on student outcomes and school climate. The result of this phase of the Interview Refinement Protocol was the creation of inquiry based questions that provoked rich responses which provided an indepth understanding about the specific instructional leadership practices thought to be essential for promoting student growth and creating a positive school climate. In addition, creating inquiry based questions provided an opportunity for me to ask follow up questions and seek clarity about my participants' responses which also promoted rich conversation and a deeper level of understanding as it pertained to the participants' responses.

To enhance the likelihood that the data that collected would be reliable , I solicited feedback about the interview questions from two colleagues-other assistant

principals serving students in elementary schools in the same district. The purpose of discussing the interview questions with other colleagues was to ensure that the questions posed would elicit feedback that would answer the research questions for this study. These discussion occurred during the peer debriefing sessions. Both elementary principals indicated that the interview questions were straight forward and addressed the specific research questions for this study.

To accomplish the fourth component of the interview refinement protocol, I needed to practice the entire interview on a colleague that mirrored my study sample (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). To accomplish this, I asked a former assistant principal who was now an elementary principal to participate in a practice interview session. During the practice session I was able to work out logistical issues prior to the actual interview. For example, making sure that I knew how to turn on the instrument that I was using to record the interview prior to the start of the interview. Since I purchased the device specifically for the interviews, I needed to be sure that I knew how to operate and situate the device in a way that minimized distractions but recorded the interview in its entirety. I was also able to practice articulating the interview questions using a pace that could be understood by the study participant. The elementary principal also provided feedback about the language of the interview questions regarding whether the questions could be easily understood and were free of technical language. The result of phase 4 which was piloting the interview included the opportunity (a) to resolve any logistical issues that might arise during the interview, (b) to practice hearing the interview questions asked

aloud which allowed me to practice the pacing of my questions, and (c) for the participating elementary principal to provide me with feedback about the clarity and structure of the interview questions.

Additional data collection tools included audio-tape which were used to record responses that were transcribed and codified to identify characteristics and themes for describing the instructional leadership practices and behaviors of successful elementary principals as instructional leaders. I also created field notes during the face to face interviews. To avoid technological problems that could occur when recording interviews, the recording device was tested prior to beginning each interview. I arrived at each location early to ensure that the device was functioning properly and to ensure that the location was one in which the study participant was comfortable and that the location was free of obstructions and distractions. Upon arrival, each participant escorted me to the setting where each interview occurred. Since I arrived early, I was able to make adjustments to the setting with the participant's permission. An example of one adjustment that was made was setting up the interview space where I was close to the participant due to the time of day that the interview was conducted. It was close to dismissal and the participant warned that it might get a little noisy so I made sure that I was almost "knew to knee" with the participant to ensure that audio recording was clear and captured the participant's responses clearly. Field notes help capture the nonverbal cues of the respondent and serve as a supplement to the audio recording (Oltmann, 2016). To avoid feelings of obtrusion that may arise when using field notes, I explained to each

participant prior to beginning the interview that I would be collecting data using the audio recording as well as by using field notes. I explained the purpose of using field notes and reinforced that confidentiality was a requirement of the study.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Recruiting participants for research has been considered one of the most challenging aspects of conducting research (Archibald & Munce, 2015). The recruiting procedures for the current study were characterized by complete transparency. The 16 study participants (elementary principals) identified using the College and Career Performance Index were notified using a variety of strategies such as an invitational email that included a Consent to Participate via Google Survey as well as follow up phone calls to those potential study participants who did not respond to the invitational email. Each participant identified was willing to participate but acknowledged that invitational emails were overlooked due to the hectic time of the school year. After establishing the time, date and location of each face to face interview, I tested my data collection instruments and organized the interview protocols by number which was used to identify study participants.

Data was collected at the elementary school site of each principal. The primary data collection instrument used was the interview protocol used during face to face interviews. Additional data collection instruments used included an audio recorder and field notes. The data collection cycle consisted of initial data collection during which time I reviewed informed consent and confidentiality and conducted face to face

interviews. I then transcribed and coded the data collected. After transcribing the data, a draft of the preliminary findings of the data analysis was sent to each study participant so that each could review my interpretation of their responses for accuracy as well as clarify any misinterpretations during the data analysis phase. Draft findings were sent via email and each member was asked to review the findings and either respond that the preliminary findings had been reviewed and were accurate or each participant could provide additional information to clarify their responses. Each participant replied that the interpretation of their responses were accurate.

Debriefing is an essential part of the qualitative research process (Research administration and compliance: Debriefing process guidance, 2015). While debriefing is commonly used in studies that may have involved initially deceiving the participant about some aspect of the study, debriefing is also used to gain insight into the study participants' experience while participating in the study (Research administration and compliance: Debriefing process guidance, 2015). Debriefing involves a structured or semi-structured conversation between the researcher and the study participants whereby all aspects of the study are reviewed after the study has concluded. To execute this portion of the study, I attempted to contact each study participant to arrange a time to discuss the findings of the research. Due to the hectic pace which is often characteristic of the closing of an elementary school year, providing a summary of the findings was more convenient for my study participants. I created an email that included verbiage thanking each participant for participating in the study and a summary of the study.

Data Analysis Plan

Qualitative thematic analysis is classified under the qualitative descriptive design (Vaismoradi, Jones, Hannele, & Snelgrove, 2016). Thematic analysis is a technique used to analyze textual data and highlight or illuminate themes (Vaismoradi, Jones, Hannele, & Snelgrove, 2016). The key characteristics of thematic analysis include a systematic process of coding, examining of meaning and provision of a description of the social reality through the creation of theme (Vaismoradi, Jones, Hannele, & Snelgrove, 2016). Qualitative data collection using thematic analysis was appropriate for the current study because the purpose of this study was to describe specific instructional leadership behaviors as perceived by successful elementary school principals to have a positive effect on student outcomes and school climate.

The major purpose of qualitative data analysis is to make meaning of the qualitative data collected (Ngulube, 2015). The aim of transcribing data for coding is to break apart the text and develop an understanding and meaning from the transcribed and coded text (Ngulube, 2015). Codes are attached to groups or chunks of information in varying sizes such as words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs (Ngulube, 2015).

The description and interpretation of participants' perspectives are important features of all qualitative data collection. The sole purpose of data collection for the current study was to use qualitative methods to gain an understanding of the perceptions of elementary principals as it pertains to specific institutional leadership behaviors that

positively influence student growth and conducive school climates. Data collection tools for the current study included the interview protocol, audio recordings, and field notes.

After the data for the current study was collected, I transcribed the data from the audio recording using TEMO, a transcribing application wherein each audio recording was uploaded and transcribed. After reviewing the transcribed data and making adjustments based on the audio recording, I coded the data and began to identify common themes that emerged from the data with regards to instructional leadership practices, strategies for managing instructional leadership practices with managerial responsibilities, and contextual factors that influence the consistent implementation of instructional leadership practices and behaviors. There are a variety of coding options. Effective coding includes the following elements: (a) labels, (b) definitions of what each is related to with regards to elements and parts of the research or study, (c) descriptions of how to know when the theme occurred, and (d) examples to illuminate the relevance of the themes to the research or study which also minimizes confusion (Ngulube, 2015). Coding for the current study included multiple cycles such as entering the responses into a spreadsheet, highlighting the most commonly used words, phrases or practices and I also used my field notes to provide clarity about specific responses. Ngulube (2015) recommended the following steps as a starting point for thematic analysis: (a) data transcription, (b) noting themes that relate to specific concepts, (c) coding each data set or theme to begin categorizing and organizing the data, (d) reviewing themes and exploring

their relationships within the context of the research, (e) solidifying the definition and names for the themes noted, and (f) then finalizing the analysis of the data collected.

For the current study, the coding cycle began with the transcription of the audio recording and participant responses dictated on the interview protocol. Relevant words or phrases were organized to begin identifying themes. For example, based on the research question regarding contextual factors, each participant response to the questions related to contextual factors was entered into a spreadhseet under each question created to address that specific research question. Each common word or phrase was highlighted using a different color on the spreadsheet to which served as the coding for each theme. This cycle was repeated several times often referring back to the audio recording to ensure that no details were missed or themes misinterpreted. To summarize the findings of the research, common themes were described and displayed in figures and tables to provide a format that allows the reader to be able to easily interpret and understand the results of the data collection process as it pertains to common themes that emerged from the data.

Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, the terms trustworthiness, dependability, transferability, and confirmability serve the purpose of legitimizing the study (Burkholder, Cox, & Crawford, 2016). For the purposes of this study, member checking was used. The following information is a description of issues of trustworthines such as credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability, defining to increase the reader's

understanding of each term as well as the strategies that used to address issues of trustworthiness.

Credibility

Credibility ensures that the data collected is aligned with the research questions guiding the study (Burkholder et al., 2016). The purpose of this study was to describe the specific instructional leadership practices perceived by successful elementary principals to have a positive effect on student outcomes. To ensure that the data collected was aligned with the research questions, I compared or triangulated data collected during face to face interviews, peer debriefing sessions, and the member checking process. Data triangulation includes the use of multiple data sources to view the findings of the research from different angles.

During the face to face interview, each of the 16 elementary principals interviewed provided feedback to interview questions created to generate responses and data relevant to the guiding research questions for this study. To ensure alignment of the interview questions to the research questions, I used the four-step Interview Refinement Protocol which included piloting the interview protocol with an elementary principal serving students in the district wherein this study was situated but who was not a study participant. Face to face interviews were conducted at the campus of each elementary principal at a time deemed most convenient for the study participant. The time for face to face interviews ranged from about 30 minutes to over an hour.

The peer debriefing process involved discussing the progress of the study with two elementary principals not involved in the study. I was able to schedule an actual conference with one of the elementary principals who agreed to assist in the peer debriefing process. However, one of the elementary principals preferred, due to her hectic schedule, to discuss the progress of the study via phone. During the peer debriefing process I discussed the purpose of the study and major themes that were emerging from my data analysis. The two elementary principals who agreed to participate in this part of the study were not included in the study because they were not principals for the entire three year span during which data from the College and Career Readiness Performance Index was reviewed. Both principals provided additional insight regarding some of the key themes that were emerging from the data. During the discussion about key themes, I was able to solicit feedback about whether specific interview questions seemed to sway the study participants to answer in a certain way or if the questions seemed to represent any bias on my part. Both principals agreed that the questions seemed straight forward and did not seem to steer responses in any specific direction. Both principals also verbalized that had they been included in the study that their responses might also confirm the key themes of this study.

During the member checking process, I provided each study participant with a draft of my interpretation of their responses to the interview questions via email. Each participant was asked to review my interpretation for accuracy. Study participants were

also asked to provide additional clarity or correction for any points that had been misinterpreted or needed expansion.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the way in which qualitative studies can be applied to a broader context while maintaining context specific richness (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). While we know that qualitative data or results cannot be generalized from a sample to a population, the findings of the research must have some value or meaning beyond the actual research (Burkholder, Cox, & Crawford, 2016). To promote the likelihood that the findings of the research will have some meaning beyond the research, I used thick descriptions to describe the findings of the research and the context of the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Thick descriptions provide sufficient details about the findings, the contextual details characterizing the research and data collection, and my interactions with the study participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Dependability

Dependability refers to whether evidence exists that demonstrates that there is consistency in data collection, analysis, and reporting (Burkholder et al., 2016). Dependability also requires that any shifts in methodology or data collection that occurs during the qualitative study be reported. To promote accountability and increase the validity of my study I engaged in a data triangulation process wherein I compared multiple data sources at different points during the study. This process took several months because it involved collecting data using the interview protocol and audio

recording as well as reviewing and comparing field notes dictated during the face to face interviews, member checking and working through the peer debriefing process. Engaging in this process involved scheduling face to face interviews either using the survey that invited potential study participants to participate in the study and following up via phone to invite participants who did not respond to the email that incuded the invitational survey; conducting the face to face interviews, transcribing and coding the data collecting during the face to face interviews and providing study participants with a draft of their responses to verify and/or expound upon; and scheduling the time to identify and engage two peers who were willing to participate in ongoing conversations about the study. My purpose for triangulating multiple sources was to determine if the data collected was aligned to the research questions and to detect common themes present throughout each data source. In other words, was the data getting to the heart or purpose of my research which was to describe the specific instructional leadership behaviors perceived by successful elementary school principals to have a positive effect on student outcomes and school climate?

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to whether other informed researchers would have arrived at the same conclusions when examining the same qualitative data (Burkholder et al., 2016). While qualitative researchers acknowledge the subjective nature of the research, research methods must be based on procedures, analyses, and conclusions that can be verified (Burkholder et. Al, 2016). To address issues of confirmability or neutrality of the

research, the Walden dissertation committee reviewed and evaluated each step of this study. I also maintained a reflexive journal used to document the procedures for checking and verifying the data throughout the process which also promoted transparency. In addition, I also solicited two elementary principals for the purpose of participating in the peer debriefing process. During this process, the elementary principals who were not a part of this study engaged in conversation about the key findings of the study as well as whether the questions on the interview protocol may have provoked the study participants to respond in a specific manner. Both elementary principals confirmed the key findings of the study based on their own experiences as elementary principals and provided feedback which also confirmed that no bias seemed to be present in the structure or wording of the interview questions.

Summary

Chapter 3 was a summary of the methodology used in this descriptive case study that aimed to describe specific instructional leadership behaviors as perceived by successful elementary school principals to have a positive effect on student outcomes and school climate. The methodology of this qualitative study included the use of unstructured face to face interviews with 16 successful elementary principals identified as being successful instructional leaders based on the continued or consistent growth of their students as evidenced by document analysis of trend data collected from Progress and School Climate Rating component of the College and Career Performance Index. The Progress section was selected because this measure describes student growth versus

achievement which demonstrates the ability to make instructional leadership decisions that positively influence students beginning at different levels of achievement.

Qualitative methods were used to collect and analyze data. Interview protocols, audio recording, field notes, and member checking were used to collect and verify data. Data collected was transcribed from audio recordings, codified and organized into patterns to identify common themes emerging from the data. Strategies such as member checking, peer debriefing, and data triangulation were used to ensure that data collected were confirmable, dependable, transferable, and credible. The information in Chapter 4 includes a description the results of the data collection including the setting, demographics, a description of the data collection process, and the data analysis. In addition, the information in Chapter 4 will include a description of strategies that address issues of trustworthiness such as dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability. Finally, the information in Chapter 4 includes a description of the emergent themes discovered during the thematic analysis of the data collected.

Chapter 4: Reflections and Results

The purpose of this research was to describe the specific instructional leadership behaviors perceived by successful elementary school principals to have a positive effect on student outcomes and school climate. Another aim of this study was to bridge the gap in the literature because while there exists a considerable body of research that described the measurable effect that school leaders have on student achievement, very little is known about why, when and how principals guide teachers' work in the classroom and implement instructional leadership practices that directly or indirectly affect student growth (Salo et al., 2015). Therefore, I attempted to add to the literature concerning the high impact instructional leadership practices of principals in schools with stable or consistent growth.

Three research questions guided this qualitative case study:

RQ1: Which direct and indirect instructional leadership practices are perceived by elementary principals as most important for ensuring the success of each student?

RQ2: How do successful elementary principals balance their dichotomous role of instructional leader and building manager?

RQ3: What are the specific contextual factors that influence the consistent implementation of instructional leadership practices by elementary principals?

Setting

The setting for this study was a school district in a metropolitan neighborhood in Georgia. Each research participant was interviewed at their school sites except for one

principal who was interviewed off-site because she recently retired. During the data collection phase, I interviewed 16 elementary principals identified as being successful instructional leaders based on a review of trend data the Progress and School Climate components of the College and Career Readiness Performance Index between the school years 2015-2017. For the data collection phase of this research, there were no changes in budgets, personnel or other trauma that would contribute to or influence the data interpretation or the thematic analysis.

Demographics

The student population for the school district during the time frame for this study was comprised of 42, 000 students, 5, 000 employees, and 50 schools (Fast Facts, 2019). The ethnic breakdown for the district that served as the setting for this study includes 52% African American students, 32% Caucasian students, 9% Hispanic students, 4% multiracial students and 3% Asian students. The student population also included 51% economically disadvantaged students, 2% English Language Learners, 13% of students with disabilities and 13% of its students receiving gifted services.

For this study, I conducted face to face interviews with 16 elementary principals who served students as the elementary principal between the 2015-2017 school years. The average number of years that research participants served in the role of the principal at the elementary schools which served as the interview site for the study ranged from four years to 30 years. Ethnically, the makeup of the participant group included six African American elementary principals and nine Caucasian elementary principals.

Table 2

Student Demographics for the Georgia Milestone Assessment System

Demographic	2015	2016	2017
African American	35	51	52
Caucasians	35	33	31
Hispanic Americans	8	9	9
Multi-Racial	4	4	4
Asian	3	3	3
Economically Disadvantaged	53	51	50
English Language Learners	2	2	2
Students with Disabilities	12.6	12.5	13
Gifted Services K-12	13	12.1	11.8

Data Collection (IRB Approval #041919-0573669)

The data collection phase of this research began with an email inviting the 16 elementary principals to participate in the study. The email explained the nature of the

research and invited the potential study participants to share their expertise regarding the instructional leadership practices implemented during the time frame in which students in their elementary schools demonstrated stable or consistent growth according to the College and Career Readiness Performance Index, specifically during the time frame 2015-2017. Attached to the invitational email were copies of the Invitation to Participate and the Informed Consent as well as a link to a survey wherein each participant could acknowledge that they read the Informed Consent, indicate their agreement to participate in the study, and study participants also provided convenient times to conduct the face to face interviews at their schools. Some of the potential study participants agreed to participate in the study after I reached out to them via email but did not complete the survey. Therefore, some of the Informed Consent Forms were also collected on site at the time of the face to face interview. Collecting some of the Informed Consent forms on site did represent a slight variation from the initial plan for obtaining informed consent using the survey link. However, prior to beginning the interview, the Informed Consent was explained, study participants were given the opportunity to ask questions and consent to participate was recorded at the beginning of each face to face interview. The data were collected at the school site for each elementary principal except for one elementary principal whose data was collected off campus because she recently retired.

The time frame for the 16 face to face interviews ranged from 28 minutes to over an hour. Each interview was recorded using an audio recorder purchased to record the face to face interviews and by using TEMI, a transcription application. I also wrote field notes during the face to face interviews and maintained a journal describing the data

collection phase of this study. Although the initial plan was to obtain informed consent via google survey, because I did have to obtain formal consent for some participants on site, this did represent a slight variation in the data collection that differed from the plan described in Chapter 3. It is important to note that each study participant did agree to participate in the study prior to my visit to conduct the face to face interview. However, because it was such a hectic time of the school year, some of the participants simply forgot to respond to the survey prior to my arrival. For study participants who did not respond to the invitational email that included the survey that consented to participate in the study, I contacted each participant by phone to ask if they received the email and to invite them to participate in the study. During the phone conversations, each study participant did accept the invitation to participate and scheduled a time to conduct the face to face interview. After arriving to the interview site and prior to beginning the interview I reviewed the purpose of the study and the details of the informed consent. After this review, each participant signed a written consent on site and acknowledged their willingness to participate in the study prior to the beginning of the interview. This acknowledgement was captured on the audio recording and signed consents were stored with the participant's transcribed audio.

Data Analysis

After each interview, the audio recording of the interview was uploaded into the TEMI platform and reviewed for accuracy. I then reviewed each transcript against the audio recording, made corrections to the transcribed audio and emailed each study participant a draft of my interpretation of their responses. Each participant was asked to

review the summary of the responses to ensure that my interpretation of their responses was accurate. Each study participant was asked to confirm the accuracy of my interpretation and/or respond with any clarifying points if they wished to do so. To confirm the accuracy of their responses, study participants were asked to review the draft of the preliminary findings and respond, *"I confirm that all responses are correct"* or provide any clarifying points.

After receiving confirmation from each study participant, I then coded each transcript by writing either words or short phrases in the margins of each transcript and underlining important points or statements. Open coding was used to code participant responses and identify emergent themes. Open coding is used in qualitative research to build concepts and identify themes from a written data collection source such as interviews (Williams & Moser, 2019). Coded data were then organized into themes and patterns. Data was then coded into categories to find emergent themes. Several themes emerged during the data analysis phase of the study. Each theme is addressed in detail in the Results section of Chapter 4.

Discrepant or negative cases refer to the data or cases that go against the grain or does not conform to previous concepts (Christopher & Stockton, 2018). While compliant leadership was an unexpected theme, all the data collected and emergent themes provided specific insight and understanding about the research questions. The principals' responses consistently led to the themes that addressed RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3. No discrepant cases were noted during the data analysis.

Results

There were 14 questions included in the interview protocol. Interview questions 1-6 and 12-13 addressed RQ1 (Which direct and indirect instructional leadership practices are perceived by elementary principals as most important for ensuring the success of each student?). Interview questions 7 and 14 were created to provide insight into RQ2 (How do successful elementary principals balance their dichotomous role of instructional leader and building manager?). Interview questions 8-11 were created to provide insight into RQ3 (What are the specific contextual factors that influence the consistent implementation of instructional leadership practices by elementary principals?).

Several themes emerged from the data collection phase of this study. Specific details regarding the thematic analysis and emergent themes are described below.

Research Question 1

Several common practices were noted when collecting data related to RQ1. Interview Questions 1-6, 12 and 13 were designed to collect data that described the perceptions of elementary principals about their perceptions of their specific responsibilities as it pertains to instructional leadership within the school building. There are three major components that describe instructional leadership behaviors: defining a clear mission, monitoring instruction, and creating a positive school climate (Pietsch & Tulowitzi, 2017). All 16 principals described the importance of building effective teams, actively monitoring the curriculum, having a clear instructional focus, supporting

teachers in a variety of ways including targeted professional development and implementing data-driven practices throughout their learning communities.

Theme 1: Data-driven decision making. Data-informed decision making is sometimes used interchangeably with data-driven decision making (Young, McNamara, Brown, & O'Hara, 2018). Applied to school principals, the term refers to the way that principals collect and use data to inform their decisions about school processes (Young et al., 2108). One theme that quickly emerged during the face to face interviews and thematic analysis was the use of data-driven decision making. Every principal described being involved in data-driven leadership at the teacher level, student level or both. P1 stated that teachers in his building were required to engage in data discussions with him wherein they examined weekly common formative assessments. P1 also mentioned that his first responsibility was to identify the needs of the school which started with "deep data analysis." P2 described data-driven practices such as students charting and tracking their own data which was reported to promote student ownership of their learning. P2 went on to say, "Everything in our building was data-driven." Every study participant reported the strategic use of data to inform instructional practices as one of the primary strategies implemented during the time framed reviewed for this study. Specifically, study participants reported the use of common formative assessments, FIP modules (formative instructional practices) that were provided through the state department of education, and P5 even stated that he examined student performance data for students who received support services such as the Early Intervention Program and Student Support Services. Another study participant indicated that based on student performance

data from the previous year, she restructured the school's gifted program to ensure more equitable practices throughout the building.

Theme 2: Team building and collaboration. Building effective teams was also an emergent theme. Effective team building requires principal engagement, scheduled and protected times for meetings, teacher facilitation and teams that are integrated with a variety of supports (Moore-Johnson, Reinhorn, & Simon, 2016). Each principal stressed the importance of not carrying the work alone and knowing when to delegate responsibilities such as monitoring instructional practices and assisting other teachers with data analysis. In addition to monitoring instructional practices, each principal referred to their reliance on the school leadership team and building level teams to communicate and model the mission of the school as well as assist with building instructional capacity in other teachers. P12 stated that one of his major responsibilities was to "getting key people around her that could help her keep an eye on what's going on in the school." P12 went on to say,

> "I have learned to find some key players on the faculty who can do some of that instructional work that I cannot. But again, you have to learn your people first and then you start to recognize those who are sharp as tacks".

P10 responded that it was impossible to do the work alone. P10 stated that she relied heavily on her leadership team and her assistant principal.

Theme 3: Supporting teachers. Ten out of 16 study participants emphasized the importance of supporting the teachers and teaching teams. P16 referred to the teachers as the "boots on the ground." P16 spoke about the need to protect teachers from outside

influenced such as overwhelming district to minimize distractions enabling them to stay focused on instructing the students. Study participants also spoke about having the "wisdom" to implement initiatives incrementally instead of all at once to keep from negatively impacting teacher morale.

Nine out of 16 of the study participants also emphasized the importance of targeted professional development. Miessel, Parr & Timperley (2016) also found that targeted professional development was an important factor when planning for teacher growth. Research conducted by Miessel et. al (2016) found that developing professional development programs based on the needs of the school was an important feature in building capacity in teachers and promoting student growth. Most of the elementary principals interviewed indicated that planning for targeted professional development based on the needs of their school was a part of their job and a very important strategy that contributed to the stability and growth of their students as reflected on the CCRPI.

Study participants also emphasized that one of their major responsibilities as an instructional leader was monitoring instructional practices. Sixty-nine percent of the elementary principals interviewed stated that monitoring instruction was an important part of their instructional leadership responsibilities. P5 stated that principals had to get in the classrooms to ensure that teachers were providing instruction using research-based practices. Other principals or study participants spoke about having clear instructional protocols and providing critical feedback about instructional practices.

Theme 4: Clearly defined mission. Defining a clear mission was also a common theme that was noted when interviewing the study participants. Each principal affirmed

the need to have a clearly defined mission and was able to provide specific methods used to communicate the vision to the members of their learning communities. Many of the principals reported strategies such as using the district messenger system, including the mission statement in weekly newsletters and communicating the mission statement during events such as PTO nights and during school council meetings. While P1 stated that communicating the mission can be challenging because some of her parents preferred communication from the school only when it is directly related to their child, she and other principals stated that the mission was posted on the website and, again, discussed their heavy reliance on their school leadership teams to communicate and carry out the mission of the school. Most of the study participants indicated that the mission was important because it provided direction and focus for their learning communities. One hundred percent of the study participants also indicated that the mission of the school influenced the allocation of school resources such as how teachers were assigned to grade levels, spending or fiscal resources and scheduling. P4 stated that the mission should be more than what is recited or included on the website. P4 stated that the mission should be palpable. Specifically, he stated that the mission should be, "seen, felt and heard all over the building."

Theme 5. Positive School Climate. Eighty-eight percent of the study participants indicated that creating a positive school climate was the most important component of instructional leadership. Twelve percent indicated that the most important was monitoring instruction or a combination of the two. P1 even stated that school climate was the "backbone" of the school. When asked how they created a positive school

climate during the three years that serve as the focus of this study, one common strategy was a focus on the language of the school climate survey that influenced their school climate rating on the CCRPI. Study participants indicated that reviewed the questions and language of the survey with their leadership teams and staff members and required them to use the language of the surveys with stakeholders within the learning community so that we the survey was administered to parents, students and teachers, a common language existed which helped to promote an understanding of the survey questions. Most of the study participants indicated that they had been intentional about changing the culture of their learning communities either by implementing programs that required culture shifts such as Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports or PBIS or establishing clear procedures and expectations about how to address undesired behaviors from students in their learning communities as well as strategies for reinforcing desired behaviors. One principal stated that being intentional about the cultural shift in his school meant that he had to be very strategic when hiring teachers to work in the school. He stated that while he could build instructional capacity, P1 went on to say that "every teacher must have a love for kids." P6 also stated that every teacher must "work with their heart because we are in the business of children." Most of the study participants also mentioned celebrating or incentivizing student and teacher behavior.

Research Question 2

Two common themes emerged during face to face interviews with elementary principals. When asked which strategies they used to balance the dual roles of the principalship which include serving as the building manager and instructional leader,

most study participants stressed the importance of distributed leadership practices and prioritization. Even though 38 percent of the study participants stated that they spent most of the day performing building management tasks and responsibilities and 62 percent stated they were able to spend most of their instructional day as the instructional leader, all of the study participants responded in way that emphasized the need to prioritize the day and distribute the tasks associated with the principal to other trusted leaders in the school building.

Theme 1: Shared or distributed leadership. Traditional leadership that involved one person being responsible for all leadership functions and responsibilities has evolved into a more share or distributed leadership style which invites the input and collaboration from other leaders within the school building (Bagwell, 2019). All study participants mentioned shared or distributed leadership practices when asked how they managed the dichotomous role of instructional leader with the responsibilities of the building manager. P16 stated, "you have to identify strong people. You make people feel as they are a part of something bigger and you allow the opportunity to grow." P16 went on to say, "You have to go out, recruit and find really good people and empower those people to continuously contribute to the overall way that you do things in the building."
Study participants also mentioned the importance of having clearly established and communicated routines and procedures so that all members of the learning community to minimize confusion about expected behaviors within the learning community.

Theme 2: Prioritizing. The role of the school principal includes many tasks and responsibilities (Lárusdóttir & Steinunn , 2015). It is important for school principals to

systematically prioritize their tasks and make use of time management methods (Lárusdóttir & Steinunn , 2015). While principals want to prioritize instructional leadership duties and responsibilities over building management or operational responsibilities, over other duties, come principals find this to be a difficult undertaking (Lárusdóttir & Steinunn , 2015). When asked how they were able to balance the dichotomous role of the building manager and instructional leaders, many of the study participants emphasized the importance of prioritizing their responsibilities. However, some principals expanded their responses to the influence of student discipline on their ability to prioritize instructional leadership tasks and responsibilities. P8 emphasized the importance of prioritizing the school day. P2 also stated that she always spent time "scheduling her priorities. P14 also stressed the importance of focus and prioritizing classroom observation time.

Research Question 3

Previous literature included a description of findings that detailed the importance of principal effectiveness as it pertains to school improvement across all school contexts (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). Included in this previous research is growing evidence that details the relevance and influence of context on instructional leadership practices (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). These contextual influences can include factors such as socio-economics, politics, school resources or district initiatives (Tan, 2018). Emergent themes that described principals' perceptions of the contextual influences that influenced their instructional leadership approach are described below.

Theme 1. Staffing. When asked about contextual influences, only 25 percent of the study participants indicated that contextual influences had no impact on their instructional leadership practices. Seventy-five percent of the study participants reported that contextual factors did influence their instructional leadership practices. One theme that emerged from the interviews and thematic analysis was the need for more staffing to assist with managing the disciplinary issues in the school building. P16 reported that he was able to focus on instructional leadership practices because he did not have an inordinate amount of disciplinary issues in the school building. However, most of the other principals indicated that having additional staffing would support their desire to place instructional leadership at the forefront of their daily practices. Some of the study participants had already been allocated additional staffing for the next school year and indicated that the additional staffing would allow them to regularly observe teacher practices. Eleven out of 16 study participants reported that monitoring instruction was the most difficult aspect of instructional leadership to consistently implement because of the need for a second assistant principal or additional staffing such as instructional coaches.

Theme 2. District initiatives. Another contextual factor that emerged as a theme during the thematic analysis was the number of district initiatives that principals were expected to implement. Although most of the study participants responded that the number of district initiatives that they were expected to implement was overwhelming, another common theme was their determination to "make it work." One study participant indicated that the number of initiatives limited his creativity in finding the best strategy for the students in his school (P8).

Theme 3. Compliant Leadership. Compliant leadership was an unexpected theme that emerged from the face to face interviews and thematic analysis. While most of the leaders indicated that the number of district initiatives that they were expected to implement was overwhelming, when asked about how the district could support or mitigate the contextual influences, every study participant responded with the attitude of just "making it work." P8 stated that it was, "all about your attitude." P7 stated that she was a "compliant leader who believed in respecting those in authority." P7 stated, "If you don't have a way then make a way." Many of the principals or study participants talked about working with the school leadership team to develop roll-out plans or plans for incremental implementation to avoid overwhelming the teachers in the building. P6 stated she did not accept any excuses from the teachers and that implementation was the only option. Study participants indicated that in times past principals did have more autonomy to lead their learning communities, but the amount of autonomy decreased with the ushering in of new leadership at the district office. Study participants all indicated that the decreased amount of autonomy "wasn't necessarily a bad thing." P12 stated that the new leadership and decreased autonomy was beneficial because it provided "focus" which positively affected her leadership style. Besides additional staffing which many of the elementary principals indicated would be provided for the upcoming school year, study participants did not make mention of any other support that was needed from the district level. One principal did mention that teacher input when deciding on school level initiatives would help to mitigate some of the resistance that principals encountered when developing plans to implement new initiatives. While unexpected, this theme

confirms Hallinger's (2018) research that included findings that effective principals understand how to adapt their instructional leadership behaviors to meet the needs, opportunities, and challenges that may characterize their specific learning communities. No discrepant cases or data was collected. All responses and themes provided insight and understanding about the research questions for this study.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness or rigor refers to the confidence that the reader can have in the data, interpretation, and methods utilized to ensure the quality of the study (Connelly, 2016). Researchers must establish protocols and procedures to ensure that specific criteria related to the trustworthiness of the qualitative study have been addressed (Connelly, 2016). Specific criteria include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Connelly, 2016).

Credibility

Credibility refers to the truth of the study and the results or findings of the study (Connelly, 2016). To ensure the credibility of this qualitative study, I triangulated data from face to face interviews, peer debriefing, and feedback collected from the member checking process. The peer debriefing sessions involved discussions with two principals who provided feedback about the protocols and asked me questions about the study. I conducted one session by phone and one session in person.

To compare or triangulate the data sources, I searched for common themes present in all three data sources: face to face interviews, the member checking process and peer debriefing. For example, after conducting each interview, participant responses

were transcribed for accuracy and in preparation for thematic analysis. During the member checking process, I asked each study participant to verify the accuracy of my interpretation of their responses to ensure that there was no bias in my interpretation. Each study participant did confirm that I captured their responses accurately with no need for further expansion of my interpretation.

During the peer debriefing process, the two principals who participated confirmed the key findings of my study based on their own experience as elementary principals. Each principal also confirmed that interview questions were straight forward and did not seem to contain any inherent bias that would encourage respondents to answer in a specific or desired way.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the way in which qualitative studies can be applied to or generalized to a broader context while maintaining context specific richness (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). While we know that qualitative data or results cannot be generalized from a sample to a population, the findings of the research must have some value or meaning beyond the actual research (Burkholder, Cox, & Crawford, 2016). To promote the likelihood that the findings of the research will have some meaning beyond the research, I used thick descriptions to describe the findings of the research and the context of the study. Thick descriptions provide sufficient details about the findings, the contextual details characterizing the research and data collection, and my interactions with the study participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Dependability

Dependability refers to whether evidence exists that demonstrates that there is consistency in data collection, analysis, and reporting (Burkholder et al., 2016). Dependability also requires that any shifts in methodology or data collection that occurs during the qualitative study be reported. To promote dependability, I utilized strategies to increase researcher accountability such as keeping process logs about each step in the data collection process. As described in the credibility session, I also triangulated the data collected during face to face interviews, the member checking process and the peer debriefing process. This process did not deviate from the previously described process.

Confirmability

The protocol previously established to address issues of confirmability, I implemented the previously established protocol wherein I kept copious field notes and a reflective journal. The reflective journal was used to document each step of the data collection process. Maintaining a reflective journal promotes transparency and neutrality in qualitative studies (Connelly, 2016). In addition, the Walden dissertation committee reviewed and evaluated every step of this study.

Summary

The purpose of this research was to describe the specific instructional leadership behaviors perceived by successful elementary school principals to have a positive effect on student outcomes and school climate. This study was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: Which direct and indirect instructional leadership practices are perceived by elementary principals as most important for ensuring the success of each student?

RQ2: How do successful elementary principals balance their dichotomous role of instructional leader and building manager?

RQ3: What are the specific contextual factors that influence the consistent implementation of instructional leadership practices by elementary principals?

Five themes emerged in response to RQ1 which asked about direct and indirect instructional leadership practices perceived to be most important for ensuring student success. The emergent themes included data-driven decision making, team building, and collaboration, supporting teachers, the importance of having a clearly defined mission and the importance of creating a positive climate. Elementary school principals indicated that the instructional leadership practices that they perceived to be most important with regards to having a positive impact on student success were focusing on data when making building-level decisions, building effective teams that could carry out the mission and vision of the school and perform instructional leadership tasks such as monitoring instruction, and supporting teachers who they felt were the "boots on the ground" in the school building. In addition, all but two study participants adamantly responded that establishing and maintaining a positive school climate was critical to the success of students. One study participant indicated that having a school climate that was not positive and conducive to learning, other school processes would be sabotaged.

Two major themes emerged in response to RQ2 which asked elementary principals how they managed the dichotomous role of the building manager and chief instructional leader. Shared or distributed leadership and prioritizing were the two dominant themes. While study participants reported that it was important to prioritize the important tasks of the day such as monitoring instruction, they also reported that monitoring instruction was the most difficult instructional leadership task to implement.

Data collection and thematic analysis for RQ3 highlighted three major themes. Study participants indicated a need for additional staffing especially as it pertains to helping to manage student discipline. Many of the study participants indicated that they had or would be implementing PBIS in their school buildings. Each study participant that indicated the implementation of PBIS also indicated that it was effective in helping to establish and maintain a positive school climate. However, study participants still indicated the need for additional staffing to assist with managing tasks that would allow elementary principals to focus more on instructional leadership responsibilities.

Another theme that emerged was the overwhelming number of district initiative that elementary school principals were expected to implement. This emerged as the most mentioned contextual factor. The third and unexpected theme that emerged from the data analysis was related to the most mentioned contextual factor and how the district could support elementary principals with regards to mitigating the contextual factor previously mentioned. Elementary principals did not mention any specific strategy that could be recommended that would represent district-level support. Instead, elementary principals responded with “compliance.” Leaders even made statements such as “I am a compliant

leader." Each principal referred to just "making a way." There were no discrepant cases discovered during the data analysis phase of this study.

Themes related to the RQ1 ("Which direct and indirect instructional leadership practices are perceived by elementary principals as most important for ensuring the success of each student?) include data-driven decision making, team building and collaboration, supporting teachers, having a clearly defined mission and the importance of creating and maintaining a positive school climate. When asked about their perception of their instructional leadership responsibilities, most of the study participants mentioned or described data-driven processes and a reliance on student performance data to make decisions about instruction. P15 stated, "we look at data as a team. We set school improvement goals based on the data. If we need to make adjustments, we do."

The importance of creating and maintaining a positive school climate was also an emergent theme. When asked which instructional leadership component was most important with regards to contributing positively to students' growth, P6 stated, "The climate. Because if your climate isn't right, it will sabotage everything you do." School climate was chosen as the instructional leadership component that contributed to positive student growth by 14 out of 16 elementary school principals. P9 also stated, **"**But if your school climate is unhealthy, uncomfortable, it's going to be a trickle effect in all different directions I think. So, I think your positive climate has to be at the forefront."

Study participants also confirmed the importance of supporting teachers. Sixty-three percent of the elementary principals interviewed described the importance of

supporting teachers and many described specific strategies for shielding teachers from contextual factors that would distract them from the core business of schools which is teaching and learning. P7 described himself as a "culture guy." He stated, "I feel like my job is to give the teachers what they need to do their job. They're the boots on the ground people and I really perceive my responsibility as support."

RQ2 (How do successful elementary principals balance their dichotomous role of instructional leader and building manager?) was designed to gain insight and understanding about how principals balance the dual roles of the building manager and chief instructional leader while keeping instructional leadership at the forefront of their work. Two major themes which will be described extensively late in this chapter emerged from the data analysis-shared or distributed leadership and prioritizing important tasks such as monitoring instruction. What was interesting about the second theme-prioritizing the monitoring of instruction and other important tasks is that when asked about the tasks or responsibility that each participant found the most difficult to consistently implement, monitoring instruction was the response provided from most study participants. Study participants also stressed the need to identify strong instructional leaders in the building who can carry out instructional leadership tasks. Study participants indicated that empowering others to lead was critical to managing the tasks associated with the dual roles that characterize the principalship.

After analyzing the responses to RQ3 (What are the specific contextual factors that influence the consistent implementation of instructional leadership practices by

elementary principals?), three themes emerged, one unexpected. While most participants acknowledged that contextual or external factors existed and could influence the school building, when asked about how the district could mitigate some of the pressures associated with contextual factors, most of the study participants chose not to provide a definitive response. Instead, they responded with an attitude of compliance. Compliant leadership was not an expected theme but became a very powerful theme when analyzing the data. The number of district initiatives expected to be implemented by school principals was the most mentioned contextual factors that were mentioned but study participants responded similarly to P6 who said, “If you don’t have a way, you make a way.” P8 also stated, “I believe in compliance because what if you veer to a place where things don’t work, then what? How do we make this fit the research and we visit other schools who look like us and say, how did they make it work?” P8 also stressed the importance of “incremental implementation” as did other study participants when responding to the questions related to RQ3.

Chapter 4 described an overview of the setting and demographic information related to the study. In addition, I provided specific information about the data collection techniques and data analysis which included specific information about coding and emergent themes. Included in Chapter 4 was also a summary of the results of the study as well as specific information about protocols used to address issues of trustworthiness.

Chapter 5 includes an interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations based on the results or findings of the study, implications for social change and the conclusion.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendations

The problem addressed in this study is the lack of consistency with regards to the level of implementation of instructional leadership practices that have a positive influence on student outcomes resulting in marginal student growth evidenced by trend data (Hitt & Tucker, 2015). While there is an abundance of research on specific practices associated with instructional leadership, missing from the research are descriptions and explanations as to why, when, and how principals guide teachers' work in the classroom and implement instructional leadership practices that directly or indirectly affect student growth (Salo et al., 2015).

I was seeking to gain more insight into the why, when, and how successful principals implemented instructional leadership practices that, based on their own perceptions, contributed to the growth and stability in student performance for the students that they served during the 2015-2017 school years. The specific purpose of this study was to describe the specific instructional leadership strategies perceived to be effective by successful elementary principals who have consistently implemented effective instructional leadership practices that have resulted in consistent student performance based on specific measures reviewed from the College and Career Readiness Performance Index (GADOE, College and career readiness performance index, 2017). Principals identified as successful were those whose students demonstrated stability or growth based on a review of student performance data in the Progress

component of the College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) and whose school earned three or more stars on the school climate component of the CCRPI.

The conceptual framework most appropriate for this study was the instructional leadership framework which is based on the work of Phillip Hallinger. Linked to effective schools' movement in the 60s and 70s (Kyriakides & Creemer, 2017), in practice, instructional leadership refers to the direct and indirect behaviors of the principal that affect the quality of instruction and, as a result, the quality of the learning (Mestry, 2017). Hallinger's conceptual framework for instructional leadership is aligned with the purpose of the study. The instructional leadership framework also provides a foundation for understanding instructional leadership practices as well as the contextual factors that may influence the instructional leadership approach of the principal or school leader (Hallinger, Bringing context out of the shadows of leadership, 2018).

The most appropriate research design for this study was the qualitative case study which is a "detailed and intensive analysis of a particular event, situation, organization, or social unit" (Burkholder, Cox, & Crawford, 2016, p. 227). The case study approach provided the opportunity to study the problem addressed in this study in its natural setting or within the real-life context (Yazan, 2015). The case study approach allowed me to conduct face to face interviews with the 16 study participants in the context wherein the study participant practices and makes instructional leadership decisions (Burkholder et al., 2016).

Data collection for this study was conducted through the use of face to face interviews. During the interview, I used an audio recording to capture the responses from study participants but also created field notes and a reflective journal to detail each phase of the process. After collecting the data, I also used a transcription application, TEMI, to assist with transcribing the audio recordings into transcribed interview documents. Transcribed documents were coded in the margins of each document and important words or phrases were also highlighted for thematic analysis. The three research questions that served as the foundation for the interview protocol are:

RQ1: Which direct and indirect instructional leadership practices are perceived by elementary principals as most important for ensuring the success of each student?

RQ2: How do successful elementary principals balance their dichotomous role of instructional leader and building manager?

RQ3: What are the specific contextual factors that influence the consistent implementation of instructional leadership practices by elementary principals?

Several themes emerged. Each theme was directly related to the research questions. There were no discrepant cases or negative data that did not relate to the research questions.

Interpretation of the Findings

The major findings of this study were discussed in Chapter 4. Several themes emerged during the thematic analysis phase of this study. For RQ1, common themes

included (a) data-driven decisions making, (b) team-building and collaboration, (c) supporting teachers, (d) the importance of having a clearly defined mission, and (e) the importance of creating and maintaining a positive school climate. Emergent themes related to RQ2 were (a) shared and distributed leadership, and (b) prioritizing. Three common themes emerged from responses related to RQ3. The three related themes included (a) the need for additional staffing, (b) the high number of district initiatives that principals were expected to implement, (c) compliant or adaptive leadership.

Instructional leadership focuses on the quality of teaching in classrooms (Pietsch & Tulowitzi, 2017). One basic assumption of the instructional leadership framework is that the school leader or principal focuses on the practices of teachers and how those practices influence student achievement or growth (Pietsch & Tulowitzi, 2017). From an instructional leadership standpoint, the principal is responsible for the quality of teaching in the school building (Pietsch & Tulowitzi, 2017). Chapter 2 described three foci as the major aspects of the conceptual framework for this study: core instructional leadership practices which include defining the school's mission, managing instruction, and creating a positive school climate (Pietsch & Tulowitzi, 2017); contextual influences that influence the different levels of instructional leadership practices (Hallinger, 2018); and the Progress and School Climate components of College and Career Readiness Performance Index (GADOE, Accountability, 2018). Chapter 2 provided specific examples of instructional leadership practices related to the work of Pietsch and Tulowitzi (2017). Defining the school's mission included specific practices such as framing and communicating the goals and expectations of the school; managing

instruction included instructional leadership tasks that promoted the principal's involvement in supervising and evaluating instruction and monitoring student progress; establishing and maintaining a positive climate included those instructional leadership practices that protected instructional times, promoted professional development (Ng, Nguyen, Wong, & Choy, 2015).

RQ1 was created to collect data about principals' perceptions of which instructional leadership tasks and responsibilities they perceived as most important to ensuring student success. The findings derived from thematic analysis of RQ1 confirm the work of Pietsch and Tulowitzi (2017) because emergent themes described activities wherein the principal aimed to ensure that students were receiving quality learning experiences within their learning communities. The principals interviewed described specific activities such as data-driven decision making as well as prioritizing classroom observations as being important instructional leadership practices that ensure student success. Principals described data-driven strategies such as using data to examine all school processes included the effectiveness of support services such as the Early Intervention Program and the Multi-Tiered Support System. Principals described practices that involved teachers and students tracking data as well as engaging in conversations that involved "deep data dives" with the leadership team and teachers in their learning communities.

Study participants also described specific strategies for supporting teachers and protecting instructional time such as allowing the secretary to be the "gate-keeper"

addressing immediate parent or stakeholder concerns while principals monitored classroom instruction or participated in data discussions with teachers or teaching teams. Principals also described direct instructional leadership practices such as targeted professional development and incremental implementation of district initiatives as strategies that they used to support teachers and guard them from contextual factors that would distract them from their teaching responsibilities. These practices confirm the work of Pietsch and Tulowitzki (2017) who wrote that managing instruction was a component of instructional leadership as it relates to principals in the school building. There was also a significant emphasis placed on the importance of tea building and collaboration which also promote quality learning and teaching environments.

Further confirmation of the conceptual framework and previously cited research for this study includes the emphasis on clearly defined missions or framing and communicating the school's goals and creating a positive school climate. The mission provides a conceptual framework for the school and can be used to inform the school's internal and external operations (Al-Ani & Ismaail, 2015). With increased accountability and emphasis on the efficacy of school leadership, principals have the responsibility for influencing student performance by shaping the school's learning-focused mission and aligning the school's structures and culture to empower the school mission (Tschannen-Moran and Gareis, 2015). Effective leaders understood the importance of identifying and communicating a shared mission thereby unifying stakeholders towards the same goals. This statement of purpose should be used to guide principal activities such as planning

for instructional strategies and budgeting decisions (Allen, Kern, Vella-Broderick & Waters, 2018).

Most of the study participants interviewed confirmed the importance of defining a clear mission for their learning communities. Principals interviewed stated that having a clearly defined mission provided focus and informed resource allocation for the school. One principal stated, "… it helps because you have to be able to put the expectations out there for your students out there for your teachers and students. This is who we are. Everything has a purpose. Time has a purpose, recess has a purpose, lunch has a purpose**.** So, it's being intentional" (P4). Another principal responded that "where there is no vision, the people perish. There must be a vision and an expectation for how you carry out that vision" (P6). Responses from most other principals were similar in that they, like previously cited work (Gurley, Peters, Collins, & Fifolt, 2015), emphasized that the mission promoted targeted discussions about spending, human resources including strategic hiring and teacher assignments, and even the school's schedule.

Study participants also confirmed previous research that emphasized the importance of creating a positive school climate which has been studied extensively as it relates to improving student outcomes (O'Malley, Voight, Renshaw, & Eklund, 2015). Previously cited research also associated positive school climates with improved student outcomes and increased student engagement (Shukla, Cornell, & Konold, 2016). Creating a positive school climate that is conducive to learning is the third dimension of Pietsch and Tulowitzki (2015) work that framed instructional leadership practices. Factors

associated with school climate directly affect student achievement (Alhosani, Singh, & Al Nahyan, 2017).

The principals interviewed confirmed that a positive school climate was essential to being able to run a school building. When asked about the most important instructional leadership component with regards to ensuring student success or improving student outcomes, most study participants confirmed the importance of school climate as the most important instructional leadership responsibility for ensuring student success. When asked about the score or star rating earned and reported on the College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) during the time frame analyzed for this study, most principals described specific strategies related to the Index such as developing a common language centered around the surveys considered when calculating the school climate rating. Study participants also indicated that without a positive school climate other tasks and responsibilities could not occur within their school buildings. P1 stated, "It starts and ends with climate." School principals described celebrating teachers and students, targeted professional development such as "poverty training" to address demographic changes or shifts, articulating clear expectations as well as implementing programs or cultural transformations such as the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). While not every principal had implemented school-wide approaches such as PBIS, many were making plans to implement PBIS in the upcoming school year. The percentage of economically disadvantaged students was stable during the time frame analyzed for this study (2015-2017) with rates of economically disadvantaged students

ranging from 53 percent to 50 percent (Table 2). However, researchers have associated a positive school climate with mitigating the effects of low SES in some school districts (Berkowitz, Moore, Astor, & Benbenishty, 2017). Principals also described a focus on the safety of the building, strategic hiring practices as it relates to adding team members who had a "heart for students".

RQ2 was created to collect data about elementary principals' perception of how they balance their dichotomous role of instructional leader and building manager while keeping student growth at the forefront. One common theme that emerged from the thematic analysis for this study was the importance of building effective teams and collaborating which also emerged when collecting data for RQ2. Effective teacher collaboration includes many different types of activities (Reeves, Pun, & Chung, 2017). Previous research has shown that many teachers leave the profession after the first three years due to feelings of isolation and feelings of inefficacy (Reeves, Pun, & Chung, 2017). Teachers need and must be afforded the opportunity to effectively collaborate if they are going to perform their jobs successfully (Vangrieken, Dochy, Raes, & Kyndt, 2015). The principals interviewed for this study confirmed that teachers need to be able to effectively collaborate so that they could consistently focus on student performance data to adjust their instructional methods. Principals also referred to team building and collaboration when they spoke about their school leadership teams as a method for being able to delegate instructional tasks and responsibilities such as monitoring instruction.

Even though most of the principals in this study stated that they spent most of their day involved in instructional leadership practices, the principals still expressed a heavy reliance on their leadership teams and teaching teams to carry out the mission of the school, assist with data analysis and data-driven decision making within the learning community.

Effective time management by school principals requires self-awareness, personal commitment, discipline, good organizational skills, and planning (Khan et al., 2015). Findings from research cited in Chapter 2) demonstrated that principals who utilized effective time management skills were able to spend more time monitoring and managing instruction and less time developing interpersonal relationships in the school building (Grisson, Loeb, & Mitani, 2015). According to previously mentioned literature, principals with better time management skills allocate more time in classrooms and to managing instruction in their schools but often sacrifice spending time on interpersonal relationships (Grisson, Loeb, & Mitani, 2015).

The principals interviewed confirmed the need to elect and implement strategies specifically designed to protect time during the school day wherein they could go into classrooms to monitor instruction. However, principals did not indicate that this was at the expense of building interpersonal relationships with the members of their learning communities. Principals indicated and confirmed the research provided in Chapter 2 from Tam (2015) that suggested that focusing on teacher practices was critical to improving student achievement. The school principals interviewed for this

study made statements such as the need to “schedule their priorities” so that they could consistently monitor instruction and meet with teachers and teacher teams. When asked if there was additional information that the principal would like to share about strategies used to manage the dual roles of the principal, P11 stated, “Prioritizing because there is a lot that happens within a building and you do have to prioritize what needs to happen now or what decision has to be made now and what things that either I can allow someone else to work on or just come back and revisit a little later. So, prioritization is something and time management because it will get away from you.” P1 also stated, “The key to this is the block off time that no matter what, unless the place is burning down, I'm going to be in classrooms and really prioritize it at the beginning of the year when we are frontloading protocols.”

Hallinger’s work on how contextual factors could influence the different levels of implementation as it pertains to instructional also served as a portion of the conceptual framework for this study. RQ3 specifically asked study participants about the contextual factors that influence their instructional leadership approach and the implementation of instructional leadership practices. Hallinger (2018) examined contextual factors such as institutional contexts, national contexts, economic contexts, political contexts, and school improvement contexts and concluded that instructional leadership behaviors and practices, especially instructional leadership behaviors as it related to the amount of time that principals could allocate towards these practices were influenced by contextual influences such as centralized districts, resources allocation, parental involvement, school

location, political and national climates as well as the historical context of each school (Hallinger, Bringing context out of the shadows of leadership, 2018).

Most of the principals interviewed confirmed Hallinger's (Hallinger, 2018) citing the following factors as influencing their work: the need for additional staffing to assist with more building management tasks and responsibilities and too many district initiatives. Study participants also indicated that the level of principal autonomy had decreased with new district leadership. However, the unexpected theme that emerged from this research question was the concept of adaptive leadership. Successful school leaders understand how to engage within the school context to influence the core business of schools which is learning (Gurr, 2015). Adaptive leadership requires the application of a variety of leadership styles instead of a singular approach (Bush, 2018). The study participants framed the influence as having a negative influence on their instructional leadership practices. Most of the principals interviewed either referred to themselves as "compliant leaders" or described practices such as incremental implementation and "making it work" such that the previously cited contextual influences did not interfere with effective teaching and learning. When discussing the decreased level of autonomy, study participants did not perceive the decreased level of autonomy as having a negative influence on the level of implementation with regards to their instructional leadership tasks. In fact, a few of the study participants indicated that the decreased level of autonomy was beneficial because the decreased level of

autonomy promoted more focus and decreased the number of time teachers and administrators spent searching for resources and best practices.

The findings of this study address the gap in the literature as it pertains to the specific instructional leadership practices perceived by the principal to have a positive impact on student growth and achievement. The findings of this study are also consistent with the conceptual framework for this study-instructional leadership. Although principals cannot learn for their students, they are instrumental as far as creating a learning environment that is conducive to learning and in which teachers and students can thrive (Spillane, Managing instructional quality and leading instructional improvement: Engaging with the essence of school improvement, 2015). Hallinger, Pietsch, and Tulowitski (2017) identified three categories into which instructional leadership practices can be viewed: (a) defining the school's mission, (b) managing instruction and (c) building and maintaining a positive school climate. The findings from this study confirm the importance of each of these components based on the perspectives 16 elementary principals who served as the study participants for this research.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited due to its small sample size. The sample size consists of 16 elementary principals and although the sample size for qualitative research depends largely on contextual factors and the research paradigm (Boddy, 2016), the sample size of

16 successful elementary principals may make the description of the practices perceived to be effective by elementary school principals difficult to generalize.

This study is also limited because the data collection in qualitative research was executed by a single person, the researcher, which means that the study lacks inter-rater reliability techniques. Since I have served students in the district wherein the study is situated, study participants may be limited in their responses and descriptions of their daily practices. As the person solely responsible for data collection, the potential for error as it pertains to data analysis may be present.

Recommendations

The results of this study identified specific instructional leadership practices perceived by successful elementary principals as having a positive impact on student growth. The first recommendation for action is that the findings of this study will be presented at the district level to district level leaders, principals, and assistant principals to provide a deeper insight into the instructional leadership practices that have a positive influence on student achievement as perceived by successful elementary principals serving in the district which served as the setting for this study.

The second recommendation is to conduct a similar study at the secondary level-middle and high schools. Using the same research design and methodology, the purpose of the recommendation for future study is to determine if successful middle and high principals also describe similar instructional leadership practices as having a positive influence on student achievement. Collecting data about the perceptions of principals at

the middle and high school level could provide deeper insight as to how to support principals as instructional leaders at all levels.

The third and final recommendation is to conduct future research using a larger sample size. This recommendation could address one limitation of this study which was the small sample size of 16. Although the sample size for qualitative studies is dependent on the design and context (Boddy, 2016), attempting to conduct this research using the same design and methodology may increase confidence with regards to the practical application of the findings of this study.

Implications

The implications of this study as it relates to positive social change are relevant to principals and district level leaders in the field of education. While previous research described instructional leadership practices, this study addresses a gap in the literature because it provides insight into the specific instructional leadership practices perceived by successful elementary principals to have a positive impact on student growth. The findings of this study may be used to inform principals about specific instructional leadership practices as well as district-level leadership.

Gaining insight into the specific instructional leadership practices perceived by successful elementary principals to have a positive impact on student outcomes could result in increased student achievement in schools locally and globally. This insight could inform district level leadership about the need for additional training, professional development, and additional support for less successful. District level leadership may also consider creating a mentoring program for elementary principals struggling to

increase student achievement because of the lack of consistency with regards to the implementation of instructional leadership practices. The findings of this study may also influence decision making at the district level as it pertains to the number of district initiatives implemented each year as well as promote more thoughtfulness as it pertains to plans for incremental implementation.

Practically speaking, the findings of this study also provide elementary school practitioners with a deeper understanding of the specific instructional leadership components that could lead to increased student achievement. Gaining a better understanding about the specific instructional leadership perceived by successful elementary principals as having a positive influence on student achievement, may help elementary principals choose more intentional strategies and processes that may result in increased student achievement.

Conclusion

With the increased scrutiny and rising levels of accountability placed on school principals as it pertains to student growth and achievement, additional research must be conducted to identify the specific instructional leadership practices that principals must employ to promote student growth and achievement. There is an abundance of research that demonstrated the importance of effective school leadership as it pertains to positive student outcomes. It is no longer acceptable to leave principals without a specific framework for successful school leadership as it pertains to stabilizing cultures and creating positive school climates, strategies for prioritizing the management and monitoring of instructional practices, and the importance of the school's mission. It is

crucial for every principal to be equipped with the knowledge, skills, and training to ensure that every student in their learning community is learning in an environment wherein he can thrive and demonstrate mastery and be equipped to survive in the local and global community.

References

Al-Ani, W. T., & Ismaail, O. H. (2015). Can mission predict school performance? The case of basic education in Oman. *School Leadership & Management, 35*(5), 459-476. doi:10.1080/13632434.2015.1070822

Alhosani, A., Singh, S. K., & Al Nahyan, M. T. (2017). Role of school leadership and climate in student achievement. *International Journal of Educational Management, 31*(6), 843-851. doi:10.1108/IJEM-05-2016-0113

Ali, A., Singh, S., & Al Nahyan, M. (2017). Role of school leadership and climate in student achievement: The mediating role of parental involvement. *Journal of Educational Management, 31*(6), 843-851. doi:10.1108IJEM-05-2016-0113

Allen, N., Peters, M. L., & Grigsby, B. (2015). Does leadership matter? Examining the relationship among transformational leadership, school climate, and student achievement. *International Journal Of Educational Leadership Preparation, 10*(2), 1-22. Retrieved June 20, 2018, from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1083099.pdf

Amanchukwu, R., Stanley, G., & Ololube, N. (2015). A review of leadership theories, principles and styles and their relevance to educational management. *Management, 5*(1), 6-14. doi:10.5923/j.mm.20150501.02

Anderman, E. M., O'Connell, A. A., & Gimbert, B. (2015). Approaches to academic growth assessment. *The British Journal of Educational Psychology, 85*(2), 138-153. Retrieved June 26, 2018

Antinluoma, M., Ilomaki, L., Lahti-Nuuttila, P., & Toom, A. (2018). Schools as professional learning communities. *Journal of Education and Learning, 7*(5), 76-91. doi:10.5539/jel.v7n5p76

Archibald, M., & Munce, S. (2015). *Challenges and strategies in the recruitment of participants for qualitative research.* Retrieved July 3, 2018, from ResearchGate: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/299483270_Challenges_and_Strategies_in_the_Recruitment_of_Participants_for_Qualitative_Research?enrichId=rgreq-1b7e1c6164280788e916298afc7860fb-XXX&enrichSource=Y292ZXJQYWdlOzI5OTQ4MzI3MDtBUzozNTIyMDE2ODA2NzA3MjBAM

Babbie, E. (2017). *The basics of social research* (7th ed.). Cengage Learning. Retrieved July 2, 2018

Backor, K., & Gordon, S. (2015). Preparing principals as instructional leaders: Perceptions of university faculty, expert principals, and expert teacher leaders. *NASSP Bulletin*, *99*(2), 105-126. doi: 10.1177/0192636515587353

Bagwell, J. (2019). Exploring the leadership practices of elementary school principals through a distributed leadership framework: A case study. *Educational*

Leadership and Administration: Teaching and Program Development, 83-103. Retrieved June 14, 2019

Balkar, B. (2015). Defining an empowering school culture (esc): Teacher perceptions. *Issues in Educational Research, 25*(3), 205-225. Retrieved May 20, 2018

Basics of literature reviews. (2018). Retrieved June 20, 2018, from Walden University Writing Center: https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/writingcenter/assignments/literaturereview

Bellibas, M., & Liu, Y. (2018). The effects of principals' perceived instructional and distributed leadership practices on their perceptions of school climate. *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 21*(2), 226-244. doi:10.1080/13603124.2016.1147608

Benefield, C., & Hodges, J. (2018, October). *School climate star rating.* Retrieved November 23, 2018, from http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/Policy/Pages/School-Climate.aspx: http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/Policy/Pages/School-Climate.aspx

Berkovich, I., & Eyal, O. (2017). The mediating role of principals' transformational leadership behaviors in promoting teachers' emotional wellness at work: A study in Israeli primary schools. *Educational Management, 45*(2), 316-335. doi: 10.1177/1741143215617947

Berkowitz, R., Moore, H., Astor, R., & Benbenishty, R. (2017). A research synthesis of the association between socioeconomic background, inequality, school climate, and academic achievement. *Review of Educational Research, 87*(2), 425-469. doi:10.3102/0034654316669821

Boberg, J., & Bourgeois, S. (2016). The effects of integrated transformational leadership on achievement. *Journal of Educational Administration, 54*(3), 357-374. doi:https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-07-2014-0086

Boddy, C. R. (2016). Sample size for qualitative research. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal, 19*(4), 426-432. doi:10.1108/QMR-06-2016-0053

Borkar, V. (2016). Positive school climate and positive education: Impact on student well-being. *Indian Journal of Health and Well-Being, 7*(8), 861-862. Retrieved October 20, 2018, from https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=117944397&site=eds-live&scope=site

Brabham, C. (2017). *Principals' perceptions of instructional leadership development.* Walden University Dissertation. Retrieved April 21, 2018

Brezicha, K., Bergmark, U., & Mitra, D. (2015). One size does not fit all: Differentiating leadership to support teachers in school reform. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 51*(1), 96-132. doi:10.1177/0013161X14521632

Brown, G. (2016). Leadership's influence: A case study of an elementary school's indirect impact on student achievement. *Education, 137*(1), 101-115. Retrieved May 20, 2018

Burkhauser, S. (2017). How much do school principals matter when it comes to teacher working conditions? *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 39*(1), 126-145. Retrieved June 17, 2019, from https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1128979&site=eds-live&scope=site

Burkholder, G., Cox, K., & Crawford, L. (2016). *The scholar-practitioner's guide to research design.* Laureate Publishing.

Bush, T. (2018). Leadership and context: Why one size does not fit all. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 46*(1), 3-4. doi:10.1177/1741143217739543

Carpenter, D. (2015). School culture and leadership of professional learning communities. *Journal of Educational Management, 29*(5), 682-694. doi:10.1108/IJEM-04-2014-0046

Castellano, K. E., & McCaffrey, D. F. (2017). The accuracy of aggregate student growth percentiles as indicators of educator performance. *Educational Measurement: Issues & Practice, 36*(1), 14-27. doi:10.1111/emip.12144

Castillo-Montoya, M. (2016). Preparing for interview research" The interview protocol refinement framework. *The Qualitative Report, 21*(5). Retrieved July 3, 2018, from https://nsuworks.nova.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2337&context=tqr/

Chang, Y., Anderman, E. M., & Leach, N. (2015). The role of perceived autonomy support in principals' affective organizational commitment and job satisfaction. *Social Psychology of Education, 18*(2), 315-336. doi:10.1007/s11218-014-9289-z

Christopher, C., & Stockton, C. M. (2018). The central role of theory in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 17*(1), 1-10. doi:10.1177/1609406918797475

Clarke, S., & O'Donoughe, T. (2017). Educational leadership and context: A rendering of an inseparable relationship. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 65*(2), 167-182. doi:10.1080/00071005.2016.1199772

College and Career Readiness Performance Index. (2018). Retrieved October 28, 2018, from Georgia Department of Education: http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Accountability/Pages/Archive.aspx

Connelly, L. M. (2016). Trustworthiness in qualitative research. *MESURG Nursing, 25*(6), 435-436. Retrieved June 15, 2019, from https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rzh&AN=120221607&site=eds-live&scope=site

Cosner, S., & Jones, M. (2016). "Leading school-wide improvement in low-performing schools facing conditions of accountability: Key actions and considerations. *Journal of Educational Administration, 54*(1), 41-57. doi:https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-08-2014-0098

Costello, D. (2015). Challenges and supports of instructional leadership in schools. *Antistasis, 5*(1), 3-6. Retrieved June 1, 2018

Cowen, J., Barrett, N., N., Toma, E., & Troske, S. (2015). Working with what they have: Professional development as a reform strategy in rural schools. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 30*(10), 1-18. Retrieved June 17, 2019, from https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eue&AN=109157339&site=eds-live&scope=site

Cucchiara, M., Rooney, E., & Robertson-Kraft, C. (2015). "I've never seen people work so hard!": Teachers' working condition in the early stages of school turnaround. *Urban Education, 50*(3), 259-287. doi:10.1177/0042085913501896

Darling-Hammond, L., Bae, S., Cook-Harvey, C., Mercer, C., Podolsky, A., & Stosich, E. (2016). *Pathways to new accountability through the Every Student Succeeds Act.* New York: Learning Policy Institute. Retrieved from https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Pathways_New-Accountability_Through_Every_Student_Succeeds_Act_04202016.pdf

Day, C., & Sammons, P. (2016). *Successful school leadership.* Oxford: Education Development trust.

Day, C., Qing, G., & Sammons, P. (2016). Impact of leadership on student outcomes: How successful school leaders use transformational and instructional strategies to make a difference. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 52*(2), 221-258. doi:10.1177/0013161X15616863

Dou, D., Devos, G., & Valcke, M. (2017). The relationship between school autonomy gap, principal leadership, teacher job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 45*(6), 959-977. doi:10.1177/1741143216653975

Dunston, P., & Wilkins, J. (2015). False hope: Underprepared students' pursuit of postsecondary degrees. *English Teaching: Practice & Critique, 14*(1), 44-59. doi:10.1108/ETPC-11-2014-0002

Elementary education. (2018). Retrieved May 1, 2018, from Encyclopedia.com: https://www.encyclopedia.com/education/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/elementary-education

Elementary school. (2018). Retrieved May 1, 2018, from Definitions.com: https://www.definitions.net/definition/Elementary%20school

Every student succeeds act. (2017). Retrieved April 3, 2018, from United States Department of Education: https://www.ed.gov/essa?src=rn

Fast Facts. (2019). Retrieved May 30, 2019, from Henry County Schools: https://schoolwires.henry.k12.ga.us/cms/lib/GA01000549/Centricity/Domain/6334/Fast%20Facts%209.14.17.pdf

Fast facts: Title 1. (2016). Retrieved April 21, 218, from National Center for Educational Statistics: https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=158

GADOE. (2017). *A guide to Georgia's student growth model.* Retrieved April 21, 2018, from Georgia Department of Education: http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Documents/GSGM/FY18/SGPGuide%2006052017.pdf

GADOE. (2017). *College and career readiness performance index*. Retrieved March 17, 2017, from Georgia Department of Education: http://www.gadoe.org/CCRPI/Pages/default.aspx

GADOE. (2017). *Georgia's student growth model*. Retrieved May 1, 2018, from Georgia Department of Education: http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Pages/Georgia-Student-Growth-Model.aspx

GADOE. (2018, May). *2018 ccrpi elementary school calculation guide.* Retrieved June 21, 2018, from GADOE: https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Accountability/Documents/Resdesigned%20CCRPI%20Support%20Documents/2018%20CCRPI%20Elementary%20Calculation%20Guide%20May%202018.pdf

GADOE. (2018). *Accountability*. Retrieved April 21, 2018, from GADOE: http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Accountability/Pages/default.aspx

GADOE. (2018). *Methods of combining sgps.* Retrieved June 24, 2018, from GADOE: http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Documents/GSGM/CombiningSGPs%20121515.pdf

GADOE. (2018, January). *Redesigned college and career ready performance index.* Retrieved April 21, 2018, from GADOE: http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Accountability/Documents/Resdesigned%20CCRPI%20Support%20Documents/Redesigned%20CCRPI%20Overview%20011918.pdf

GADOE. (2018). *School Climate*. Retrieved May 1, 2018, from Georgia Department of Education: http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/Policy/Pages/School-Climate.aspx

Ghasabeh, M., Claudine, S., & Carmen, R. (2015). The emerging role of transformational leadership. *The Journal of Developing Areas, 49*(6), 459-467. doi:10.1353/jda.2015.0090

Ghavifekr, S., Ibrahim, M., Chellapan, K., Sukumaran, K., & Subramaniam, A. (2015). Instructional leadership practices of principal in vocational and technical college: Teacher's perception. *Malaysian Online Journal of Educational Management,*

3(1), 48-67. Retrieved November 3, 2018, from file:///C:/Users/Owner/Documents/Research/effective%20IL%20Praactices%20of%20Principals%20in%20Vocational%20Schools.pdf

Goddard, R., Goddard, Y., Eun, K., & Miller, R. (2015). A theoretical and empirical analysis of the roles of instructional leadership, teacher collaboration, and collective efficacy beliefs in support of student learning. *American Journal of Education, 121*(4), 5301-530. doi:10.1086/681925

Goodyear, V. A. (2017). Sustained professional development on cooperative learning: Impact on six teachers and students' learning. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 88*(1), 83-94. Retrieved June 5, 2018, from https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1080/02701367.2016.1263381

Grisson, J., Loeb, S., & Mitani, H. (2015). Principal time management skills: Explaining patterns in principals' time use, job stress, and perceived effectiveness. *Journal of Educational Administration, 53*(6), 773-793. doi:https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-09-2014-0117

Gurley, D., Anast-May, L., O'Neal, M., Lee, H., & Shores, M. (2015). Instructional leadership behaviors in principals who attended an assistant principals' academy: Self-reports and teacher perceptions. *Planning and Changing, 46*(1/2), 127-157. Retrieved May 19, 2018

Gurley, D., Peters, G., Collins, L., & Fifolt, M. (2015). Mission, vision, values, and goals: An exploration of key organizational statements and daily practice in schools. *Journal of Educational Change, 16*(2), 217-242. doi:10.1007/s10833-014-9229-x

Gurr, D. (2015). A model of successful school leadership from the international successful school principalship project. *Societies, 5*, 136-150. doi:10.3390/soc5010136

Hallinger, P. (2018). Bringing context out of the shadows of leadership. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 46*, 5-24. doi:10.1177/1741143216670652

Hallinger, P., & Li Dongyu, W. C. (2016). Gender differences in instructional leadership: A meta-analytic review of studies using the principal instructional management rating scale. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 52*(4), 567-61. Retrieved May 29, 2018, from https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1177/0013161X16638430

Hallinger, P., & Walker, A. (2017). Leading learning in Asia: Emerging empirical insights from five societies. *Journal of Educational Administration, 55*(2), 130-146. Retrieved May 26, 2018

Hallinger, P., Hosseingholizadeh, R., Hashemi, N., & Kouhsari, M. (2018). Exploring how principal self-efficacy and instructional leadership impact teacher efficacy

and commitment in Iran. *Educational Management Administration and Leadership, 46*(5), 800-819. Retrieved September 29, 2018, from http://journals.sagepub.com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/doi/pdf/10.1177/1741143217700283

Hallinger, P., Nguyen, D., Truong, T., & Nguyen, T. (2017). Perspectives on principal instructional leadership in Vietnam: A preliminary model. *Educational Administration, 55*(2), 222-239. doi:10.1108/JEA-11-2015-0106

Harrison, H., Birks, M., Franklin, R., & Mills, J. (2017, January). Case study research: Foundations and methodological orientations. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 18*(1). Retrieved June 30, 2018

Hattie, J. (2015, February). High impact leadership. *Educational Leadership, 72*(5), pp. 36-40. Retrieved April 3, 2018

Heaven, G., & Bourne, P. (2016). Instructional leadership and its effect on students' academic performance. *Review of Public Administration and Management, 4*(3), 1-20. doi:10.4172/2315-7844.1000197

Heissel, J., & Ladd, H. (2018). School turnaround in North Carolina: A regression discontinuity analysis. *Economics of Education Review, 62*(2018), 302-320. Retrieved November 4, 2018, from http://www.elsevier.com/locate/econedurev

Hitt, D., & Tucker, P. (2016). Systematic review of ley leader practices found to influence student achievement: A unified framework. *Review of Educational Research, 86*(2), 531-569. doi:10.3102/0034654315614911

Houghton, C., Murphy, K., Shaw, D., & Casey, D. (2015). Qualitative case study data analysis: An example from practice. *Nurse Researcher, 22*(5), 8-12. doi:10.7748/nr.22.5.8.e1307

Husband, T., & Hunt, C. (2015). A review of the empirical literature on no child left behind from 2001 to 2010. *Planning and Changing, 46*(1/2), 212-254. Retrieved March 14, 2018

Hussain, M., Haider, S., Ali, S., & Ahmed, I. (2016). School principals as effective change agents: A study of essential skills and attributes. *Journal of Educational Research, 19*(2), 49-61. Retrieved June 28, 2018, from https://eds-b-ebscohost-com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=5&sid=698e4b7b-ba32-46ff-90c0-f73d8c196ea6%40pdc-v-sessmgr01

Hvidston, D., Range, B., McKim, C., & Mette, I. (2015). The views of novice and late career principals concerning instructional and organizational leadership within their evaluation. *Planning and Changing, 46*(1/2), 109-126. Retrieved November 3, 2018, from https://search.proquest.com/openview/6b857cca20e047d06c5386875c8f4dca/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=47169

Intxausti, N., Joaristi, L., & Lizasoain, L. (2016). Educational leadership at best practice in highly effective school in the autonomous region of the Basque county (Spain). *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 44*(3), 397-419. doi:10.1177/1741143214558570

Jia, Y., Konold, T., & Cornell, D. (2015). *School Psychology Quarterly, 31*(2), 289-303. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/spq0000139

Kempa, R., Ulorlo, M., & Wenno, I. H. (2017). Effectiveness leadership of the principal. *Educational Management, 6*(4), 306-311. Retrieved May 20, 2018

Khalifa, M., Gooden, M., & Davis, J. (2016). Culturally responsive school leadership: A synthesis of the literature. *Review of Educational Research, 86*(4), 1272-1311. doi:10.3102/0034654316630383

Khan, I., Khan, U., Ahmad, S., & Naseer-ud-Din, M. (2015). The effect of training on principals' time management practices: A focus on time management areas, school's level, locality and complexity. *FWU Journal of Social Sciences, 9*(2), 82-94. Retrieved November 4, 2018, from http://www.sbbwu.edu.pk/journal/Jan%202016/9.The%20Effect%20of%20Training%20on%20Principals%20Time%20Management%20Practices.pdf

Kraft, M., & Gilmore, A. (2016). Can principals promote teacher development s evaluators? A case study of principals' views and experience. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 52*(5), 711-753. doi:10.1177/0013161X16653445

Kwong, D., & Davis, J. (2015). School climate for academic success: A multilevel analysis of school climate and student outcomes. *Journal of Research in Education, 25*(2), 68-81. Retrieved May 26, 2018, from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1098022.pdf

Lane, K., Oakes, W., Carter, E., & Messenger, M. (2015). Examining behavioral risk and academic performance for students transitioning from elementary to middle school. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 17*(1), 39-49. doi:10.1177/10983000714524825

Lárusdóttir, B. H., & Steinunn, H. L. (2015). Instructional leadership in compulsory schools in Iceland and the role of school principals. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, 59*(5), 583-603. doi:10.1080/00313831.2014.965788

Lee, T., Ko, J., & Cheng, Y. C. (2018). Curriculum reform with a school-based approach: Intellectual, structural and cultural challenges. *School Leadership & Management, 38*(3), 278-301. doi:10.1080/13632434.2017.1386647

Leithwood, K., & Sun, J. (2015, February 11). *Direction-setting school leadership practices: A meta-analytical review of evidence about their influence.* Retrieved May 26, 2018, from https://doi.org/10.1080/09243453.2015.1005106

Leo, U. (2015). Professional norms guiding school principals' pedagogical leadership. *International Journal of Educational Management, 29*(4), 461-476. doi:10.1108/IJEM-08-2014-0121

Louis, K. S. (2015). Linking leadership to learning: State, district and local effects. *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy, 2015*(3). doi:10.3402/nstep.v1.30321

Ludvik, E., Ergova, D., & Pisonova, M. (2018). Assessment of school image. *Center for Educational Policy Studies, 8*(2), 2232-2647. doi:10.26529/cepsj.546

Male, T., & Palailogou, I. (2015). Pedagogical leadership in the 21st century: Evidence from the field. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 43*(2), 214-231. doi:10.1177/1741143213494889

Manna, P. (2015). *Developing excellent school principals to advance teaching and learning: Considerations for state policy.* Retrieved June 28, 2018, from wallacefoundation.org: http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Developing-Excellent-School-Principals.pdf

Marshall, S. M., Moore-Gardner, M., Hughes, C., & Lowery, U. (2016). Attrition from student affairs: Perspectives from those who exited the profession. *Journal of Student Affairs, Research, and Practice, 53*(2), 146-159. doi:https://doi.org/10.1080/19496591.2016.1147359

Maxwell, L. (2016). School building condition, social climate, student attendance, and academic achievement: A mediation model. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*.

Maxwell, S., Reynolds, K., Lee, E., Subasic, E., & Bromhead, D. (2017). The impact of school climate and school identification on academic achievement: Multilevel modeling with student and teacher data. *Frontier Psychology, 8*. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2017.02069

McCarley, T., Peters, M., & Decman, J. (2016). Transformational leadership related to school climate: A multi-level analysis. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 44*(2), 322-342. doi:10.1177/1741143214549966

McKinney, C. L., Labat, C. A., & Labat Jr., M. B. (2015). Traits possessed by principals who transform school culture in national blue ribbon schools. *Educational Leadership Journal, 19*(1), 152-166. Retrieved June 22, 2018, from https://eds-b-ebscohost-com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=5e4f804c-b0ca-4898-8a75-88184a374910%40sessionmgr102

McNeal, R. (2015). Parental involvement and student performance: The influence of school context. *Educational Research for Policy and Practice, 14*(2), 153-167. Retrieved June 9, 2018, from http://dx.doi.org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1007/s10671-014-9167-7

Mestry, R. (2017). Principals' perspectives and experiences of their instructional leadership functions to enhance learner achievement in public schools. *Journal of Education*(69). Retrieved April 21, 2018, from http://joe.ukzn.ac.za/

Miller, P. (2018). Culture, context, school leadership, and entrepreneurialism: Evidence from sixteen countries. *Education Sciences, 8*(2). Retrieved November 4, 2018, from https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.3390/educsci8020076

Mitchell, R., Kensler, L., & Tschannen-Moran, M. (2015). Examining the effects of instructional leadership on school academic press and student achievement. *Journal of School Leadership, 25*(2), 229-252. Retrieved November 2, 2018, from https://eds-b-ebscohost-com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=4&sid=9d0470d4-a524-4a99-b4ba-28bda68423ce%40pdc-v-sessmgr02

Moore-Johnson, S., Reinhorn, S. K., & Simon, N. S. (2016). Time work: Time well spent. *Educational Leadership, 73*(8), 24-29. Retrieved June 15, 2019, from https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1100628&site=eds-live&scope=site

Morgan, S., Pullon, S., Macdonald, L., McKinlay, E., & Gray, B. (2017). Case study observational research: A framework for conducting case study research where observation data are the focus. *Qualitative Health Research, 27*(7), 1060-1068. doi:10.1177/1049732316649160

Murphy, J., Neumerski, C., Goldring, E., Grisson, J., & Porter, A. (2015). Battling fog? The quest for instructional management. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 46*(4), 455-471. doi:10.1080/0305764X.2015.1064096

NAESP. (2017, February). *Principals action plan for the every student succeeds act: Providing a well rounded and complete education*. Retrieved April 3, 2018, from Center on Great Teachers and Leaders: https://www.naesp.org/essa#Guidance

Nassaji, H. (2015). Qualitative and descriptive research: Data type versus data analysis. *Language Teaching Research, 19*(2), 129-132. doi:10.1177/1362168815572747

NCES. (2017). *Search for public schools: Common core data*. Retrieved April 28, 2018, from National Center for Education Statistics: https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/

NCSSLE. (2018). *School climate*. Retrieved May 20, 2018, from National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments: https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/safe-and-healthy-students/school-climate

Newton, P., Tunison, S., & Viczko, M. (2017, May 17). The school principal's role in large-scale assessment. *Canadian Journal of Education Administration and Policy*(105). Retrieved June 21, 2018

Ng, F., Nguyen, T., Wong, K., & Choy, K. (2015, June 15). Instructional leadership practices in Singapore. *Leading and Managing, 35*(4). Retrieved June 5, 2018, from https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2015.1010501

Ngulube, P. (2015). *Qualitative data analysis and interpretation: Systematic search for meaning.* Retrieved November 24, 2018, from https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Patrick_Ngulube/publication/278961843_Qu

alitative_Data_Analysis_and_Interpretation_Systematic_Search_for_Meaning/links/5587e2c108aeb0cdade0e8df.pdf

OECD. (2016). *What makes a school a learning organization: A guide for policymakers, school leaders and teachers.* Retrieved June 23, 2018, from Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development: http://www.oecd.org/education/school/school-learning-organisation.pdf

Oltmann, S. (2016). Qualitative interviews: A methodological discussion of the interviewer and respondent contexts. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *17*(2). doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.17169/fqs-17.2.2551

O'Malley, M., Voight, A., Renshaw, T., & Eklund, K. (2015). School climate, family structure, and academic achievement: A study of moderating effects. *School Psychology Quarterly, 30*(1), 142-157. Retrieved May 20, 2018

Onuma, N. (2016). Principals performance of supervision of instruction in secondary schools in Nigeria. *British Journal of Education, 4*(3), 40-52. Retrieved November 4, 2018, from http://www.eajournals.org/wp-content/uploads/Principals-Performance-of-Supervision-of-Instructions-in-Secondary-Schools-in-Nigeria.pdf

Osbourne-Lampkin, L., Sidler-Folsom, J., & Herrington, C. D. (2015). *A systematic review of the relationship between principal characteristics and student*

achievement. National Center for Educational Evaluation and Regional Assistance. Retrieved September 17, 2017, from http://ies.ed.gov/

Paletta, A., Alivernini, F., & Manganelli, S. (2017). Leadership for learning: The relationships between school context, principal leadership, and mediating variables. *International Journal of Educational Management, 31*(2), 98-117. doi:10.1108/IJEM-11-2015-0152

Pietsch, M., & Tulowitzi, P. (2017). *School Effectiveness and School Improvement: An International Journal of Research, Policy and Practice, 28*(4), 629-649. doi:10.1080/09243453.2017.1363787

Preston, C., Goldring, E., Guthrie, J. E., Ramsey, R., & Huff, J. (2017). *Leadership and Policy in Schools, 16*(4), 525-562. doi:10.1080/15700763.2016.1205198

Price, H., & Moolenar, N. (2015). Principal-teacher relationships: Foregrounding the international importance of principals' social relationships for school learning climates. *Journal of Educational Administration, 53*(1). Retrieved April 21, 2018, from https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1108/JEA-11-2014-0134

Principals: The centerpiece of state policy implementation. (2015, July). Retrieved April 9, 2018, from Reform Support Networks: https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/implementation-support-unit/tech-assist/princcentrpiofstatepolicyimp.pdf

Professional standards for educational leaders. (2017). Retrieved January 6, 2019, from http://npbea.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Professional-Standards-for-Educational-Leaders_2015.pdf

Public impact. (2018). Retrieved January 6, 2019, from https://publicimpact.com/

Quin, J., Deris, A., Bischoff, G., & Johnson, J. (2015). Comparison of transformational leadership practices: Implications for school districts and principal preparation programs. *Summer 2015*. doi:1012806/V14/13R5

Rangel, V. (2018). A review of the literature on principal turnover. *Review of Educational Research, 88*(1), 87-124. doi:10.3102/0034654317743197

Ravitch, S., & Carl, N. (2016). *Qualitative research: Bridging the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological.* Los Angeles: Sage.

Reed, L., & Swaminathan, R. (2016). An urban school leader's approach to school improvement: Toward contextually responsive leadership. *Urban Education, 51*(9), 1096-1125. doi:10.1177/0042085914553675

Reeves, P. M., Pun, W. H., & Chung, K. S. (2017). Influence of teacher collaboration on job satisfaction and student achievement. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 67,* 227-236. Retrieved June 17, 2019, from https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.06.016

Research administration and compliance: Debriefing process guidance. (2015, October). Retrieved July 3, 2018, from UMASS at Amherst: https://www.umass.edu/research/guidance/debriefing-process-guidance

Rey, C., & Bastons, M. (2018). Three dimensions of effective mission implementation. *Long Range Planning, 51*, 580-585. Retrieved October 29, 2018, from http://www.elsevier.com/locate/lrp

Rigby, J. (2015). Principals' sensemaking and enactment of teacher evaluation. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *53*(3), 374-392. Retrieved June 5, 2018, from https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-04-2014-0051

Ronfeldt, M., Farmer, S., McQueen, K., & Grissom, J. (2015). Teacher collaboration in instructional teams and student achievement. *American Educational Research Journal, 52*(3), 475-514. doi:10.3102/0002831215585562

Ross, D., & Cozzens, J. (2016). The principalship: Essential core competencies for instructional leadership and its impact on school climate. *Journal of Education and Training Studies, 4*(9), 162-176. doi:doi:10.11114/jets.v4i9.1562

Salo, P., Nylund, J., & Sternstrom, E. (2015). On the practice architectures of instructional leadership. *Educational Management Administration and Leadership, 43*(4), 490-506. doi:10.1177/1741143214523010

Seashore, K., Murphy, J., & Smylie, M. (2016). Caring leadership in schools: Findings from exploratory analyses. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 310-348.

Sebastian, J., Camburn, E., & Spillane, J. (2017). Portraits of principal practice: Time allocation and school principal work. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 54*(1), 47-84. doi:10.1177/0013161X17720978

Seo, D., McGrane, J., & Taherbhai, H. (2015). The role of student growth percentiles in monitoring learning and predicting learning outcomes. *Educational Assessment, 20*, 151-163. doi:10.1080/10627197.2015.1028621

Shindler, J., Jones, A., Williams, A. D., Taylor, C., & Cardenas, H. (2016). The school climate-student achievement connection: If we want achievement gains, we need to begin by improving the climate. *Journal of School Administration Research, 1*(1), 9-16. Retrieved May 20, 2018

Shukla, K., Cornell, D., & Konold, T. (2016). Profiles of student perceptions of school climate: Relations with risk behaviors and academic outcomes. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 57*(3-4), 291-307. doi:10.1002/ajcp.12044

Smith, T., & Shouppe, G. (2018). Is there a relationship between school' climate ratings and student performance data? *National Teacher Education, 11*(1), 15-21. Retrieved June 16, 2019, from https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eue&AN=131494009&site=eds-live&scope=site

Social Change. (2018). Retrieved March 20, 2018, from Walden University: https://www.waldenu.edu/about/social-change

Spillane, J. (2015). Leadership and learning: Conceptualizing relations between school administrative practice and instructional practice. *School of Education and Social Policy*, 277-294. doi:10.3390/soc5020277

Spillane, J. (2015). Managing instructional quality and leading instructional improvement: Engaging with the essence of school improvement. *Australian Educational Leader, 37*(1), 22-26. Retrieved May 19, 2018

Sun, J., & Leithwood, K. (2015). Leadership effects on student learning mediated by teacher emotions. *Societies, 5*(3), 566-582. doi:10.3390/soc5030566

Tam, A. (2015). *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 21*(1), 22-43. Retrieved November 2, 2018, from https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1080/13540602.2014.928122

Tan, C. Y. (2018). Examing shool leadership effects on student achievement: The role of contextual challenges and constraints. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 48*(1), 21-45. doi:10.1080/0305764X.2016.1221885

Terosky, A. L. (2016). Enacting instructional leadership: Perspectives and actions of public K-12 principals. *School Leadership & Management, 36*(3), 311-332. doi:10.1080/13632434.2016.1247044

The nation's report card. (2018). Retrieved June 11, 2016, from National Assessment of Educational Progress: https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/

Thornton, K., & Cherrington, S. (2019). Professional learning communities in early childhood education: A vehicle for professional growth. *Professional Development in Education, 45*(3), 418-432. Retrieved June 12, 2019, from https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1080/19415257.2018.1529609

Truong, T., Hallinger, P., & Sanga, K. (2017). Confucian values and school leadership in Vietnam: Exploring the influence of culture on principal decision making. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 45*(1), 77-100. doi:10.1177/1741143215607877

Tschannen-Moran, M., & Gareis, C. (2015). Principals, trust, and cultivating vibrant schools. *Societies, 5*(2), 256-276. doi:10.3390/soc5020256

Understanding the 2018 CCRPI for mygadoe portal users part 3. (2018). Retrieved November 23, 2018, from GADOE: http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Accountability/Documents/Webinars%20and%20Presentations_FY19/Understanding%20the%202018%20CCRPI%20Report%20%20for%20MyGaDOE%20Portal%20Users%20Part%203.pdf

Urich, A. (2016). Examining US principal perception of multiple leadership styles used to practice. *Journal of Educational Administration, 54*(2), 152-172. doi:10.1108/JEA-07-2014-0088

USDOE. (2018). *Improving basic programs operated by local educational agencies (Title I, Part A)*. Retrieved April 28, 2018, from United States Department of Education: https://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/index.html

Vaismoradi, M., Jones, J., Hannele, T., & Snelgrove, S. (2016). Theme development in qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis. *Journal of Nursing Education and Practice, 6*(5). doi:10.5430/jnep.v6n5p100

Vangrieken, K., Dochy, F., Raes, E., & Kyndt, E. (2015). Teacher collaboration: A systematic review. *Educational Research Review, 15*, 17-40. Retrieved June 17, 2019, from https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2015.04.002

Wang, M., & Degol, J. (2016). School climate: A review of the construct, measurement, and impact on student outcomes. *Educational Psychology Review, 28*, 315-352. Retrieved May 20, 2018

Warner, L., & Heindel, P. (2017). Student success built on a positive school climate. *The Education Digest*(November), 1-4. Retrieved October 20, 2018, from http://unitedwaynnj.org/documents/press/NJEA_SchoolClimateArticle11_2016.pdf

Whitworth, B. A., & Chiu, J. (2015). *Science Teacher Education, 26*, 121-137. doi:10.1007/s10972-014-9411-2

Wieczorek, D., & Manard, C. (2018). Instructional leadership challenges and practices of novice principals in rural schools. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 34*(2), 1-21. Retrieved June 1, 2018

Wieczorek, D. (2017). Principals' perceptions of public schools' professional development changes during nclb. *Education Policy Analysis, 25*(8). doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.25.2339

Yasser, H., & Amal, R. (2015). Teachers' perceptions of principals' instructional leadership in Omani schools. *American Journal of Educational Research, 3*(12). Retrieved September 29, 2018, from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/288338650_Teachers%27_Perceptions_of_Principals%27_Instructional_Leadership_in_Omani_Schools?enrichId=rgreq-e6f46a28b7a664e0ea6a920420b273d8-XXX&enrichSource=Y292ZXJQYWdlOzI4ODMzODY1MDtBUzozMTEzMTY1MTI3MzkzMjlAMTQ1

Yazan, B. (2015). Three approaches to case study methods in education: Yin, Merriam, and Stake. *20*(2). Retrieved April 22, 2018, from http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol20/iss2/12

Yin, H., & Zheng, X. (2018). Facilitating professional learning communities in China: Do leadership practices and faculty trust matter? *Teaching and Teacher Education, 76*, 40-150. Retrieved November 2, 2018, from https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1016/j.tate.2018.09.002

Young, C., McNamara, G., Brown, M., & O'Hara, J. (2018). Adopting and adapting: School leaders in the age of data-informed decision making. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Accountability, 30*(2), 133-158. doi:10.1007/s11092-018-9278-4

Young, M. (2015). Effective leadership preparation: We know what it looks like and what it can do. *Journal of Research on Leadership Education, 10*(1), 3-10. doi:10.1177/1942775115569419

Appendix A; Interview Protocol for the Elementary Principals

Walden University Qualitative Study
The Characteristics of Successful Elementary Principals as Instructional Leaders
Phonecia Wilson

Appendix A: Interview Protocol for the Elementary Principals

Research Participant # _____ Date: _____

1. What are the responsibilities of the principal as the instructional leader?
2. After reviewing trend data from the CCRPI 2015-2018, I noticed that the students you served demonstrated consistent progress or at least maintained their progress in student growth category on the Index, what instructional leadership practices would you say accounted for this growth or stability?
3. According the CCRPI trend data, your school has earned four or more stars under your leadership indicating a safe and conducive climate. What strategies have you used to create and maintain a school climate that is conducive to learning?
4. Do you feel that it is important to have a clearly defined school mission? Why or why not?
5. How do you communicate the school's mission to the stakeholders in your learning community?
6. Does the school's mission influence how you manage the school resources: time, fiscal and staffing?
7. Historically, the role of the principal has included being the building manager and chief instructional leader. What specific strategies do you use to manage tasks and responsibilities of each of these roles so that the tasks associated with instructional leadership remain at the forefront pf your work?

8. How do factors such as the political climate, district initiatives, the availability of resources or the lack thereof influence your approach to instructional leadership in the school building?
9. How do you select strategies to overcome the contextual influences mentioned in the previous question-the political climate, the community' influence, district initiatives and demands, resource allocation?
10. As an instructional leader, which specific instructional leadership practices do you find it most difficult to consistently implement? Why?
11. Which instructional leadership practices do you find it most difficult to consistently implement? Why?
12. Which instructional leadership component-defining the school's mission, creating positive school climate or managing instruction-do you feel has the most positive impact on the school as a whole?
13. Is there any additional information that you would like to share that could help provide insight into how you manage or balance your responsibilities as the school's instructional leader?