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Educator Perceptions of Instructional Leadership in the School Improvement Process

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A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

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by

Lori Lynne Brown

May 2016

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*Keywords:* Instructional Leadership, Teacher Perceptions, Accountability, School Reform,  
School Improvement Process

## ABSTRACT

Educator Perceptions of Instructional Leadership in the School Improvement Process

by

Lori Lynne Brown

The purpose of this case study was to conduct an investigation of educator perceptions of instructional leadership in the school improvement process. Interviews were conducted with educators and an administrator in a small, rural high school in Middle Tennessee. In 2010, the high school was labeled as a low performing school by the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE). In 2014, Commissioner Kevin Huffman announced the school was on the TDOE Reward School Cusp List for being in the top 10% of schools based on one-year progress data from the Tennessee Value-added Assessment System (TVAAS) school composites.

Participants of this case study shared experiences and opinions of the instructional leadership utilized by the school principal. As indicated in the findings of this study, instructional leadership practices are crucial in the school improvement process. The key themes related to indicators of sound instructional leadership practices were: maintaining a culture of continuous school improvement, having every faculty member participate in the development and implementation of the school improvement plan, knowing how to use data to make crucial decisions, developing leadership capacity in the school, and being an engaged leader during the school improvement process. Developing a qualitative understanding of the perceptions of effective instructional leadership will enhance greater understanding of leadership practices in the school improvement process.

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## DEDICATION

### **To my family.**

Thank you for your support in my lifelong love of learning.

Chuck – God truly blessed me with you! You are my best friend, my greatest cheerleader,  
and a wonderful technical reader!

Matt, Kathryn, Campbell, David, Anna-Leigh

Nanny, Pappy, Dranny,

Sharon, Preston, Joseph, Jordan, Bailey,

Susan, Hoss, Justin, Tisha, Josie, Maddison, Harper, Jaxson, Adam, Jessica, Brad,

Andy, Alicia, and Aidan.

God has blessed me with the best family anyone could ask for!

### **To my friends and colleagues.**

Thank you for lending an ear and being sympathetic when I let this get the better of me.

Jessica and Gayle, my true cohort. Thank you for being there ANYTIME I needed help.

Kim, Molly, and Delores – the brunch bunch – you are great educators and my mentors.

Beverly, Jan, and Cara – I have learned so much from you all.

### **To the greatest TEACHER!**

The Lord will guide you continually (Isaiah 58:11)

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and light unto my path (Psalm 119: 105)

In everything give thanks;

for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

To God be the Glory (Psalm 24: 7-10)

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To those who graciously agreed to be a part of this study – thank you for your time and willingness to give even more than you already give to the field of education!

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

There is a need for change in education leadership due to the extent of fragile schools in the United States (US). Data from this study will provide instructional leadership behaviors that may guide others in the school improvement process.

Today, more than ever, a world-class education is a prerequisite for success... We will not be able to keep the American promise of equal opportunity if we fail to provide a world-class education to every child... Our goal must be to have a great teacher in every classroom and a great principal in every school. (Obama, 2010, p. 1)

Fullan (2005) describes the need for a leader who thinks beyond the confines of the school and makes decisions that go way beyond the immediate requirements for change. “New theoreticians” (p. 27), according to Fullan, will be able to secure sustainability for schools in need of improvement. The United States Department of Education (USDOE) has encouraged for every state in the nation to adopt rigorous standards (Duncan, 2010), reach a higher level of effectiveness, and be more accountable for student performance (United States Department of Education [USDOE], 2010b). Leaders have been charged with transforming low performing and failing schools while maintaining continuous school improvement (Duncan, 2010 & 2014). A culture of continuous improvement requires leaders who are able to: establish professional learning communities (PLCs), develop and implement a plan of action that targets goals, define accountability through data, and build leaders through staff development (Eaker & Keating, 2012; Dubrin, 2007; Jackson & McDermott, 2012; Zmuda, Kuklis, & Kline, 2004).

Principal roles have changed over the past few decades (Smith & Addison, 2013). Principals are no longer just managers of schools. Principals are instructional leaders. School principals are expected to develop an instructional culture and climate that create teaching and

learning environment for students, staff, and community, all while maintaining the everyday operations of the buildings. One way an effective leader role is defined is by the way professional development and collaboration time is provided for faculty members (Eaker & Keating, 2012). Effective leaders are defined by the way followers are persuaded to embrace a plan and reach goals (Jackson & McDermott, 2012). Effective leaders are defined by the ability to use data to make instructional decisions (Zmuda et al., 2004). Effective leaders are defined by the way teachers are transformed into school leaders (Dubrin, 2007).

Great leaders make great schools. The most successful school leaders create a school climate of high achievement and continuous improvement, give teachers a voice in decision-making, use data to drive curriculum and instruction, and assure...everyone at the school is focusing on student success. They know what is going on in classrooms and support teachers' efforts to learn new instructional strategies. (Bottoms, 2012, p. 1)

Effective leaders realize it takes a leadership team within the professional learning community (PLC) to make learning institutions successful (Jenkins & Pfeifer, 2012).

Leaders who are accountable for the success of educational organizations model the behaviors that others are expected to have (Jackson & McDermott, 2012). Effective schools have administrative leadership, focused data teams and a shared vision, mission, and beliefs. Eaker and Keating (2012) state, "Effective principals...demonstrate to all that learning is the top priority...principals own the work and take responsibility for ensuring that each collaborative team is doing the right work and doing it with high quality" (p. 12). Leclerc, Moreau, Dumouchel, and Sallafranque-St. Louis (2012) argue that although many school leaders indicate they are implementing PLCs with meaningful professional development, many are not. Frick, Polizzi, and Frick (2009) feel the concept of the PLC is very general. In many situations, PLCs

are not true PLCs (Frick et al., 2009). Frick et al. suggest that leaders need very structured parameters for the professional learning institution to be successful. “Building principals are accountable to teachers’ learning in the same way that teachers are accountable to students’ learning” (Frick et al., 2009, p. 14). The parameters for effective instructional leaders and successful learning institutions are very closely aligned with the school improvement plan (SIP), data based decision making, and coaching teachers to be leaders (Frick et al., 2009).

Effective leaders are able to plan strategically for goal attainment (Fullan, 2010). It is important the entire school knows the school improvement mission, vision, and goals (Lambert, 2006). Zmuda et al. (2004) indicate schools have a SIP not because it is an expectation, but because an improvement plan drives improvement initiatives. The SIP should reflect the instructional needs of students. The SIP should also reflect how the teacher will address student needs through development of strategic, specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and time bound goals. The SIP will provide a strategic framework for teachers to use in meeting goals (Barton, 2013; Eaker & Keating, 2012; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Sappington, Pacha, Baker, & Gardner, 2012).

Effective principals connect all of their work to student learning; they use student learning data to inform everything from the school improvement plan to classroom observations and evaluation of teachers...they walk teams through the process of reviewing school student achievement data...they use the data and the related discussions to lead the development of a school improvement plan. (Eaker & Keating, 2012, p. 12)

The overall reason for a SIP is to provide a path for educators to help students arrive at success (Reddekopp, 2007). School improvement plans (SIPs) are not fully utilized if the finished product is placed on a shelf until the next revision. Students may never achieve success if

teachers are not directly accountable for implementation of an improvement plan and its contents (Reddekopp, 2007). Improving schools takes “strong leadership, a good plan and lots of communication” (Isernhagen, 2012, p. 1).

The success in making the right decisions ultimately lies in the data one uses in making the decisions (Eaker & Keating, 2012). Making decisions without data implies one is making a best guess. Data may be used for a variety of reasons including predictive measures, summative or longitudinal measures, and short-term formative measures (Protheroe, 2010). In determining a solution based on the facts, a leader should first examine and use data for understanding the state of the organization. In our data drenched educational systems, the dilemma is determining what data is the best data to use (Murray, 2014). Administrators and teacher leaders must choose data wisely. Accurate data leads to informed decision making. Data must also be analyzed routinely to be able to determine patterns and root causes of certain issues (Thomas, 2010). Successful learning institutions have leaders who use data to make informed decisions affecting the entire school and teacher leaders who use data to make informed instructional decisions affecting the classroom (Knoepfel & Rinehart, 2010; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004).

Leithwood and Mascall (2008) propose that teacher capacity building has a tremendous impact on student achievement, whether simply influential on the part of the leader or truly teaching knowledge or skill. Foran (Umphrey & Foran, 2012) elaborates on the necessity of developing teacher leaders for successful improvement initiatives. Foran explains that through building leadership capacity throughout the school, he is able to manage his school effectively and have the instructional leadership necessary to sustain the level of rigor needed for continuous improvement. Highly effective administrators know when to take the lead and when to



relinquish the reins and watch teacher leaders gain the skills necessary to be successful in the leadership role (Wilhelm, 2010). “Over time, a principal who intentionally balances... leadership in this way creates a high-functioning team of teacher leaders who, in turn, become increasingly effective leading their own teams of colleagues” (Wilhelm, 2010, p. 24).

Leaders may be able to learn the most about effective leadership from followers. Teacher perceptions of instructional leadership of effective leaders could prove to be the most valuable information in improving schools. Principals who view teachers as top priority, compared to principals who view the superintendent and students as top priority, have the highest student achievement scores (Protheroe, 2010). “Your success as a school administrator hinges on the effectiveness of those you lead” (Protheroe, 2010, p. vii). The principal is the catalyst in developing an effective school (Bottoms, 2012).

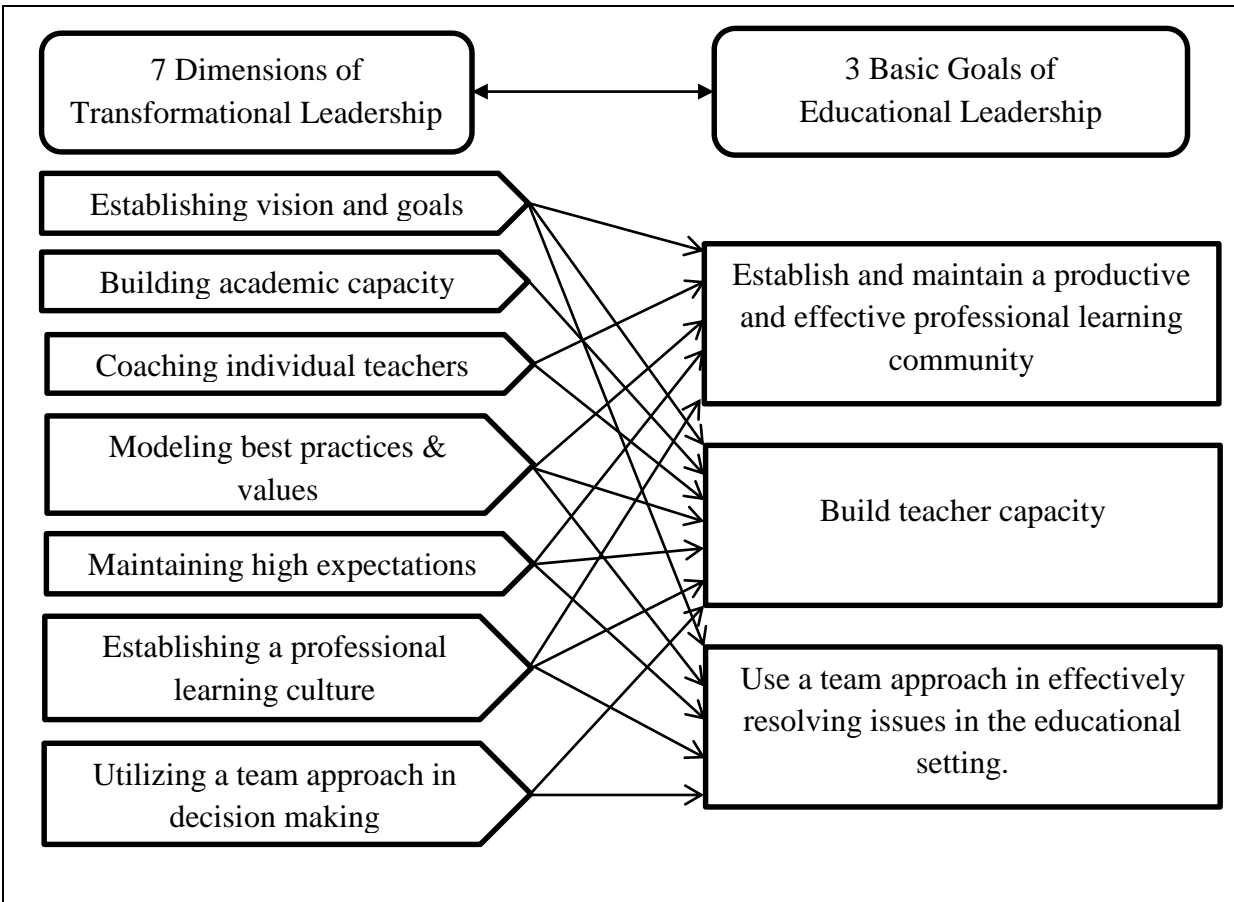
#### *Theoretical Foundation*

Transformational leaders exhibit leadership skills and ability in transforming unskilled followers and failing institution into skilled followers and successful institutions (Zaleznik, 1992). The Transformational Leadership Theory which described the process of leaders using seven rudimentary dimensions (Figure 1.) helpful in transforming failing schools (Leithwood, 1995). Additionally, Bass (1998) acknowledges that transformational leadership manifests itself in the form of a transformed follower; the leader coaching the follower who now possesses an acquired or learned skill from the leader, exhibiting learned leadership qualities.

Transformational leadership is a leader possessing the ability to transform followers into leaders (Dubrin, 2007).

In Figure 1., the three basic goals of sound educational leadership that thread through the works of Dubrin, (2007), Eaker and Keating (2012), Jackson and McDermott (2012), and Zmuda

et al. (2004) are relatable to the seven dimensions Leithwood (1995) used to describe transformational leadership.



▪ *Figure 1. Transformational Leadership Dimensions Compared to Educational Goals*  
Adapted from Dubrin, 2007; Eaker and Keating, 2012; Jackson and McDermott, 2012;  
Leithwood, 1995; and Zmuda et al., 2004.

Since the development of the Transformational Leadership Theory (Leithwood, 1995), many practitioners have researched, debated, and modified the Transformational Leadership Theory body of work (Bass, 1998; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Duke, 1987; LaRocque & Coleman, 1989; Smith & Andrews, 1989). The subsequent work has helped establish the importance of effective instructional leadership in the school improvement process. This case study is grounded in the Leithwood Transformational Leadership Theory, as well as the later work of Bass, Dubrin, Eaker and Keating, Jackson and McDermott, and Zmuda et al.

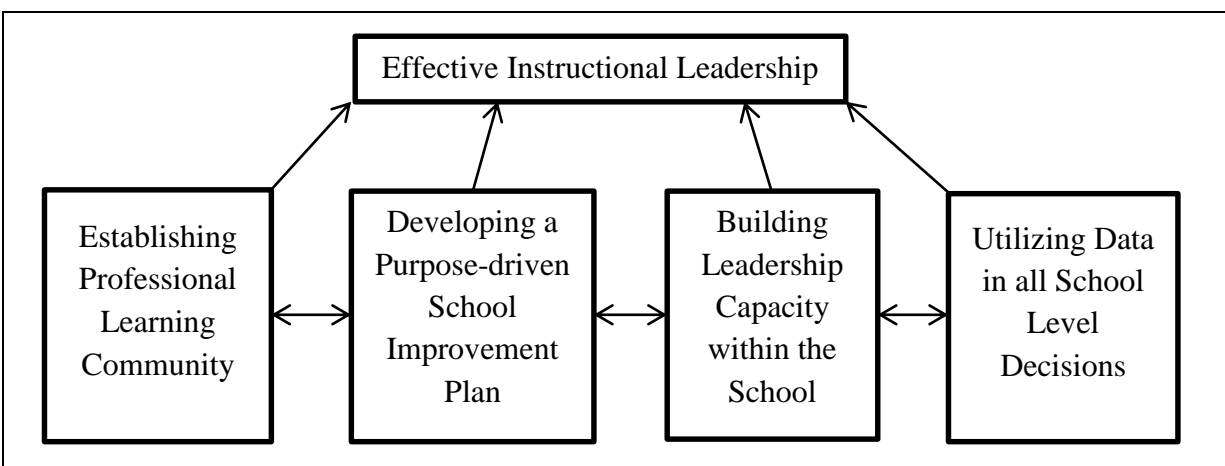
Research, debate, and modifications of Transformational Leadership continue, with organizations like AdvancED using the seven dimensions (Leithwood, 1995) to correlate standards with effective educational leadership behaviors and goals (Denmark, 2012). Figure 2. Characteristics of Leadership (Denmark, 2012), from AdvancED, correlates the transformational ability of a leader to standards for quality and instructional leadership goals in an educational setting.

<b>AdvancED Standard for Quality</b>	<b>Seven Dimensions</b>	<b>3 Goal of Instructional Leadership</b>
S1: Purpose and Directions	Building school vision and establishing school goals	G1: PLC G2: Build Capacity G3: Shared Leadership
S2: Governance and Leadership	Creating a productive school culture	G1: PLC G2: Build Capacity G3: Shared Leadership
S3: Teaching and Assessing for Learning	Providing intellectual stimulation	G2: Build Capacity
S3: Teaching and Assessing for Learning S4: Resources and Support Systems	Offering individualized support	G1: PLC G2: Build Capacity
S1: Purpose and Directions S2: Governance and Leadership S3: Teaching and Assessing for Learning	Modeling best practices and important organizational values	G1: PLC G2: Build Capacity G3: Shared Leadership
S1: Purpose and Directions S3: Teaching and Assessing for Learning S5: Using Results for Continuous Improvement	Demonstrating high performance expectations	G1: PLC G2: Build Capacity G3: Shared Leadership
S1: Purpose and Directions S2: Governance and Leadership S3: Teaching and Assessing for Learning	Developing structures to foster participation in school decisions	G2: Build Capacity G3: Shared Leadership

- *Figure 2. Characteristics of Leadership.* Adapted from Denmark, 2012, p. 1; Dubrin, 2007; Eaker and Keating, 2012; Jackson and McDermott, 2012; Leithwood, 1995; and Zmuda et al., 2004.

Successful transformation does not occur unless all stakeholders contribute to the effort (Denmark, 2012).

As Figure 1. shows, the seven dimensions of Transformational Leadership can easily be modified into a much more compact, yet powerful, list of components meeting the goals of most educational leaders. In Figure 3., the seven dimensions of Transformational Leadership have been streamlined into four school improvement processes that define effective instructional leadership. These four competencies encompass the most commonly researched processes attributed to effective instructional leadership. This case study will focus on educator perceptions of these four instructional leadership competencies for aiding in the school improvement process or school-wide transformation.



▪ *Figure 3.* Four Major Competencies of Effective Instructional Leadership. Adapted from Denmark, 2012 and Leithwood, 1995.

All four competencies (Figure 3.) are important to the effectiveness of an instructional leader (Denmark, 2012; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008). It is also important to establish and maintain an effective PLC within the educational institution (Eaker & Keating, 2012; Frick et al., 2009; Graham, 2007; Steele, Peterson, Silva, & Padilla, 2009; Wells, 2008). PLCs are likened to an umbrella under which many things occur, including establishing a working, purpose-driven SIP, building teacher capacity, and using data in decision making (Frick et al., 2009). All of the major components are related to the development and implementation of an effective PLC (Vale et al., 2010).

Furthermore, Leclerc et al. (2012) use the seven dimensions of Transformational Leadership as crucial indicators of an effective PLC. Leclerc et al. utilize the seven behaviors found in the literature review on effective PLCs to determine the schools' progress or level of effectiveness in establishing and implementing PLCs. Additionally, Leclerc et al. created the "Observation Grid for the Progression of Schools as Professional Learning Communities" (2012, p. 2) evaluative model. This model is used to assess the three different levels of implementation. The stages begin with level one, which is minimally implementing PLCs through level three. Earning a level three indicated that a school is fully operational in the PLC process. There was evidence of a SIP, professional learning culture, teacher capacity building, and use of data as a tool for improvement. Directly correlating with the four instructional leadership competencies in Figure 3., Leclerc et al. indicates a fully functional PLC is one where the instructional leadership utilizes all four competencies. A relationship exists between effective instructional leadership and the establishment of an effective PLC (Leclerc et al., 2012).

#### *Statement of the Problem*

The purpose of this case study is to examine educator perceptions of instructional leadership in the school improvement process. According to Lambert (2006), high instructional leadership capacity is a determining factor in whether an educational institution is successful or not. In the results of the USDOE (2010a) Annual Performance Report, the gap between schools' target performance expectations and actual performance rates are consistently growing larger. High leadership capacity schools have an established PLC, have implemented a visionary SIP, have deliberately utilized performance data in decision making, and have built a level of leadership capacity that would allow the school to carry on effectively without the principal (Lambert, 2006). "Given the perceived importance of leadership, it is no wonder that an

effective principal is thought to be a necessary precondition for an effective school” (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 5).

The primary investigator will explore educators’ perceptions of instructional leadership in the school improvement process. Instructional leadership includes the ability of the leader to establish a PLC, develop and implement a SIP, utilize data in decision making, and build leadership capacity within the school. The primary focus will be on instructional leadership within the school as it specifically relates to the school improvement process. Moreover, with this study the researcher was allowed an opportunity to gather an instructional leadership interview and an account of the process of research, development, and implementation of a SIP during the school improvement process. The information from the instructional leadership interview offers an administrative perspective in the process and provides an account of the intent during the school improvement process. The school improvement process provided in the account of instructional leadership appears throughout the analysis, triangulating the data gathered from the educator interviews.

### *Research Questions*

For the purpose of this case study, the following overarching questions will guide the research:

For Educators –

What are the perceptions of teachers regarding the instructional leader in the school improvement process?

How did the instructional leader facilitate the school improvement process?

For Administration –

What are the perceptions of administration regarding the implementation of the school improvement process?

How did the instructional leader facilitate the school improvement process?

### *Significance of the Study*

There is need for change in educational leadership due to the magnitude of failing schools (DeVita, Colvin, Darling-Hammond, & Haycock, 2007; USDOE, 2010a). Onorato (2013) states, “a trend for reforming and restructuring schools began to rely on the importance of the principal and their ability to enhance the necessary skills for change and transformation” (p. 38). Rapid change agents are leaders who bring about rapid improvement, or transformation, in the area of student academic success (Adams, Ikemoto, & Taliaferro, 2012; Barton, 2013; Fullan, 2007). A rapid change administrator is needed to lead educational reform and transformation in the development of instruction. A rapid change leader builds culture and climate, uses data in all decision making, and encourages collaboration between colleagues (Eaker & Keating, 2012).

The transformation of individual teacher planning into a common time for content area teachers to plan and collaborate facilitates instructional growth. A common planning time for each content area allows teachers the time to mature academically and develop collegiately. Many school districts are opting to hire rapid change agents to jump start transformation of poor performing schools (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010). Rapid change leaders are able to create a climate and culture of learning, thus creating school reform and improvement (Bottoms, 2012). Sometimes by challenging the status quo, change agents are able to move a failing school toward greater success (Marzano et al., 2005). Rapid change agents are one answer to the urgent need for significant transformation in educational leadership (Barton, 2013; Adams et al., 2012; Fullan, 2007).

This case study is significant because it will contribute to the greater body of knowledge of instructional leadership that impact overall school reform, transformation, and thus

improvement (Bickman & Rog, 2009). The study will contribute to a greater understanding of how educators perceive effective instructional leadership in the school improvement process. For this reason, it is my firm belief that the best way to give a clear account of the perceptions of the educators of the instructional leadership in the school improvement process is by means of a case study. Specifically, the information gathered will allow the researcher to document instructional leadership behaviors the educators consider crucial for transformation to occur. In-depth data collected through interviews will provide a foundation for the understanding the behaviors of an instructional leader in the school improvement process. The educators at this study site experienced a transformation from failing to one of improving. Schools in the US are having trouble being successful, and it takes effective instructional leaders to create successful schools (Bottoms, 2012). This case study will build on existing research pertaining to successful leadership in the school improvement process.

### *Definition of Terms*

The following terms and definitions are to aid the reader in fully understanding the contents of this research study. Many terms in education are overused and come to represent a variety of meanings.

**Accountability** – “the idea of holding schools, districts, educators, and students responsible for results...[and] whether the schools have made adequate yearly progress toward meeting performance targets” (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2004, p. 1).

**Capacity building** – “involves developing the collective ability – dispositions, skills, knowledge, motivation, and resources – to act together to bring about positive change” (Fullan, 2005, p. 4).



**Case study** – “Intensive examination of...a small number of instances of a phenomenon.

The goal in a case study is deep understanding of a small number of cases rather than broad knowledge of data about variables drawn from many cases” (Vogt, Gardner, & Haeffele, 2012, p. 336).

**Continuous school improvement** – “an unwavering commitment to progress” (Zmuda et al., 2004, p. 17).

**Data driven decision making** – using multiple types of data to inform the decision making process for an educational institution (Murray, 2014).

**Effective leader** – “one who helps group members attain productivity including good quality, and satisfaction...attaining desirable outcomes such as productivity, quality, and satisfaction in a given situation” (Dubrin, 2007, pp. 502-503).

**End of Course (EOC)** – refers to a mandated summative assessment for accountability (Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE), 2016a).

**Instructional leader** – “resource provider, instructional resource, communicator, and visible presence...the principal engages in frequent classroom observations and is highly accessible to faculty and staff” (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 18).

**Leadership capacity** – “the knowledge and skills required to accomplish work-related tasks” (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008, p. 536), and “the ability to inspire confidence and support among the people who are needed to achieve organizational goals” (Dubrin, 2007, p. 503).

**Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC)** – literacy initiative associated with the Southern Regional Education Board’s (SREB) *High Schools That Work (Southern Regional Education Board [SREB], 2016)*.

**Math Design Collaborative (MDC)** – math initiative associated with the SREB *High Schools That Work* (SREB, 2016).

**Professional learning community(ties) (PLC/PLCs)** – “the initiative...that a focus on learning brings all the research related to best practice together and connects it to the day-to-day work in schools...once teams begin to do PLC work, the research comes alive” (Eaker & Keating, 2012).

**Response to instruction and intervention (RTI<sup>2</sup>)** – statewide initiative to reach struggling students through intensive instructional intervention (TDOE, 2016b).

**School improvement plan** – “a set of coordinated actions that a school leader [and teacher leaders] can take to enhance the achievement of students in schools” (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 98).

**School reform** – “ways to improve educational outcomes for underserved and disadvantaged students...school reform has involved multiple actors at multiple levels...reformers have been assisted by a strikingly large number of federal and state policies that have evolved over the past 40 years” (Aladjem & Borman, 2006).

**Sustainability** – “the capacity of a system to engage in the complexities of continuous improvement consistent with deep values of human purpose” (Fullan, 2005, p. ix).

#### *Limitations and Delimitations*

Argued that it is not a methodology for research (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner, 1984; Campbell & Stanley, 1966; Diamond, 1996; Dogan & Pelassy, 1990), case study proved to be a valuable tool in the investigation of educator perceptions of instructional leadership in the school improvement process. Patton (2002) counters the notion that qualitative case study research is limited and not a method in which broad generalizations may be made. He elaborates that, “Case

analysis involves organizing the data by specific cases for in-depth study and comparison. Well-constructed case studies are holistic and context sensitive, two of the primary strategic themes of qualitative inquiry” (p. 447). Informal and formal generalizations are possible depending on the case selected and metrics applied (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

The instrument used to measure or collect the data in a study may constitute a weakness. Qualitative generally utilizes interviews and observations. For this study, the researcher implemented the use of interviews. Interviews allow the researcher to gather data directly from the subject in the form of opinion, recall, and perceptions. Patton (2002) cautions that “Interview data limitations include possibly distorted responses due to personal bias, anger, anxiety, politics, and simple lack of awareness since interviews can be greatly affected by the emotional state of the interviewee at the time of the interview” (p. 306). The interviews occurred three years after the implementation of the school improvement process. This could be a limitation in the perceptions being tainted by time (Patton, 2002).

Another limitation was the size of the school. The population of teachers eligible to participate in the study was relatively small. This researcher will include all participants who volunteer and are eligible for the study. The purposeful sampling strategy was based on the school and the implementation of the school improvement process (Patton, 2002). Purposive sampling allows for the researcher to choose a pool from the eligible participants in which to interview (Vogt et al., 2012). For this research, all eligible volunteers will be accepted as participants in an attempt to further validate the study.

#### *Overview of the Study*

This case study is organized into five separate chapters. The first chapter includes an introduction, theoretical foundation, statement of the problem, overarching research question,

significance of the study, definition of terms pertaining to the study, limitations and delimitations, and an overview of the institution of the study. The second chapter is the literature review of dissertations, journal articles, and scholarly books from experts in education field of study. Topics for the literature review include instructional leadership, the importance of an effective instructional leader, the leader role in establishing a PLC, the leader role in establishing a SIP, the leader role in building leadership capacity, and the leader role in using data in the decision making process. The third chapter will outline the theoretical basis for the case study, the inquiry methodology utilized for this qualitative case study, the role of the researcher, the population and sample selection process, and the data collection methods, instruments, and analysis. The fourth chapter includes the participant demographics, interview questions and results, and an analysis of the interview results. The fifth chapter includes a discussion of the study, emerging themes from the interview results, recommendations for future practices, and recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### *Introduction*

The principles of Leithwood's (1995) Transformational Leadership Theory, Denmark's (2012) Standards for Quality, and the list of crucial instructional leadership behaviors developed through the work of Dubrin (2007), Eaker and Keating (2012), Jackson and McDermott (2012), Zmuda et al. (2004) align closely. The literature reviewed for this study are current research on instructional leadership emphasized in establishing PLCs, developing and implementing a strategic SIP, defining accountability through data, and building leadership capacity through intense coaching and staff development (Dubrin, 2007; Eaker & Keating, 2012; Jackson & McDermott, 2012; Zmuda et al., 2004).

There is need for transformation, both in leadership and instruction, within the walls of public schools (Sergiovanni, 2006). Schools are in need of a "disruption," of sorts, that would cause a transformation (Christensen, Johnson, & Horn, 2008, p. 5). Christensen et al. (2008) are not calling for a disruption that will further detriment, but rather spur progress. Christensen et al. feel schools need a disruption that would propel student learning forward to how students learn today; a disruption innovation led by instructional practices that focus on engaged learning. Researchers do not know exactly why schools of today cannot grasp on to progress, but suggest foundational causes that may be hampering the inherent impetus for students to desire knowledge (Christensen et al., 2008; Grey & Streshly, 2010; Shepard et al., 2012). There are many reasons schools are failing, among these are: lack of funding, inability to keep up with technological advancements, greater influx of students who are ill-prepared to learn due to familial issues, language barriers, and economical limitations (Aladjem & Borman, 2006;

Christensen et al., 2008; DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Preble & Gordon, 2011). Christensen et al. place emphasis on the fact that the learner of today requires engaging, applicable, real-world projects that allow them to fully experience all curriculum being taught (Protheroe, 2010; Shepard et al., 2012).

The need for transformation is impacting our schools and making our schools appear to be in a decline, although schools are doing much better than most realize (Christensen et al., 2008). There has been a public focus on funding issues, the inability to keep up with technological advancements, and assessment results that do not show marked growth (Aladjem & Borman, 2006; Christensen et al., 2008; Zmuda et al., 2004). The poor growth does not match nor warrant the mounting educational costs (Aladjem & Borman, 2006; Christensen et al., 2008). The increasing number of diverse students entering the public school systems each year outweighs the amount of funding allocated (Aladjem & Borman, 2006). Students are beginning school less prepared than in the past (Zmuada et al., 2004). Christensen et al. feel that the US public school systems and leaders are doing an outstanding job based on growing demands in education and limited funding that are not equally sufficient to maintain the current situation. It is a cycle that is hard to overcome or even maintain.

Zhao (2009) reacts to the notion that US schools are not performing as well as possible, much like other researchers (Adams et al., 2012; Christensen et al. 2008; Gray & Streshly, 2010). Zhao began writing a book about American education and how the US is looking to other countries in an effort to mimic student success practices. China and other countries are researching ways to overhaul current educational processes to those found in America (Zhao, 2009). Zhao comments that when it comes to American education, instructional leaders are either “catching up or leading the way” (p. 181). There are specific behaviors that instructional

leaders are able to utilize that will maximize transforming schools (Adams et al., 2012; Gray & Streshly, 2010; Fullan, 2014).

Instructional leadership and school-wide transformation are not processes that any one person can do effectively alone (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). Sergiovanni expounds by stating, “viewing leadership as a group activity linked to practice rather than just an individual activity linked to a person helps match the expertise we have in a school with the problems we face” (2005, p. 45). Unlike any other time in US history, public education is being called on to do more for students while students are coming to school with greater needs than ever. Unlike any other time in US history, effective instructional leadership is crucial for student and teacher success.

DuFour and Marzano (2011) elucidate that effective instructional leadership is critical to the school improvement process, but growing leadership capacity within the school equally important. Building leadership capacity provides districts insurance that their supply of possible leaders is plentiful (Gray & Streshly, 2010). Administrative mentors provide real-world opportunities for teachers to learn in a safe, controlled environment, while being mentored by someone currently in the field (Gray & Streshly, 2010). Research has been conducted on the critical impact principals have on faculty and academic success of schools (Leithwood et al. 2004; Marzano et al., 2005). One fourth of academic success can be directly linked to the instructional leadership of the school. Principals have a direct impact on the effectiveness of the faculty (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). This effectiveness is enhanced when administrators develop teacher capacity for leadership (Adams et al., 2012).

Research over the last two decades has attempted to establish a framework for describing what works in educational leadership (Augustine et al., 2009; Leithwood et al, 2004; Marzano et

al., 2005; Portin et al., 2009). There is a plethora of must have traits and practices proximal to the construct of being an effective leader (Cashman, 2008; Collins, 2001; Maxwell, 1999, Ulrich, Smallwood, & Sweetman, 2008), but there is no how-to manual or guarantees of success even with leaders who possess one or more highly desired qualities (Hochbein & Cunningham, 2013). “Effective educational leadership makes a difference in improving learning” (Leithwood et al, 2004, p. 3). According to the Wallace Foundation (2013):

education research shows that most school variables, considered separately, have at most small effects on learning. The real payoff comes when individual variables combine to reach critical mass. Creating the conditions under which that can occur is the job of the principal. (p. 4)

Transforming schools into productive institutions is a challenge in all school districts (Corcoran et al., 2013). Student success depends on the ability of the principal to lead the faculty to an understanding of the expected standards, goals, and objectives, as well as how to achieve the standards, goals, and objectives (Shepard et al., 2012). Shepard et al. (2012) indicate that high stakes national standardized tests are placing increasingly extraordinary demands on all educators to be accountable for student success. Instructional leaders are responsible for implementing processes that will lead to the success of students and teachers. Zubreychi (2012) asserts that one of the most critical processes a rapid change leader can implement to insure the quickest transformation and the highest impact on student results is utilizing the student assessment data for every decision, action, and plan that is made. Knowing school performance data and using it in decision making processes is one of the most critical tools a transformational leader can possess (Zubreycki, 2012).



School, state, and federal leaders have come to realize that effective instructional leadership has a tremendous impact on school improvement processes (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007). Corcoran et al. (2013) note the process in which principal leaders are selected, trained, and assessed has changed radically as a greater understanding of effective leadership is established. The redefined roles and expectations of the principal as an instructional leader have forced transformation in hiring practices for school principals. School success depends on the ability of the instructional leader. Administrator preparatory programs coupled with good district and local level capacity building initiatives need to produce educationally strong instructional leaders. It is those administrators who will be supporting the teachers in professional development, developing and implementing a SIP, utilizing data in decision making, and building leadership capacity within the school (Bottoms, 2012). An educational organization is only as strong as the professional preparation of the leader, and the ability of that leader to transform others into leaders (Leithwood et al., 2004).

### *Instructional Leadership*

Instructional leadership has been researched and debated for decades and critical to the success of educational organizations (Bass, 2008; Bennis, 1989; Campbell, Dunnett, Laler, & Weick, 1970; Stogdill, 1948). As stated in a study by Blasé and Blasé (1999) “few studies have directly examined teachers’ perspectives on principals’ everyday instructional leadership characteristics and the impacts of those characteristics on teachers” (p. 1). Fullan (2014) interprets the role of the principal as one that is actually three pronged. Fullan goes on to state that the first, and core, prong is the “learning leader – one who models learning, but also shapes the conditions for all to learn on a continuous basis,” Fullan names the other two prongs as “a system player and agent of change” (p. 9).

Most experts in the field agree that other than the teacher, the principal has the greatest impact on the success of a school (Fullan, 2014; Leithwood et al., 2004). The greatest impact a principal can have in ensuring success for a school is to focus the charge on instructional leadership (Fullan, 2014; Leithwood et al., 2004). Even more powerful is to focus capacity building in the best instructional agents in your building. If the instructional leader can double the impact of instruction coaching one to one, think of the influence “purposeful peers can have” on the entire building (Fullan, 2014, p. 55). The instructional leader will have to focus time on selecting and developing a group, resulting in that group being able to cut the time of seeing results substantially (Leithwood et al., 2004).

The second prong is knowing your district and community. Fullan (2014) argues, “it is possible to become a great school despite the system you are in, it is not possible to stay effective if the system is not cultivating greatness in all of its schools” (p. 97). The instructional leader who is able to share, learn, and cultivate greatness with other schools, will build a support of an educational network allowing the school to reap the benefits of many effective schools and districts. Working collaboratively with others who have achieved greatness and can provide tips and information quickly frees the instructional leader to focus more time in cultivating the instructional leaders within his or her institution (Fullan, 2014).

Prong three, Fullan (2014) affirms, is becoming “a leader of change” (p. 123). Good agents of change are able to help the resistant followers see past what may be lost and moreover see the possibilities of promise in the march toward progress. Good agents of change enlighten the path for the remainder, those who are uncertain to what the future holds. Fullan is not implying that the agents of change are going to have all of the answers, know the exact path, or

even feel confident in what is being done, but the agent of change has the courage to make the first step and lead others as growth occurs.

Maxwell (1993) explicates the definition of “leadership is influence...Nothing more, nothing less” (p. 1). Condensed to one word, influence can be a very broad definition of leadership that transcends most leadership settings. Instructional leadership is so much more than general influence. In the research on the vital role of educational leadership, DeVita, et al. (2007) found that:

leadership is an essential ingredient for ensuring that every child in America gets the education they need to succeed. Indeed, education leadership has been called the bridge that can bring together the many different reform efforts in ways that practically nothing else can. (p. 2)

Leaders are not necessarily born, but can be developed (Maxwell, 1999; Ulrich et al., 2008). Instructional leaders can also be developed, but first the title must be defined. The definition of effective instructional leadership will continue to evolve, just as the need for effective instructional leaders will continue to grow (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Mulford, 2003;).

Knowing what to look for in an instructional leader is very important since the success or failure of an institution ultimately depends on the transformational leadership ability of the leader (Bass, 2008). Many researchers have spent countless hours interviewing, observing, analyzing, and writing about the traits, philosophies, styles, practices, and visions of the most famous leaders and institutions throughout history. Research efforts with the sole purpose of helping aspiring instructional leaders become effective transformational trailblazers (Bass, 2008; Beach & Reinhartz, 2000; Cashman, 2008; Fullan, 2014). In education, there is a perception that effective instructional leadership is the key to making a difference in school performance

(Ogawa & Scribner, 2002). Ineffective educational leaders, according to researchers, are the reason schools are having a tough time making any progress (Elmore, 2000; Finn, 2003). Instructional leaders are administrators who are able to transform teachers into effective educators. Instructional leaders are also able to establish a shared vision, set the tone for the institution, deal with stakeholders, limit conflict, and overcome any issues or roadblocks that stand in the way of being effective as an administrator (Hess, 2003; Yukl, 2010). Instructional leaders are the key to the success of the school as a whole because of ability to lead instruction for students and teachers and to transform teachers into instructional leaders (Bottoms, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2004).

Hallinger and Murphy (1985) stress the role of the instructional leader is not only to be the manager and administrator. Historically, principals were the managers of the building. Principals kept things running smoothly and effectively while teachers were responsible for instruction and curriculum disseminated on a daily basis (Beach & Reinhartz, 2000). Principals are now curriculum and instructional leaders and are expected to play an essential role in the development of higher educational standards for student success (Jenkins & Pfeifer, 2012). The instructional leader should also include being a consultant who defines and communicates school goals, monitors and provides explicit and beneficial feedback and guidance, and promotes and emphasizes PLCs. Among meeting expectations of being manager and administrator of the school, Portin, Alejano, Knapp, and Marzolf (2006) declare the restructured role of the instructional leader is what leads to success for students. Leadership effectiveness is two pronged (Portin et al., 2006). First, effective leaders accomplish the goals developed and set by the institution. Secondly, the effectiveness of leaders is determined by the perceptions of staff

pertaining to the performance of the leader. The role of the instructional leader has progressed into a position equated to that of a chief executive officer (Osman & Mukuna, 2013).

Instructional leadership has a critical impact on the success of an educational institution due to the correlation of leader effectiveness and student academic performance (Brauckmann & Pashiardis, 2012; Marzano et al., 2005). Eaker and Keating (2012) elucidate:

effective principals connect all of their work to student learning; they use student learning data to inform everything from the school improvement plan to classroom observations and evaluation of teacher...ultimately, student learning is the responsibility of the building principal. (p. 12-14)

Because of the correlation between leader effectiveness and student academic performance, there has been an influx of research pertaining to training and development of instructional leaders (Hochbein & Cunningham, 2013).

In light of federal school improvement grants (SIGs), instructional leaders are facing new challenges. The challenges center on student performance and performance of the instructional leader (Duncan, 2014; LeFlock et al., 2014). Dickey-Griffith (2013) found that schools receiving the SIGs were not experiencing the transformations that were expected. Dickey-Griffith wrote the major stipulations and regulations from receiving the grant funding were hampering the process. The initial steps in the reform began with a decision on replacing the school leadership, faculty, or a combination of the two. Although most schools opted to keep the majority of the faculty, in most of the schools receiving the school improvement grant (SIG) funding, the instructional leadership was replaced (Dickey-Griffith, 2013; Duncan, 2014; LeFlock et al., 2014). Complete closure of the school was also an option, as were allowing outside organizations take control the schools (Dickey-Griffith, 2013).

As Marzano and Walters (2009) point out, “change is the one constant of which we can all be certain” (p. 115). Hochbein and Cunningham (2013) note that change does not guarantee results. There is little research available proving an impact on replacing leadership and positive instructional gains (Hochbein & Cunningham, 2013). Hochbein and Cunningham (2013) clarify that even though the practice of releasing instructional leaders has now been going on since the initial school improvement grants in 2010, there are still low performing and failing schools. Dickey-Griffith (2013) expands in more detail that, “in its first year of implementation, SIG had a negative effect on student achievement at the elementary and middle schools across almost all subjects and subgroups and had little effect on achievement at high schools” (p. 21).

Instructional leadership has evolved into an extension of the Transformational Leadership Theory based on its definition and the behaviors used to attain success in the educational institution of the leader (Bass, 2008; Leithwood & Mascal, 2008). The role of the Transformational Leader in instruction has one of the most critical impacts on student academic performance (Brauckmann & Pashiardis, 2012; Marzano et al., 2005). Forced changes from district and state offices on individual schools have a major impact on student achievement; they often do not know what is best for the school. However, a crucial constant remains; the instructional leadership of the principal has the power to influence and transform every operational and instructional facet of a school and its success (DeVita et al., 2007).

#### *Importance of an Effective Instructional Leader*

The instructional leader role in the process of continuous school improvement may be defined by the ability of the leader to meet specific goals. Most instructional leaders are judged on meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) as mandated by Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) (Bottoms, 2012). The struggles many instructional leaders face on a daily basis

culminate with the leaders' accountability for student performance (Bottoms, 2012). Excellence in anything is not just meeting the bottom line standard of being acceptable. Meeting basic expectation is minimally being competent. It takes more than just a simple manager to make a difference (Sergiovanni, 2006). "Leadership has several aspects, each of which contributes uniquely to school competence and to school excellence" (Sergiovanni, 2006, p. 7). Instructional leaders who move a school to higher levels of success are considered to be an effective instructional leader. "Excellent schools...exceed the expectations necessary to be considered satisfactory" (Sergiovanni, 2006, p. 7).

Student achievement and high school graduation rates are two factors that often impact the determination of success in a high school turnaround. In a recent study conducted on effective school level instructional leadership and the support district level leaders were able to give the principals in being effective leaders, Bottoms and Schmidt-Davis (2010) found that the board members and district leaders are an integral component, stating:

the building principal's key role in producing turnaround high schools, one critical factor often gets lost in the policy shuffle: the vision and actions of system leaders and school board members frequently determine whether principals can be effective in leading school improvement. (2010, p. i)

According to Bottoms and Schmidt-Davis, supporting principal needs supports scaffolding reform efforts within the school. Bottoms and Schmidt-Davis go on to detail that it is when the principal is supported that the school level leader is able to coach instructional needs and build leadership capacity for the faculty, establish a strategic SIP, use assessment data for decision making school-wide, and help teachers use data for creating instructional plans. "There are no leader-proof reforms – and no effective reforms without good leadership" (DeVita et al., 2007, p.

5). Bottoms and Schmidt-Davis have one essential question, “What are the conditions school districts can create that make it possible for principals to be more effective in leading school improvement” (p. i)? Capacity building, vision, and instructional leadership were the three key findings of the study. Leadership capacity building is what makes successful transformational reforms occur, starting with principals, as well as the district level leaders, and in most cases including the state level leaders (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010).

Bottoms and Schmidt-Davis (2010) caution that it takes a lot of support and trust on the part of the district level leaders and a precise combination of effective processes on the part of the principals to bring about school improvement. It is crucial for effectiveness that instructional leaders be allowed to function automatically and with great precision when implementing an improvement agenda. Without being able to function autonomously, the principals will likely become nothing more than a manager of schools (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010). The three key findings of Bottoms and Schmidt-Davis reiterate the prior findings of researchers performing similar studies. Research findings: capacity building, vision, and instructional leadership are vital in the transformation of a failing school (Browne-Ferrigno, 2007; Copland, 2003; Hogan & Warrenfeltz, 1999; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Rose & Fiore, 1999). Bass (2008), Leithwood and Mascall (2008) claim that these are instructional leadership behaviors that should be utilized in reform efforts.

Sergiovanni (2006) attributes competent or effective leadership is indicative of meeting goals even if those goals are based on minimum numbers meeting “fundamental academic competence” (p. 6). He also indicates the definition of a truly effective leader would have to include moving students to acquire “a love of learning, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, aesthetic appreciation, curiosity and creativity, [and] interpersonal competence”



(Sergiovanni, 2006, p. 6). These important student qualities may be developed as a result of successful modeling or mentoring on the part of the teacher. Adhering to his beliefs, Sergiovanni prefers to think that effective leadership is possible through utilizing the metaphorical, or symbolic, forces at the disposal of administrators. Identifying five elements able to make an impact in the success of an instructional leader, Sergiovanni lists: technical, human, educational, symbolic, and cultural factors as desirable elements. All five elements Sergiovanni identifies as crucial to the leaders' success similarly correlates to the characteristics adapted from the list in Figure 3. from Denmark (2012) and Leithwood (1995). Sergiovanni includes an additional element to the list, that of an effective manager of the building. Sergiovanni describes an effective manager as one who controls conditions or uses positive and thoughtful tactics for peak performance.

The technical leader of the building may also be identified as the “management engineer” (Sergiovanni, 2006, p. 7) of the building. The techniques used by a manager to keep the building operational and functional are crucial in the effectiveness of the overall institution. Managers are considered those who find possibilities in impossible situations based on past experiences and learned knowledge and wisdom (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Bolman and Deal (2013) refer to the leader as the “administrative component” who “track developments in the environment, determine the mission, and shape the grand design in school systems” (p. 76). Sergiovanni (2006) explains the technical leader is a person who is responsible for managing the strategic SIP, organizing and coordinating by using data intentionally, and engineering all situations for optimal outcome. When juxtaposing management and leadership, “leaders...do the right thing; managers...do things right” (Bennis, 1989, p. 18). Beach and Reinhartz (2000) articulate that a person must first a leader then a manager to be successful. Sergiovanni emphasizes that an

effective manager as one who is able to control conditions or use positive and thoughtful tactics for peak performance. One can never be an excellent manager without being an excellent leader” (Stevens, 2009, p. 1).

The human factor as a leadership force refers to the ability of the leader to “harness...available social and interpersonal resources” (Sergiovanni, 2006, p. 7). He defines the “human engineer” (Sergiovanni, 2006, p. 8) as the person who is responsible for providing motivation while constructing faculty morale and a sustainable PLC capable of thriving as growth occurs. In Marzano et al. (2005), the human leader is described as someone who exhibits the ability to hone in on employee concerns, motivational influences, and conditions that coax optimal performance. Parallel to Sergiovanni’s (2006) crucial “interpersonal competence” (p. 8), Marzano et al. reinforce the qualities that are core in a servant leader are apropos to those of the human engineer, including: “understanding the personal needs of those within the organization, healing wounds caused by conflict within the organization, being a steward of the resources of the organization, developing the skills of those within the organization, and being an effective listener” (2005, p. 17). Accountability has changed the role of the present day administrator (Barton, 2013). The mere manager factor no longer works without the human factor of knowing your followers’ needs and helping them to make valuable connections to needed change (Eaker & Keating, 2012).

Sergiovanni (2006) acknowledges the educational leader as the one with “expert knowledge about matters of education and schooling” (p. 7). Sergiovanni expresses that the instructional leader is crucial because the instructional leader must have the ability to provide educational expertise and to promote leadership growth beyond faculty members’ current status. The instructional leader is not only responsible for the learning of students, but also the learning

of teachers as well (Barton, 2013). Instructional leaders need to be able to diagnose problems within the institution and know how to correct the issues, all while maintaining a positive learning culture (Sergiovanni, 2006). “The traditional role of school principal as manager has been replaced by that of an instructional leader – a teacher of teachers” (Barton, 2013, p. 94). The educational instructional leader must be an expert clinical practitioner (Sergiovanni, 2006). The instructional leader must have the knowledge to transform an issue into a success (Bottoms, 2012).

Sergiovanni (2006) proposes that the symbolic administrator leads by “focusing the attention of others on matter of importance to the school” (p. 7). The symbolic leader must model the philosophy, beliefs, and expectations being established (Jackson & McDermott, 2012). The symbolic leader will serve as the example of how to act personally and professionally, handle situations, and use data in making decisions (Eaker & Keating, 2012). Sergiovanni clarifies that the style in which the leader uses is not really of great importance, rather “what the leader stands for and communicates to others” (p. 9). Responsible leaders ensure that a clear picture of vision, mission, and expectations of the institution is communicated. Students, faculty, staff, and community will all have eyes on the leader to make sure he is practicing what he is demanding from others (Sergiovanni, 2006).

Finally, Sergiovanni (2006) reiterates the success of any educational institution is due to the leader establishing and “building a unique school culture” (p. 7). An effective leader will be able to establish what the institution is about, what will and will not be tolerated, and what there will be common knowledge throughout the community. Without an effective instructional leader, the cadre has no direction, plan, wisdom, or structure in which to operate (Sergiovanni, 2006). It is important to the successfulness of an educational institution to have an effective

instructional leader. “Without consistent leadership...goals for achievement and instruction have little chance of success” (Marzano & Waters, 2009, p. 114). Sergiovanni associates the cultural leader as one who sets the boundaries for the learning institution, comparing the leader to the “high priest” (p. 10) of a tribe.

It is the work instructional leaders do that supports teachers in making schools effective (DeVita et al., 2007). Leader support may not always be recognizable or straight forward as in the form of directly working with the faculty and staff at a school. Sometimes, leaders provide support to followers in ways that are never realized. An example would be in the recruiting and retaining practices of the leader to find the best teachers in hard to fill placements (Rose, 2012). “The teacher matters the most” (Rose, 2012, p. 181) when it comes to student success.

Leadership plans evolve as new situations and elements are introduced to the school culture causing the need for the leader to act more flexibly (Marzano et al., 2005). At other times a strategic plan must be honed by the instructional leader before being shared or implemented (Gabriel & Farmer, 2009). In the research, DeVita et al. (2007) stress effective leaders set direction through vision and goals, coach teachers through modeling desired behavior, provide professional development that enlightens teacher knowledge, include teachers in all planning and data collection, establish collaborative professional learning communities, and maximize resources and support. DeVita et al. explicate that these effective behaviors coupled with a collaborative leadership style that shares in the decision making process are a powerful combination in thrusting a school into improvement.

#### *Leader Role in Establishing a Professional Learning Community*

Teachers hear the words new initiative and recoil. Eaker and Keating (2012) emphasize that most districts and leaders feel the need to implement every new initiatives and concepts

perceived as progressive. The problem is many new initiatives are never given the appropriate amount of time to realize success or failure before implementing yet another initiative. Teachers know this cycle and feel new fads will be implemented occasionally (Eaker & Keating, 2012). Teachers will go through the motions of implementing the initial phase of a new initiative, when in reality some have no intention of changing teaching methods or daily operations in the classroom (Protheroe, 2010). Instructional leaders know that in order to sustain improvement initiatives the initiative must have depth and purpose (Fullan, 2005). DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker (2008) indicate:

the best professional development occurs in a social and collaborative setting rather than in isolation, is ongoing and sustained rather than infrequent and transitory, is job-embedded rather than external, occurs in the context of the real work of the school and classroom rather than in off-site workshops and courses, focuses on results (that is, evidence of improved student learning) rather than activities or prescriptions, and is systematically aligned with school and district goals rather than random. In short, the best professional development takes place in professional learning communities. (p. 370)

Establishing an authentic PLC means that the instructional leader critiques the initiative for value or worth for the teachers and the school. “Creating and sustaining PLCs is one powerful way your school can improve professional practice and student learning” (Protheroe, 2010, p. 149).

PLCs play a crucial role in teacher planning and curriculum design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Good planning and goal setting is deliberate, focused, and quite time consuming (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Eaker and Keating (2012) insist that the effort is worth it, stating, “the capacity of teachers to improve student learning is enhanced by the school functioning as a true professional learning community” (p. 2). Implementing PLCs is not the traditional way

schools look at or implement professional development. Simple sit and get type professional development no longer meets the needs of a technologically savvy, engaged culture educational force (Zmuda et al., 2004). Effective PLC instructional leaders must display, to some degree, the following six characteristics (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2006, p. 3):

- a focus on learning,
- a collaborative culture with a focus on learning for all,
- collective inquiry into best practices and current reality,
- action orientation or learning by doing,
- a commitment to continuous improvement, and
- a results orientation towards student learning.

Wells (2008) reports in her qualitative study of six high schools the crucial role instructional leadership plays in the effective implementation of the PLCs process at all phases. She found that all phases were crucial, but noted the tone at the onset of the process was extremely vital. Fullan (2001) concurs:

at the most basic level, businesses and schools are similar in that in the knowledge society, they both must become learning organizations or they will fail to survive. Thus, leaders in business and education face similar challenges – how to cultivate and sustain learning under conditions of complex, rapid change. (p. xi)

Wells asserts that leadership could possibly aid in alleviating some of the resistance to implementation. Wells offers eight themes that were realized during the process and proposes two additional elements for an effective PLC. The eight themes that emerged during implementation include: leadership, teacher learning, student learning, collaboration, resistance, teacher leadership, conflict, and culture. Additionally, Wells cautions schools looking to

implement PLCs without proper research. First, the school is not taking on a program; it is seeking to change its culture. Secondly, instructional leaders should realize what change is and best practices for transforming the institution into a PLC. It is a true transformation. Wells recommends several areas that need to be considered by a learning institution and its leader prior to transitioning into the PLC process.

Leadership in the initial phase of PLC implementation needs to be accurate, clear, and strong (Wells, 2008). As noted in the work of Eaker and Keating (2012), “leaders matter...successful implementation of the professional learning community concept requires highly skilled and effective leaders” (p. 10). Eaker and Keating also declare the need for strong, quality district leadership for a smooth transition into a cohesive district level PLC. The district level PLC should be the model and expectations of what normal is in the individual schools within the district. Marzano and Waters (2009) maintain, however, the number one goal of the PLC, whether at the school or district level, should be pedagogical collaboration and development. Wells (2008) offers, without “a leader’s voice to articulate a vision” (p. 34) of the PLC, change will not occur.

Wells (2008) notes that just because teachers are collaborating does not mean learning is occurring. Wells claims that without collegial debate teachers are only highlighting current knowledge. Authentic PLCs require an in-depth inquiry worthy of the practitioner level (Wells, 2008). Eaker and Keating (2012) echo the necessity of doing more than just collaborating as a group of educators in an area together. That is nothing more than a having a discussion. Collaboration is genuinely having a collegial examination of concepts in which teachers express understanding and are able to consider the understanding of colleagues. This type of collaborative process allows the cognitive levels of practitioners to grow or evolve (Eaker &

Keating, 2012). This level of collaboration must be encouraged, modeled, and occur on a consistent basis by both school and district level administration.

Student learning, according to Wells (2008), is an integral part of the PLC. Focus on data and tracking the progress and struggles of each student must occur for the teacher to know how to follow up the adjusted instruction (Tomlinson, 2014). “It isn’t really so much that...teachers use formative assessments often. It’s that they do so continually, – formally and informally, with individuals and with the group, to understand academic progress and to understand the human beings that they teach” (Tomlinson, 2014, p. 13). Tomlinson (2014) describes the process of teaching, student learning, and assessing student knowledge as something that should be on-going. Tomlinson reiterates that the act of tracking progress through data, formative and summative assessments, is what student learning is all about and ultimately the duty of the teacher as a professional. Marzano and Waters (2009) report that it is the duty of each district to have unequivocal expectations and goals concerning the protection of pedagogical development time for teachers. It is this protected time that allows collaboration and growth in the use of data.

Collaboration is crucial to the school improvement process, yet one that rarely occurs due to time constraints (Wells, 2008). Collaboration, which must occur when all teachers are available, could have the most impact on school improvement. Yet, dedicated collaboration time is an element of the professional learning process that is consistently cut due to simply running out of time (Wells, 2008). There are many duties outside of the instructional day that must be taken care of in order to keep a school functioning smoothly. For that reason, collaboration rarely takes place. In Rose’s (2012) study of teacher compensation compared to student performance, he references two opposing journal columns debating the average annual salary for a teacher. Some feel teacher pay is too high. Teacher pay takes a huge cut when calculating



instructional time and pay, compared to actual hours the teacher works. Actual hours include instructional time plus planning, grading, mandatory meetings, extra duties, and professional development that falls after hours or during the summer hours when teachers do not receive a paycheck. Extra-curricular and non-curricular events that teachers are required to attend include before school and after school bus room duty, open house, special program events, faculty meetings, parent meetings, facilitating parent involvement activities, working ticket gates, and manning concession stands at athletic events. Rose reiterates, noting the general public has come to expect this type of volunteer service since it has been going on for so long and it occurs outside protected instructional hours. Also not included are the hours of planning and grading that occur after teachers go home. Legters, Adams, and Williams (2010) indicate the best way to ensure educators are collaborating is to protect common planning time during the school day. Common planning times for secondary school educators is being held as an important factor in transforming schools in the school improvement process (Legters et al., 2010).

Wells (2008) reveals, there will be opposition and people who resist change, especially deep change. For that reason, transitioning into a PLC will be difficult for the instructional leader and the educators who are on board with the PLC implementation process. Beach and Reinhartz (2000) warn that happy leaders and teachers are deceiving sometimes. Leaders and teachers are happy because of comfort in present routines or working conditions. Complacency is maintaining current comfortable circumstances. "They come to love the security of the status quo; the lack of tension or conflict that such conditions produce makes change a difficult task" (Beach & Reinhartz, 2000, p. 305). There is nothing wrong with being a happy or comfortable teacher or leader, but on occasion happy or comfortable institutions are not successful institutions. Complacency, or habit of behaving a certain way, can be the downfall of a great

institution according to Beach and Reinhartz. Beach and Reinhartz suggest that leaders work closely with faculties, being keenly aware for signs of resistance, even anticipatory of signs, and diligently guide those who are resistant. Cynicism and animosity could grow uncontrollably if those who are resistant to change are ignored or come to feel ostracized (Beach & Reinhartz, 2000). Even negative teachers should be allowed to voice opinions and concerns, just as any legitimate and respected member of the school improvement team (Wells, 2008). Resistance to change efforts does not need to be the reason that positive reform stalls or even ends altogether.

Conflict is not always a bad thing or something that cannot be resolved. Some conflict could be considered a productive struggle toward improvement (Wells, 2008). If PLCs operate as designed, collegial conversations will cause healthy, productive debate focusing on the philosophy of the practitioner (Eaker & Keating, 2012). This will only lead to growth in the knowledge of the professional, either receiving the introduced thought with a new found realization or discounting the information because of healthy debate. Productive conflict, through the process of collaborative collegiality, leads to the increased knowledge of leaders and teachers (Fullan, 2005; Wells, 2008).

Leadership can be a lonely endeavor (Foster, 2006). Foster (2006) warns of the outcomes of leaders who try to do it all alone, all of the time. “It is difficult to be a successful school leader and even harder to sustain successful leadership that continually inspires, supports, nurtures, and empowers others towards learning, growth, development, and excellence” (Foster, 2006, p. 4). Building teacher leaders is a way to build a more successful school. Creating leadership capacity in your institution is a great way to keep from becoming overwhelmed with the minor duties (Flanary, 2009). Building teacher capacity is not only about planning for succession; it is also about maintaining possession of a leader position (Browne-Ferrigno, 2007).

One person cannot do the job alone. It is in the best interest of the leader to have help in the form of a leadership team. This will keep the school running in the absence of the leader. If the institution falls apart while the leader is away, then district leaders may seek to find someone who knows how to keep the institution running smoothly at all times. Teachers are the primary catalyst responsible for student acquisition of knowledge (Wells, 2008). The leader is the primary catalyst responsible for in building capacity in the teachers (Protheroe, 2010). Teacher leaders have the ability to quickly thrust a school into improvement since the teachers are the ones working directly with the students on a routine basis. Teachers also have the ability to take ownership and responsibility of the school improvement process through team leadership, amplifying the rate of improvement, and alleviating the feeling of loneliness of the part of the leadership (Vernon-Dotson & Floyd, 2012).

Fullan (2005) explains that the relationships that are forged in a PLC are built on trust and trust in a school culture is what sustains improvement. School culture is powerful in establishing total acceptance or complete denial of the leadership plan for improvement (Wells, 2008). The work of creating a new culture in an educational institution takes a very skilled and strategic thinking leader (Fullan, 2001), because certain challenges will be incurred. It takes a lot to change beliefs and values of a community (Fullan, 2005). Followers normally want no part of an unknown leadership vision until the vision has been productive. Sergiovanni (2006) elucidates the necessity for a leader to respect the cultural norms that are in place in an institution, while respecting differences among the institutions' members. Sergiovanni continues on about how important it is to gain the trust of an institution by incorporating the standing values, beliefs, and uniqueness of the institutions when trying to implement a transformation (Sergiovanni, 2006).

It is the responsibility of the instructional leader and the faculty to work toward outcomes in a strategic and collaborative way (Eaker & Keating, 2012).

By definition, effective schools should produce stable and consistent results over time that apply to all students within the school...underlying the notion of school accountability is the belief that school personnel should be held responsible for improving student learning. (Heck, 2005, pp. 1-2)

According to Eaker and Keating (2012), a sign-in sheet and agenda are not documentation enough to prove professional learning is occurring. The principal must fully attend to the professional development in order to guide deep conversations and prod the team using thought provoking questions that lead to depth and clarity in what the team produces (Eaker & Keating, 2012). The principal must follow through on the process with classroom observations to assure the implementation of concepts from the professional development opportunity is actually occurring. This allows the principal to determine if the professional learning opportunity has been effective (Eaker & Keating, 2012). The PLC experience allows leaders and followers, in any configuration, to learn from one another, construct meaning, and implement the initiative collectively for continuous improvement in schools (Steele et al., 2009).

#### *Leader Role in Establishing a School Improvement Plan*

Change is not a new concept in any context. Most people want to grow and become more successful at most everything attempted, especially in a chosen career. Unwanted change may happen in life, but a person may not comprehend the reason and improve because of it. “Change is inevitable; growth is optional” (Whitaker, 2010 p. 1). The concept is the same in education. Unless an instructional leader has the skills and a plan in place to initiate and guide the process of school improvement, all a school will encounter is change without improvement (Eaker &

Keating, 2012). “A vision without a plan is just a dream. A plan without a vision is just drudgery. But a vision with a plan can change the world” (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 98). Before a faculty will have buy-in for a plan of change, the faculty must fully believe in what the leader has planned for them to do and commit to the process of improving, otherwise the teachers are basically going through the motions (Graham, 2007).

Whitaker (2010) asserts that individual schools and leaders must prescribe, through strategic planning, action steps for improvement based on school needs. Whitaker relates the strategic planning process to a game of chess with an unknown, cunning opponent who has an astute and infinite number of moves. In plotting a course for school improvement, there are many factors and variables to take into consideration. Graham (2007) indicates that carefully and strategically planned professional learning sessions, facilitated by the organizational leader, are more effective in producing the desired outcome than providing unstructured collaboration time. For that reason, Whitaker replies the educational leader must “steer that change in the direction we choose by applying intentional strategies to maximize the chance of success as the game unfolds” (2010, p. 3).

A strategic SIP is a roadmap for the school toward positive school reform. Zmuda et al. (2004) explain one step that must be adhered to in order to maintain continuous improvement is to create and implement a strategic plan of action. Strategic planning should be a collective effort. Zmuda et al. go on to detail an effective action plan should have real-world questions established with the help of stakeholders, an agenda of the time needed to complete the project, a list of possible items the faculty will need in order to make the organizational changes, and a projected cost of the necessary changes. Accordingly, there will need to be a metric to determine

the overall progress and how the plan outcomes will look (Zmuda et al., 2004). Zmuda et al. confirm a risk assessment is needed in an attempt to foil any pitfalls during the plan of change.

An effective strategic plan will have specific goals that are measurable and attainable, geared toward desired outcomes, and have predetermined deadlines for completion (DuFour et al., 2008). Although goal setting is normally an individual activity, when it comes to organizational goal setting, usually a team is involved. The group generates a set of goals according to the purpose or mission of the organization (Rouillard, 2009). Rouillard (2009) responds that when groups are in need of developing goals, as in the case of a school, there should be a three step process to gain consensus on the acceptability of the goals. After the team or committee generates goals relevant to the institution, a presentation with open discussion should occur (Rouillard, 2009). This discussion will allow negotiations to happen and changes to be implemented. Next the group as a whole should reach consensus on the goals (Rouillard, 2009).

Eaker and Keating (2012) express that effective goals are SMART goals. SMART is an acronym representing: strategic or specific, measurable, attainable or action oriented, and realistic or results oriented (Eaker & Keating, 2012; Rouillard, 2009). SMART goal development should directly relate the desired outcome. SMART goals should include a measure so progress toward the goal is easily tracked. SMART goals should be accomplished by the actions of those working toward the goal. SMART goals should result in an outcome that will improve the institution. SMART goals should be achieved by the date specified in the goal (DuFour et al., 2008).

Lack of planning for the future tends to be a growing problem and crucial pitfall for educational institutions across the nation (Peters, 2011). A successful leader, who may be

leaving for promotional reasons, leaves the new leader finding it hard to maintain success. There is no support system there to guarantee a smooth transition. In her qualitative instrumental case study, Peters (2011) opts to “examine and understand these challenges in successful succession planning” (p. 64). Just as in strategic planning to obtain or maintain goals for the entire school, school districts should have a plan in place that supports leadership development. Peters found that with the proper support and a mentoring program in place, sustaining school improvement for those schools in the midst of transitioning leadership has less disruption than having no plan. Peters explicates that there is a leadership shortage, and although there are leadership preparation and mentoring programs, those programs are sporadic. Peters elaborates that:

the research suggests that teacher leadership is important in shaping schools and particularly so throughout the succession-planning process. This is important because teachers are responsible for assuming leadership in schools and carrying out the vision and goals of the leader. This level of leadership can help to sustain the organization when transition occurs. (p. 82)

Planning is crucial to continuous school improvement, whether strategic planning for obtaining goals or maintaining and sustaining success through a leadership transition (Browne-Ferrigno, 2007).

#### *Leader Role in Building Leadership Capacity*

Peters (2011) affirms the crucial role teachers play in stepping up and assuming responsibility and leadership roles in obtaining goals through the vision and mission of a strategic SIP. Peters also suggests that teacher leaders could be the answer to maintaining the continuity during leadership transitions. Eaker and Keating (2012) feel that, “everyone has leadership responsibilities and a role to play in the learning improvement process” (p. 15).

Teacher induction programs led by the instructional leaders of the school go a long way in preparing teacher leaders to feel more comfortable in taking on leadership roles. Leithwood et al. (2004) reiterate this notion in the research claiming educational leadership ranks second in school-related factors contributing to student success, just under teachers. Smart educational leaders train faculties to be able to carry on, even if the leader is not there (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). When followers “seek more attention, feedback and support, leaders must become more mindful of individual needs in order to more effectively inspire professional development and overall performance. Leaders who listen are able to create trustworthy relationships that are transparent” (Llopis, 2013, p. 1).

Adams and Jean-Marie (2010) maintain that without effective instructional leadership any chance of improvement or reform ceases to exist. Instructional leaders are better able to build leadership capacity within the faculty by means of mentoring (Adams & Jean-Marie, 2010). Faculty members are more responsive to an overall support approach than being told what to do or how to change by an authoritative position (Adams & Jean-Marie, 2010). There are also outliers who are able to stall or abort positive change, depending on the social standing of the outlier. Adams and Jean-Marie report that in schools where mentoring, collective responsibility, and shared leadership were implemented, leadership capacity was more established.

In Copland’s (2003) mixed methods, longitudinal research, three factors are recognized as basic to building capacity. Distributive, collective, and shared leadership practices allow teachers to develop into leaders while performing leadership tasks on a smaller scale. Copland defines distributed leadership as collective in actions and goals, involving transcending boundaries, and requiring expert knowledge instead of authority. Distributed, collective, or



shared leadership transforms a school by empowering all who participate to establish an atmosphere of unity and commitment to a common goal. Copland summarized:

the leadership of these principals was not superhuman; rather, it grew from a strong and simple commitment to making the school work for their students, and to building teachers' capacity to pursue this collective goal. Perhaps most importantly, the responsibility for sustaining school improvement was shared among a much broader group...rather than owned primarily by formal leaders at the top of the organizational chart. (p. 379)

Not all decisions can be shared by the team (Protheroe, 2010). Sometimes there must be a decisive entity that has the implied and authentic power. The instructional leader must be the final say in some debates, decisions, and actions that occasionally must be managed without emotion. Effective instructional leaders, however, know the importance of empowering the faculty in order to make the strategic plan happen (Protheroe, 2010). Forming focus teams, study groups, think tanks, and various levels of teacher leaders, the workload is shared and invaluable insight comes to the forefront (Flanary, 2009). "Effective leaders of professional learning communities not only harness the power of collaborative teams, they disperse the leadership responsibility throughout the...school" (Eaker & Keating, 2012, p. 15). The leader must be the one who ensures business is handled, even if there is no help to the lead position (Foster, 2006).

Leithwood et al. (2004) warn of the dangers in distributing certain authoritative responsibilities when building the leadership capacity in a school. Leithwood et al. note the importance of the true instructional leader for building a mission and vision, otherwise followers may go in the wrong direction. Leadership skills need to be honed in teacher leaders through "distributed...shared, collaborative, democratic, and participative" (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 7)

methods. Teacher leaders could share in general managerial task and instructional ground work. There may be varying levels of distribution based on the tasks being shared and the individual teachers. Principals cannot shoulder all of the work alone (Leithwood et al., 2004). Key teachers, who become trusted teacher leaders, help in the overall success of the school operation.

### *Leader Role in Using Data in Decision Making*

Data-informed decision making, claims Protheroe (2010), is the one of the most important instructional leadership processes that will gain quick results. Consequently, data-informed decision making contributes to sustaining school improvement efforts. As noted by Protheroe, “Effective data-informed decision making requires well-organized processes as well as conditions that support data use” (p. 105). Protheroe further report “that more effective schools typically use data differently than less effective ones” (p. 105). Protheroe remarks that the most effective schools assessed students, collected the results, discussed the findings collaboratively, and used the results to adjust and develop remedial interventions. Many instructional leaders do not know how to use the data in hand (Mooney & Mausbach, 2008). There are schools that do not do anything with data, those who are data rich but do not use the data, and those who are effective in utilizing data (Protheroe, 2010). Zmuda et al. (2004) echo Protheroe’s claim that schools rarely use data to make informed decisions, but should since the data is a means to drive informed strategic planning.

There is a difference in knowing how to read the data provided by any state department of education concerning school growth and how to interpret teacher accountability rate. Murray (2014) comments that more acuity is needed by instructional leaders in how to convert growth and accountability data into improvement in instruction and learning. Williamson and Blackburn (2009) agree, stating:

gathering and using data to guide decisions about improving the rigor of your school is important. Be cautious about simply gathering data: the value of data is in using the information to identify improvement strategies and monitor your progress toward meeting your improvement goals. (p. 66)

Murray also indicates the full potential and power of data usage in the decision making process for school improvement purposes has not been completely realized.

Means, Padilla, DeBarger, and Bakia (2009) echo Murray's (2014) comments on the depth of data usage. Means et al. draw attention to the importance of the instructional leaders and how leaders "play a major role in...setting expectations for staff participation in data-informed decision making, and making resources such as supported time available to support the enterprise" (2009, p. 5). Focus teams that concentrate on data and how best to use it for improvement are being developed and utilized in schools across the nation. The problem however, according to Wilhelm (2011), is analyzing data in order to reform schools is foreign to most teachers and some leaders. Student assessment data should be used to determine next steps in classroom instruction, determining student placements in the various content areas, leading teacher collaboration, and planning school improvement initiatives (Wilhelm, 2011). In a three year, mixed methods study by Wayman, Cho, Jimerson, and Spikes (2012), teacher attitudes about using data for improved instructional practices and as a planning tool were negative. Some of the major factors driving the negativity according to Wayman et al. was the apparent lack of guidance and professional development in how to effectively locate and use the data. Wayman et al. point out that a collective database which both teachers and leaders could find all past and present performance data would be a tremendous help in the decision making process.

A common practice in most districts is using data mainly for at-risk students. Wayman et al. (2012) suggest the use of data for enrichment activities that will affect high stakes assessments, for example ACT and SAT. Analyzing data from end of year state wide assessments gives teachers and leaders a snapshot of what expectations are expected for the upcoming school year (Griswold, 2005). These results would greatly enhance the power of the instructional leader and teacher leaders in meeting the needs of the at-risk students and high functioning students alike. Using data effectively has the most impact in raising student achievement (Wilhelm, 2011). Wilhelm (2011) asserts that, “this requires leaders to ensure teachers have developed the skills to convert student data to useful information to effectively plan for instruction and student interventions” (p. 30).

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### *Introduction*

This case study was designed for the researcher to examine educator perceptions of the instructional leadership in the school improvement process. The school involved in the study received a SIG in November 2010. SIGs were authorized by the USDOE for state department of education (2010b). The state department of education then assigned the grant funds to local schools considered to be low performing. The grant process was competitive and low performing schools applied. Among expectations outlined in the SIG were the establishment of a PLC, development and implementation of a SIP, utilization of data-based decision making, and building leadership capacity within the school.

The researcher examined high school teachers' opinions of instructional leadership and the impact of leadership on the school improvement process for a rural Middle Tennessee high school. An interview was conducted with an administrator for the purpose of understanding administrative perceptions of intent of the school improvement process. As noted in Louis et al. (2010):

Although leadership is widely thought to be a powerful force for school effectiveness, this popular belief needs to be justified by empirical evidence. There are five types of such evidence, each offering its own estimate of the size of leader effects. One type is evidence from qualitative case studies. Studies providing this type of evidence typically are conducted in exceptional school settings, selected as exemplars of effectiveness. (p.

7)

In 2014 the high school selected for this study was recognized as being on the Reward School Cusp List – Progress by the TDOE. The cusp list award is defined by the TDOE as a school in the top 10% of schools, based on one-year progress data from the Tennessee Value-added Assessment System (TVASS) school composites. In 2010 the school was identified as a low performing school. The sample school could be compared to the exemplar schools Louis et al. described, based on improvements. Louis et al. wrote of a different definition of “exceptional” (2010, p. 7) in their quote above. The school selected for this study was perceived as exceptional due to the contrast in being identified for performance.

#### *Qualitative Design: Constructivism and Case Study*

Bickman and Rog (2009) specify case study as one of the most complex frameworks in the field of research. Additionally, Denzin and Lincoln (2011) classify case study as a definitive qualitative design. Hyett, Kenny, and Dickson-Swift (2014) laud qualitative case study research as offering varied levels of flexibility, conforming to the individual case, and considers the research questions in finalizing the design for the study. Creswell (2013) indicates that case study is:

a methodology, a type of design in qualitative research, or an object of study, as well as a product of the inquiry. Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case)...through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case-based themes. (p. 97)

Case study allows the researcher a means of concentrating on individualized experiences, documenting the process, collecting a narrative account of the individual experiences, analyzing

the accounts, and drawing conclusions and capturing themes which will extract the complexity of the journey (Creswell, 2014). Louis et al. notes that when searching for “exemplars of effectiveness,” a researcher would utilize a “qualitative case study” (2010, p. 7).

Marzano et al. (2005) declare “leadership is considered to be vital to the successful functioning of many aspects of a school...it is no wonder that an effective principal is thought to be a necessary precondition for an effective school” (p. 5). Baxter and Jack (2008) add that “a case study is...a form of qualitative research, [that] can inform professional practice or evidence-informed decision making in both clinical and policy realms” (p. 544). Determining instructional leadership behaviors that make a difference in a school improvement process is a complex task. The use of a case study design allowed for the collection of rich data which provides better understanding of the complexities of school improvement process.

In qualitative research, there are two schools of thought in case study methods. One school of thought is post-positivist, determining what is correct, affirmative, real, or true (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2011). The other is the social constructivist paradigm, which allows for variations in realities or viewpoints (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995). Crotty (1998) clarifies that constructivism is distinguishable in qualitative inquiry when:

Focusing exclusively on the meaning-making activity of the individual mind.

Constructivism taken in this sense points out the unique experience of each of us. It suggests that each one’s way of making sense of the world is as valid and worthy of respect as any other, thereby tending to scotch any hint of a critical spirit. (p. 58)

Campbell and Russo (1999) counter that a single method of study is imperfect and cannot be certain or absolute. To be valid, Campbell and Russo argue a researcher incorporate multiple methods that are reproducible. Patton (2002) advises to have self-auditing documentation to

eliminate bias and preconceptions in inquiry based research. As one of five principal conventions of constructivism, Guba and Lincoln (1989) acknowledge that “data derived from constructivist inquiry have neither special status nor legitimation; they represent simply another construction to be taken into account in the move toward consensus” (p. 45). Based on Lincoln and Guba’s (2000) theories about qualitative case study, the researcher fully expects the data will not legitimize any definite instructional leadership behaviors, but rather move the body of study toward consensus of best practices in the school improvement process.

The researcher assumed a constructivist perspective in this qualitative inquiry. Utilizing Patton’s (2002) description of the theoretical tradition of constructivism, in this case study the researcher attempted to:

- understand the experiences and perceptions of colleagues through the transformation into a high performing school,
- describe the processes taken on the part of the school for current status,
- illuminate the process of change from the perceptions and accounts of the individuals being interviewed,
- decode individual cases, and offer recommendations for future practices and further research.

In this case study process, interviews of the educators resulted in truthful, unbiased, and enlightening perceptions of the participants of this study. Through analysis of the data, rich accounts of the school improvement process were explored. From those accounts, promising patterns and themes emerged for instructional leaders to consider implementing in future transformations.



## *Research Method*

### *Inquiry and the Case Study*

Case study has a rich history dating back to the early 1900s (Bryman, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Creswell (2013) describes case study as one of the five possible qualitative approaches to effective research and inquiry. Stake (1995) believes the purpose of case study is to contribute to future research on a larger scale. Stake equates case study to field work or small scale inquiry that could benefit the big picture or in conjunction with other studies. Flyvbjerg (2006) insists that a researcher wanting depth in a research project should rely on the case study. From Flyvbjerg's research, it is noted that in order to comprehend an intricate issue, "in-depth case study research was necessary" (p. 219). Case study research allows detailed and rich accounts of the reality experienced by those being interviewed. Patton (2002) acknowledges rich accounts that include thick description gives case study a firm "foundation for qualitative analysis and reporting" (p. 437). This case study included a "collection of behavior patterns and beliefs that constitutes" educator perceptions of what is good instructional leadership and what leadership can be (Patton, 2002, p. 81).

Hyett et al. (2014) emphasize case study has been described as only a means to arrive at a method of study. However, many researchers are increasingly utilizing case study which is contributing to its popularity as a significant method of research (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2010; Yin, 2009 & 2011). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) define case study as a comprehensive research strategy. Creswell (2013) comments that case study has been utilized in psychology, medical studies, law, and political science studies. Creswell goes on to explain that "case study research has a long, distinguished history across many disciplines" (Creswell, 2013, p. 97).

Interviews were utilized for data collection in this study. Interviews were conducted with faculty and administration. Only interviewees who were employed at the study school since 2010 were eligible for participation. For the purpose of this case study, the researcher obtained interviews from 11 faculty members and an administrator.

### *Researcher Role*

There are many roles of the researcher, including: being the director of the study, reviewing related literature, performing interviews, and analyzing the data collected in the interviews (Vogt et al., 2012). The role of the researcher in the literature review is to help the reader realize connections related to the topic and to help the reader understand the topic (Vogt et al., 2012). It is important to create a clear picture of the research topic by linking related studies; this gives the research focus (Martella, Nelson, Morgan, & Marchand-Martella, 2013). Martella et al. (2013) maintain the importance of conducting a thorough research of the literature. “Including a wide range of primary and grey literature sources can enhance degree of confidence in the findings” (Martella et al., 2013, p. 538). The researcher performed an extensive literature review investigating instructional leadership.

According to Martella et al. (2013) there are basic roles of the researcher, including: “developing the research question(s) they will attempt to answer; using an appropriate methodology to answer the research question[s]; interpreting the results; making conclusions based on the results of the study” (pp. 39-40). A major role of the case study researcher is to give “a case narrative...written to present a holistic portrayal of the case” (Martella et al., p. 325). Hyett et al. (2014) state that, “the case is an object to be studied for an identified reason that is peculiar or particular” (p. 2). The researcher has been employed as an educator for over twenty years; the last six years have been in administration. Since 2010, the research is also familiar

with developing and implementing a successful school improvement transformational plan that includes administrative and educator strategies, behaviors, and practices. Finally, the researcher is very familiar with the language in the field of education and the intricate details of everyday school operations. For the purpose of this case study, the researcher developed the following overarching questions that guided the research:

For Educators –

What are the perceptions of teachers regarding the instructional leader in the school improvement process?

How did the instructional leader facilitate the school improvement process?

For Administration –

What are the perceptions of administration regarding the implementation of the school improvement process?

How did the instructional leader facilitate the school improvement process?

The overarching research questions were a fundamental foundation in developing the interview questions posed to the case study participants. The research questions are directly correlated with the interview questions for the study participants.

The researcher secured permission from the administrative office to perform the study based on the school improvement process in the district. Permission was granted by the principal of the study site to perform interviews with participants. Full disclosure of the study and the primary investigator was given at the time of request for participation and again at the interviews.

“The credibility of qualitative methods, therefore, hinges to a great extent on the skill, competence, and rigor of the person doing fieldwork” (Patton, 2002, p.14). The primary

investigator and the additional interviewer worked together prior to the interviews to discuss the interview protocol, interview questions, and questioning techniques. It was determined that interviewees would be given the freedom to answer the interview questions openly and freely, with the option to ask clarifying questions as needed. Patton believes “the much smaller sample of open-ended interviews adds depth, detail, and meaning at a very personal level of experience” yielding a “deeper understanding...as the depth of participants’ feelings is revealed” (2002, p. 17).

### *Ethical Concerns*

Vogt et al. (2012) determined that researchers performing case studies incorporating face to face interviews experience a more difficult level of issues. This is due to dealing with human subjects, ethical concerns, communication with interviewees, and built in biases. For ethical concerns, the researcher did not conduct interviews with the educator participants with whom there is a working relationship (Sieber & Tolich, 2013). The researcher trained another educator in the interview process and protocols to assure that the additional interviewer knows how to ask clarifying questions if needed. Currently, the researcher is not in a superordinate position with any of the school level interviewees as indicated in the districts organizational chart. However, in order to eliminate the possibility of biasing interviewee responses based on the position of the researcher, a third party conducted those interviews (Sieber & Tolich, 2013). The researcher interviewed an administrator and only those school level participants with whom there was no perceived superordinate level relationship. The researcher employed a transcriptionist to assure accuracy in the verbal data. All reasonable efforts were taken to protect the anonymity of the interviewees.

This case study was approved through the East Tennessee State University (ESTU) Internal Review Board (IRB) process. In compliance with the ETSU IRB requirements, the researcher developed Interview Protocol (Appendix A) and Interview Questions (Appendices B and C). As noted in the approval letter (Appendix D), an Informed Consent for this study was developed, accepted by the ETSU IRB, and shared with the participants at the beginning of the interview process. Participants were notified at the beginning of the interview the decision by the ETSU IRB to waive the requirement for written documentation of informed consent for this study. Participants were notified of the right to refuse to participant, the opportunity to stop the interview after beginning, and to withdraw from the study at any time.

### *Sample*

The sample used in this case study was selected the faculty and administration from a small high school in a rural area of Middle Tennessee. The sample included 11 educators and an administrator who were employed at the school since 2010.

### *Sampling Strategy*

The case study sampling strategy specifically selected participants based on the recent completion of the school improvement process. From the faculty and administrative population, the researcher selected members who experienced the process of school improvement. All eligible participants were invited to participate. Vogt et al. (2012) refer to this selection process as a purposive sample. In the purposive sample, Vogt et al. propose the researcher select a smaller sample from which the population will be determined. Maximum variation sampling allowed for the inclusion of all eligible participants instead of a select few, increasing the study credibility (Patton, 2002). In consideration to the number of study participants, Patton (2002) clarifies by stating, “The validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative

inquiry have more to do with the information richness of the cases selected and the... analytical capabilities of the researcher than with sample size” (p. 245).

#### *Data Collection Method, Instruments, and Limitations*

Upon receiving approval to begin the study from the ETSU IRB on August 4, 2015, an email was sent to all eligible participants at the study school. The prospective participants then contacted interviewers to set up times for one on one interviews. A four-week time frame was allocated to schedule and conduct interviews. Interviews were administered on an individual basis with each interview lasting approximately one hour. There were twelve interviews conducted.

Besides the principal investigator, the other interviewer was an educator who was trained to ask probing and clarifying questions, as necessary, in the interview process. The interviewees were given complete disclosure of the principal investigator in the initial request for participation and then again when beginning the interview process. Also being disclosed was the reason for enlisting an alternate interviewer and the plan for transcribing the interviews while maintaining anonymity. The principal investigator performed interviews with those for whom there was no superordinate relationship.

The following criteria were used to select interview participants: (1) interviewees must meet the employment criteria to assure participation in the school improvement implementation process; and (2) participants must have been employed at the school during the time that the school improvement process was being implemented. Interviews were conducted one at a time. Interviewees were assigned a number to replace names in transcriptions and presentation of data to assure anonymity. Participation in the interview process was voluntary. The guiding research

questions were the benchmark for the researcher in the development of faculty and administrator interview questions (Appendices B and C).

### *Interviews*

At the beginning of the interviews, the interviewers presented the Informed Consent Document to each participant and reviewed the contents of the document. Participants were notified that the ETSU IRB to waive the requirement for written documentation of informed consent for this study.

The interviewers explained that the interviews would be recorded with no identifiers to protect anonymity. A transcriptionist would be used for the transcribing process; the recordings would be erased after being transcribed. Each recorded interview was given a numerical identifier at the beginning of the interview and the participant was never referred to by name or any other personally identifiable information.

Each of the interview participants were given the opportunity to opt out of the study or continue with the interview. No one opted out of the study. Each participant was given a copy of the interview questions for use during the interview. Each of the interview questions were read aloud and the person being interviewed was given a chance to answer each question using open-ended dialog. This provided for a rich discussion of the participants' opinions and perceptions regarding the question and for a multitude of recommendations of what the instructional leader role and abilities are or should be in the school improvement process.

The interview process allowed the primary investigator to collect detailed data on educator perceptions of instructional leadership in the school improvement process. As articulated by Vogt et al. (2012), "case studies utilize multiple methods to gather data from a variety of sources: interviews, observations, archives, questionnaires, and often various forms of

quantitative data such as...performance data” (p. 110). The face to face interviews allowed the interviewees to elaborate on perceptions related to the why and how of the administrators’ actions in the school improvement process. Martella et al. (2013) established a necessary component of the case study process is to analyze all of the data and make possible recommendations for future research while reporting a complete account of the case. As revealed by Patton (2002), “detailed case studies can be even more important when evaluating outcome attainment...getting into case details better illuminates what worked and didn’t work along the journey to outcomes” (p. 152).

An educator interviewer and the primary investigator facilitated one on one interviews with the participants, recording all of the information provided in the open-ended questions.

Utilizing a tradition of qualitative inquiry, case study:

involves asking open-ended questions of people and observing matters of interest in real-world settings in order to solve problems, improve programs, or develop policies...in real-world practice, methods can be separated from the epistemology out of which they have emerged. (Patton, 2002, p. 136)

Each of the interviews were recorded for the data verification. Once finished, the recordings were given to the transcriptionist to transcribe.

### *Data Analysis*

#### *Confirmability*

Recognizing that evaluative criteria in determining trustworthiness is very different between research methods, Zhang and Widemuth (2009) offered validity, credibility, transferability, and confirmability as a possible metric. Three components that could cause issues with the confirmability of the case study research include validity, credibility, and



transferability. Those three components are addressed in this section. Suggestions for establishing trustworthiness based on validity, credibility, and transferability are taken from experts including Creswell (2013), Martella et al. (2013), and Patton (2002). Trustworthiness is “the conceptual equivalent to validity applied to research on qualitative data” (Vogt et al., 2012, p. 355). Self-checks, scholarly peer reviews of data, expert input through written and oral discussions, use of an additional educator as an interviewer, and the utilization of a transcriptionist were research strategies implemented in the present study to maintain validity, credibility, and transferability.

### *Triangulation*

Qualitative data gathered in this case study, was coded to find patterns and themes in the instructional leadership. Each interview case was analyzed and compiled in table form, then compared to the other interviews, which led the researcher to follow the methodology developed by Patton (2002). Patton expanded by stating to “include triangulation of data sources and analytical perspectives to increase the accuracy and credibility of findings” (p. 93).

Triangulation of multiple sources, which in this case were literary works, multiple interviews, and scholarly discussion of the data, validates the themes that emerged from this case study (Martella et al., 2013).

### *Transferability*

Although case study is not generalizable, triangulation of literature and cross-case interview comparisons made within this study allow other schools viable transferability (Vogt et al., 2012). Perspectives, schools of thought, sources of data, purposive sampling, rich and detailed descriptions, and even multiple interviewers increases the validity of data, therefore the credibility of case study (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002). From the literature review, the

researcher analyzed prior qualitative and quantitative research, journal articles, literary works from experts in the field, and twelve case study interviews in triangulating the data (Martella et al., 2013; Patton, 2002). Through a broad literature research, the researcher was able to find reoccurring behaviors that were common in the body of research surrounding instructional leadership. Those reoccurring behaviors found in the literature were also common recommendations from the TDOE for schools receiving SIGs and served, in essence, as an axial coding schemata for analysis.

#### *Data Management and Coding Strategies*

A thorough evaluative process of the literary data and the overarching research questions resulted in an outline of eight open-ended interview questions. Included in Patton's (2002) work, the open-ended responses permit one to understand the world as seen by the respondents. The purpose of gathering responses to open-ended questions is to enable the researcher to understand and capture the points of view of other people" (p. 21). Interviews were completed, and the data gathered from interviews offered a plethora of reoccurring instructional leadership behavioral keywords. The keywords suggested possible patterns or themes. Following the model of Hsieh and Shannon (2005), summative content analysis tables for reoccurring behavioral keywords were developed and coded for each interview question. A triangulation study of the reoccurring behavioral keywords associated in the review of literature and in educator and administrative interviews was performed (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). The results of each summative content analysis are detailed in Tables 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. As a result of the analysis of the data, best instructional leadership themes emerged.

The qualitative analyst's effort at uncovering patterns, themes, and categories includes using both creative and critical faculties in making carefully considered judgments about what is really significant and meaningful in the data. Since qualitative analysts do not have statistical tests to tell them when an observation or pattern is significant, they must rely first on their own intelligence, experience, and judgment; second, they should take seriously the responses of those who were studied or participated in the inquiry; and third, the researcher or evaluator should consider the responses and reactions of those who read and review the results. (Patton, 2002, p. 467)

Finding patterns and themes is the job of the qualitative analyst, as suggested by Patton (2002). The key themes indicative of progress based on instructional leadership is reflected in Table 10.

This researcher focused on the responses of the participants, included the rich details and experience descriptions. The researcher utilized teacher perceptions and opinions to extrapolate the key information for recommendations. Responses from scholarly peer reviews and experts in the field were instrumental in the development of this case study.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

#### *Introduction*

The purpose of this case study was to examine educator perceptions of instructional leadership in the school improvement process. Confirming the emerging themes from the educator interviews, an administrative interview provided triangulation of the educator perceptions of instructional leadership. Interviewees were asked eight open-ended questions. Responses from the participants offered rich accounts of preferred behaviors from instructional leadership. Four overarching research questions brought focus to the research.

#### *Participant Profiles*

Twenty-four educators from the study site that had just recently completed a federal SIG were invited to participate in the case study. Of the 24 educators who were eligible, 17 were females and seven were males. Initially, 13 educators volunteered to participate in the study. One respondent was not able to follow through with the study due to other responsibilities, prior commitments, and time constraints.

Five of the 12 participants were at the school prior to the implementation of the school improvement grant. Seven of the participants arrived at the school the year the SIG began. Eleven of the 12 participants who agreed to participate were females; one was male. The participants represent several different content areas, including: Mathematics, English and Language Arts, Career and Technical Education, Social Studies, and Special Education.

The participants had varying amounts of experience in the education field ranging from three years to 30 years (Table 1). Of the 24 educators invited to participate, 12 educators volunteered to participate and followed through with the interview process. While the researcher

hoped there would be an evenly dispersed demographic sampling of participants, the researcher knew there would be no guarantee due to participation being strictly voluntary.

Table 1

*Case Study Participant Years of Experience*

0 – 2 Years of Experience	3 – 11 Years of Experience	12 – 17 Years of Experience	18 – 24 Years of Experience	25 – 30 Years of Experience
0	4	1	5	2

Half of the participants hold a Bachelor level degree, while the other half hold a Master level degree or higher.

*Interview Findings and Analysis of Data*

After receiving the transcribed interviews, the researcher analyzed the data, marking all reoccurring instructional leadership behaviors mentioned by the participants. Utilizing the model of Hsieh and Shannon (2005), the researcher included the five most repetitive behaviors in summative content analysis tables. The tables include the questions and the frequency of behavior keywords by participant. The researcher extrapolated the five most common responses to each of the interview questions. The researcher was able to construct a matrix of the data for confirmation. Researchers suggest that audits of the data through scholarly peer data review is a technique for confirming the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Zhang & Widemuth, 2009).

The researcher enlisted three colleagues to participate on a scholarly peer data review panel. One of the colleagues was the principal at the study site during the SIG process, one served as the SIG coordinator during the process, while two others served on the SIG leadership team during the process. The four-person panel read the transcribed responses to the questions. The researcher explained the process in which the top five instructional leadership behaviors were extrapolated using the confirmability matrices. Discussion occurred regarding issues that

may have had an effect on participant responses, confirming the data representation of the matrices. As a result of the collegial discussion of the interview responses, some possible issues with participant responses, included:

- participant disassociation with the school improvement process when recalling behaviors that were liked or disliked (ex. “teachers should be able to have a say in the development of the vision, mission, SIP”),
- anger, frustration, or discontent with the current situation compared to the time frame of the SIG,
- negative retrospective responses (ex. “we really do not do a SIP as a faculty now”),
- time creates false or tainted perceptions from distorted recollections of the process or participants,
- inferences that implied meaning (ex. “protected my quitting time”), and
- responses based on experiences prior to the school improvement process or based on experiences from other schools.

All interviews were included in the data analysis process. A sampling of responses was included in each of the question reviews. Not every interview response was included due to redundancy. The confirmability matrices include all of the interviewees and express the most common behaviors of the instructional leader as mentioned in the interviews.

### *Research Question Responses*

#### *Research Question #1*

Table 2

*Summative Content Analysis for Question One*

Teacher Interview Question: How do you perceive the instructional leader role in the development of professional learning communities with a focus on collegial collaboration?					
Key Prevailing Behaviors	Collaboration or common planning time	Professional development during the day	Professional development with pay	Having a plan, focus, and goals	Providing coaching or facilitating
Participant #1	✓			✓	✓
Participant #2	✓				✓
Participant #3	✓			✓	✓
Participant #4	✓	✓		✓	✓
Participant #5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant #6	✓			✓	✓
Participant #7	✓	✓		✓	✓
Participant #8	✓	✓		✓	✓
Participant #9	✓			✓	✓
Participant #10	✓	✓		✓	✓
Participant #11	✓	✓		✓	✓

In question one, participants were asked to give perceptions on the instructional leader role in developing a PLC with a focus on collegial collaboration. In an administrative interview, the participant elaborated on the importance of having a plan, stating:

One of the things that we looked at as a new leadership team, was the fact that the school had no direction or no specific professional learning communities established. Not that professional learning communities are the “be all, end all,” but as most everyone knows, if you have a plan, purpose, and goals you will more appropriately follow the best path.

One of the most commonly perceived behaviors in establishing a successful PLC was that the instructional leader facilitates or coaches the educators throughout the school improvement process. In an administrative interview the instructional leader agreed, adding:

The work of the main professional learning community provided support by providing focus and direction for all of the ancillary professional learning communities. It was not a top down process. It was a process of the leadership team using the data and information that were being provided by the students, parents, data reports from the state, teacher surveys, and then ultimately working with the focus teams to make changes.

During the interviews, all of the participants indicated the importance of the leader being a facilitator or coach. The educators felt strongly about the instructional leader having a plan and focused goals that would lead them to success. All but one of the participants acknowledged the practice of having a plan or focused goals was important. Eaker and Keating (2012) described the PLC as something that facilitates growth and success as a cooperative process, not on an individual basis. Participant one noted:

I actually feel like administrator number two was probably the most successful...in creating more opportunities for collaboration...I saw the greatest value come from administrator number two and I think that it was because she defined the activity much more, and in a much more detailed manner. So, we had a much better understanding of what our outcomes were and what we were trying to accomplish.

During the interviews, participant six defined the instructional leader as a person who:

was a quick change agent, who had a plan, and who was supposed to be bringing things in to make the quickest, most successful change. That quick change agent brought in many initiatives to turn the school around. The leader's role in developing a professional learning community with a focus on collegial collaboration is more than developing a school improvement plan. Leaders must help establish the goals with their overall vision and mission in mind.



The process of instructional leader walkthroughs and peer observations is a prime opportunity to build collegial collaboration. In an administrative interview, the instructional leader commented:

the one thing we determined needed to occur was to have common planning time for our specific content area educators. We had so much other professional development going on in the afternoons, after regular work hours in which the educators were paid to collaborate and learn throughout the week, but we knew we would have to accommodate for the specific content areas during the teachers' planning time. We did take into consideration that having these meetings would take away from their planning time, but all survey data indicated that the educators were good with working collaboratively once or twice per week to plan together.

Through open dialogue and discussions between instructional leaders and teachers about strategies identified as best practices, colleagues are able to build a learning community built around student success and better instruction (Kachur, Stout, & Edwards, 2013). Seeing the instructional leader in classrooms and actively participating in discussions is important according to participant seven, who added:

The instructional leader's role in developing a professional learning community with a focus on collegial collaboration, is one in which the leader pulls everyone together to work toward a common goal. Once the goals are developed, teams can be formed to determine the next steps in accomplishing those goals. The team should see their leader in the meetings and see the leader actively participating and guiding the discussions and protecting the rights of all educators to participate.

In all twelve interviews, collaboration or common planning time was mentioned in the responses. Participant five defined the PLC as being like an umbrella. That participant continued about the meetings with colleagues in the same department as:

another professional learning community; each subject area in the county met together...During the last portion of our school subject area focus meetings, we would spend time discussing where we were headed with the subject area we were teaching, coming up with common assessments and those kinds of things...I much preferred the subject specific and I loved, loved, loved getting together with the other teachers from the county who taught the specific subject that I taught.

Having common planning time is one of the ways to build collegial collaboration time without having to force the faculty to stay after hours. “We planned well together,” declared participant nine. “Our common planning time was, for me, very valuable.”

*Research Question #2*

Table 3

*Summative Content Analysis for Question Two*

Teacher Interview Question: How do you perceive the instructional leader role in the development of professional learning communities with a focus on helping faculty understand and implement changes for school reform?					
Key Prevailing Behaviors	Being open and maintaining transparency	Helping teachers understand the change	Provide data bringing about the change	Reform with teacher input	Leadership that is actively engaged
Participant #1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant #2		✓	✓		✓

Table 3 (continued)

Participant #3		✓			
Participant #4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant #5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant #6		✓	✓		✓
Participant #7	✓	✓	✓		✓
Participant #8	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant #9		✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant #10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant #11		✓	✓	✓	✓

In question two, participants were asked perceptions in developing a PLC while maintaining a focus on helping them understand and implement changes. An administrative participant expressed how providing guidance to help faculty members understand and implement changes necessary for school reform was attempted.

The most prevalent behaviors on the part of the instructional leader from question two focused on finding ways to help the educators understand the necessity for change, provide proof that the reform was needed, and be consistently engaged in the PLC. A member of the leadership team felt that explaining everything to the faculty helped maintain a glass house, of sorts, in what was trying to be accomplished, so that everyone was privy to what was going on in leadership, and that by consistently explaining the process that the faculty understood a little better. In an administrative interview, the participant elucidated:

As a leadership team, we felt very strongly about maintaining transparency in all our decisions, fully explaining to the faculty why we were implementing a specific initiative, activity, or event to help them fully understand why we were making a particular change, and fielding any questions or concerns with the teachers as a group or on an individual basis as needed.

Participant ten reiterated, “When we were under the grant, our instructional leader explained why we were doing what we were doing, we knew our data, and we knew what the plan was and were able to offer suggestions.” An administrative participant confirmed data was an integral component in being an effective leader, adding:

We worked as a faculty, with help from outside educators and consultants, to determine what instructional strategies and best practices worked and what didn’t. We relied heavily on all of the data we could get our hands on and recommendations from our consultants concerning the most recent research in education, to make each decision concerning our students and school.

Participant eight agreed:

I am a firm believer in putting everything out there, including the bad stuff, to keep people invested in what is going on; our instructional leader did explain everything to us. I think that if teachers were involved in the leadership portion then they would be aware of where they were and how far they needed to go. It is always good to know your goal.

The instructional leader is on call 24/7 in a school that is in a state of continuous improvement. Everyone from the parents and students to the educators following that leader on a daily basis are watching the leader for prompts on what to believe, do, and say. Everything the instructional leader does is being critiqued and processed for later use on the part of the observer, be it the student, parent, or teacher (Combs, Harris, & Edmonson, 2015). The instructional leader is demonstrating expectations. For teacher understanding, a model of excellence is key in everything the leader attempts to do in continuous improvement. The instructional leader is teaching with every action, reaction, and decision. In the interviews, all of the participants

mentioned the importance of helping them understand the change needed in school reform.

Participant six affirmed:

When you have strong enough leaders, from the principal down to the leadership team, working on goals, doing what you need to do, that model of planning, learning, and doing encourages the faculty to fall in line with what is going on and understand why reform is necessary.

When it comes to understanding the entire scope of school reform, participant four asserted,

I think that there has to be a focus on why changes are being made in a school and helping teachers really understand the reason for reform and the data being used to drive the change. I think that we have to know as a school, our leaders should help us identify our weaknesses and a plan to better ourselves in those areas, especially based on the data. I think that we have to understand that our weaknesses are what we need to work on as a group and as individuals. I feel like the leadership should give the big picture of what we should deliberately focus on and give us time to meet to find resolutions to address the issues and use ideas offered by the teachers in driving change.

As noted by participant four, it is a must, "...that a leader be an active part of the change and is able to see the big picture...be able to help their teachers with strategies and tools in making a change in their school." Eaker and Keating (2012) concur the importance of adult learning throughout the district and the correlation it has to the success of the student learning across the district. Eaker and Keating credit the importance of the instructional leader modeling what is expected to be seen in the classroom. An administrative participant reinforced Eaker and Keating's notion, offering:

We found that the more the members of the leadership team were in the classrooms working with and guiding teachers and the more we were visible and actively engaged in professional development, the more the teachers and students bought into what we were doing.

During the interviews, all but one felt the need for the leader to be actively engaged in the school improvement process. Participant five echoed:

I think the instructional leader is going to have to be present during the professional learning communities and be very visible in the classrooms to make an impact on some teachers...if they see the dedication to what is going on from the administration, they will feel more inclined to make a change.

Furthermore, "It is vital to be engaged in what you expect your teachers to be engaged in, because they need to see that you are vested in your own expectations," declared participant seven. Participant nine affirmed that, "...when your administrator is there with you working right alongside you, learning and teaching, it makes me want to work harder."

"It is crucial for the leader to be involved every step of the way and know the school's data," in order to lead school reform and followers, claimed participant six. Participant seven agreed, "As the instructional leader, it is still very important to have the data to give credibility to your plan and to help others realize the necessity for change." The instructional leader, "had the data to back up what she was saying and telling us we needed to do," emphasized participant nine. It is not enough however just to know the data, "...but most importantly is knowing how to use the data and helping the teachers use the data in their classrooms is central to school success," reiterated participant 11.

Research Question #3

Table 4

Summative Content Analysis for Question Three

Teacher Interview Question: How do you perceive the instructional leader role in the development of the school improvement plan with a focus on collegial participation in the process?					
Key Prevailing Behaviors	Faculty participates in the SIP process	Leader facilitates SIP process	Faculty knows expectations of the SIP	Data driven SIP goals and action steps	Faculty accountable for SIP goals
Participant #1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant #2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant #3	✓		✓	✓	✓
Participant #4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant #5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant #6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant #7	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant #8	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant #9	✓		✓	✓	✓
Participant #10	✓		✓	✓	✓
Participant #11	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Prior to the school improvement grant the process of developing the SIP was very different. Teachers were asked about perceptions on the instructional leader role in developing the SIP and teacher participation in the plan. An administrative participant described the process of providing opportunities and encouraging all faculty members to participate in creating the objectives and a strategic SIP, commenting, “we knew that we had to make the process of setting up the school improvement plan a strategic process. A process of determining what the best route to make the greatest strides in the least amount of time.”

There were four very strong perceptions of behaviors that the instructional leader should focus on when developing a SIP, all faculty should participate in the process and have input, all

faculty should know the expectations of the plan, data should be used in the plans development, and all faculty members should be held accountable for the plan goals. Mooney and Mausbach (2008) debat the real reason for the SIP. SIPs should be simple, involve all who will be using the plan, and be focused on the students. Participant five responded:

I think that the best way to develop a school improvement plan, with collegial participation is to go about the business of creating the school improvement plan with everyone involved. There may have to be small groups working all around, but everyone should have a say in what goes in the plan. Everyone should be a part of the process. The instructional leader should be the one facilitating the process and coaching the process along.

Participant six reinforced the perception of participant five, stating:

The entire faculty should be aware of the development process, with progress being shared out at certain points throughout the development of the school improvement plan. The entire faculty should have a chance to give input on the goals and the action steps.

Relevant goals, strong classroom strategies, and map like or to do like action steps are the three vital components for a SIP, according to Mooney and Mausbach.

Participant one felt very strongly about the instructional leader not only providing guidance throughout the entire development of the SIP, but when necessary enlisting the help of the Southern Regional Education Board's *High Schools That Work* consultants to help coach the entire faculty through the process. An administrative participant expounded on the experience:

We decided, as a leadership team, that we would work through the development of the school improvement plan strategically and present all the pieces, as we progressed, to the faculty for consensus. This process afforded all involved a couple of things. First, we



weren't adding to the already heavy load the faculty had been handed in upping their game in the classroom by implementing the new strategies and practices we were learning through professional development. Secondly, by introducing the pieces of the strategic school improvement plan in portions, as it was being created, the faculty understood what was being put in the plan, why it was being put in the plan, and gave immediate feedback for the leadership team to use in going forward to create the next portion of the plan. They had input through having a voice throughout the process. As the objectives were being developed, their ideas, concerns, and needs were being addressed, and the faculty appreciated the fact that the leadership team was respecting their valuable time by doing the footwork of utilizing their feedback and taking the requirements by the state and developing the strategic school improvement plan.

According to an administrative participant, the entire SIP process was mapped out strategically so that all involved knew what was being included, what the goals were, why the goals were set at certain percentages, and the opportunity to have a discussion on the action steps to meet the goals.

Data is a crucial part of having the proof that what you are doing or what needs to be done is justified. Participant three stressed the importance of involving the entire faculty in the SIP development process, commenting:

we all had a part in the school improvement plan... We had someone who monitored that during the grant... Everybody had a part in it. I think that there was a little more buy in there. We used it more; we had to have data to back it up.

Participant seven used a specific example in the process used to arrive at the goal percentages, stating:

We debated for a long time about the percentage in which to set our goals. We ended up being realistic instead of going gung ho and risking not making 100% proficient or advanced. That was probably one our best practice initiatives throughout the grant process.

Mooney and Mausbach (2008) explain that the SIP may be equated to a blueprint. The SIP is a map for moving forward, toward a successful end product. Clarifying the SIP process, an administrative participant explicated:

Throughout the development of the school improvement plan process, every teacher was involved in the debates that occurred about what would go in the plan and what was the best option for the school as a whole. We were very strategic in determining percentages that we used. We were very strategic in the action steps we said we would use in order to improve.

The SIP requires applicable data to make it workable and the blueprint requires applicable measurements to make it workable. Without the valid data, the SIP will not work. Participant five added:

The faculty should decide the goals based on their data and determine action steps that will aid them in being successful in achieving the goals. The school improvement plan isn't a plan that should be developed by two or three people, typed up nicely, and put on a shelf until the next time it needs to be updated. Goals must be lofty in order for all to give 100%.

Participant two summarized, "We knew that change was needed. Change occurred and things began to work. Results were accomplished with the things that we did." Participant nine

replied, "...it is a plan for us to grow and get better. I, as well as everybody, had input in deciding goals and action steps."

*Research Question #4*

Table 5

*Summative Content Analysis for Question Four*

Teacher Interview Question: How do you perceive the instructional leader role in the development of the school improvement plan with a focus on collegial responsibility for the established goals and action steps to meet the goals?					
Key Prevailing Behaviors	Being a part of developing the SIP	Knowing the expectations of the SIP	Consensus on agreed upon action steps	Teachers being accountable for the SIP	Proof that the SIP is working
Participant #1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant #2	✓	✓		✓	✓
Participant #3	✓	✓		✓	
Participant #4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant #5	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Participant #6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant #7	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant #8	✓	✓		✓	
Participant #9	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Participant #10	✓	✓			✓
Participant #11	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

In question four, teacher perceptions on the instructional leader role in holding the faculty responsible for the established goals in the SIP were requested. An administrative participant responded with the process used to empower faculty members to take responsibility for the established goals and action steps to meet the goals in the SIP.

As a school, we were all a part of determining what would be put in the strategic school improvement plan and for its complete development. We all knew what was expected of

us through the plan, because we developed it as a school, and agreed to work toward accomplishing what we said we would accomplish.

The majority of the educators held the perception that teachers being a part of the SIP process, knowing the expectations of the plan, and being held responsible for meeting the goals should be the main focus for instructional leaders in developing a SIP with collegial responsibility for the established goals and action steps to meet the goals. Participant one elaborated on collegial responsibility in achieving goals, “Administrator number two did provide definite plans, definite steps that were to be followed in terms of the actions and goals required to meet that school improvement plan.” Mooney and Mausbach (2008) recognize instructional leader established SIPs as ineffective, while those plans created with faculty input as the most effective and successful. Participant seven reinforced these notions of methodically maintaining progress toward achieving the school improvement goals, stating:

The responsibility for successfully meeting the school improvement plan goals through the listed action steps lies in all responsible parties striving to meet the goals they have set in the plan. The instructional leader’s role is to make expectations known and coach the faculty in moving toward meeting the goals through regular meetings and benchmarking progress.

Participant four expanded on the necessity for faculty input in setting goals:

I feel the instructional leader should guide the faculty in determining the goals for the school and not just pick and choose for the school or have a couple of educators determine that for the school. I don’t feel that the teachers will buy in to the school improvement plan if they all didn’t have the opportunity to contribute to the process.

Additionally, participant nine articulated:

The instructional leader has to model the expected performance...or demonstrate what they are expecting to see in their followers for the followers to understand their responsibilities. Modeling the way to go about establishing and meeting goals would be the best way to ensure that all faculty members meet the expectations.

“Accountability was always on the part of administrator two for what teachers and staff had done and were expected to do,” offered participant one. Participant four continued, “Each faculty member should have a copy of the school improvement plan and know the expectations of the plan.” Participant two concurred:

We had...specific responsibilities or group of responsibilities to work on for meeting the goals established in the school improvement plan. I can’t say that everybody knew how it all came together, but those things did come together. It was really communicated pretty well what each group’s role was and evidently it worked.

Monitoring the SIP as a means of holding faculty members accountable for the plan is like good parenting, ascertained to Mooney and Mausbach (2008). An administrative participant confirmed that:

Accountability came through those on the leadership team performing walk-throughs, helping by coaching in the classrooms, administrators doing teacher observations and evaluations, everyone being expected to do share outs during any of our professional learning sessions, like professional development, faculty meetings, focus team meetings, data team meetings, or teacher clubs, and considering the strategic school improvement plan as a living, working document.

Mooney and Mausbach warn that instructional leaders must monitor voraciously to be able to realize any amount of success. Participant four enlightened that goals are met through faculty accountability:

The leader should monitor the school improvement plan to make sure each person is pulling their weight to reach the goals agreed upon, and that is easily done through evaluations. The leader is the only one who can enforce that.

Participant five advised:

The instructional leader will have to be very visible in the classrooms to make sure the teachers are doing what they have said they will do in order to meet the established goals...The instructional leader has to hold all accountable for following through with the action steps, else all the other educators will lose faith and the plan will fall apart.

Participant 11 summarized by stating:

For the instructional leader, success is the way they approach and present the school improvement plan, allow it to be monitored with help from other leaders in the building, and how they model celebrating small gains and moving forward. That really determines how quickly they get to major success.

Initiatives that are not monitored may never bring about success. An instructional leader is granting permission for the faculty to bypass the action steps if the leader never monitors for follow through in what the teachers say will happen.

Research Question #5

Table 6

Summative Content Analysis for Question Five

Teacher Interview Question: How do you perceive the instructional leader role in the utilizing and aiding the faculty in utilizing the assessment data in making all decisions concerning the school?					
Key Prevailing Behaviors	Variety of data from various sources	Using the graduation cohort data	Modeling data usage for the faculty	Using data for remediation	Using data as a collaborative tool
Participant #1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant #2	✓		✓	✓	✓
Participant #3	✓		✓	✓	✓
Participant #4	✓		✓		✓
Participant #5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant #6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant #7	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant #8	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Participant #9	✓		✓	✓	✓
Participant #10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant #11	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Teachers were asked for perceptions on the instructional leader role in utilizing data and aiding them in utilizing assessment data in making all decisions concerning the school. For this focus, an administrative participant spoke about the process of gathering and using data to make every decision concerning the school in the school improvement process.

When we began our journey with...many different sources of data. Mostly the TDOE suite of reports, TCAP and EOC, on the content area results, graduation rate, and attendance, but also other sources as well such as ACT reading, math, social studies, science, and composite scores, the PLAN and Explore results, and local stats maintained by the school and district.

Teachers placed great emphasis on using a wide variety of data from various sources, modeling the usage of the data in decision making, especially when the decisions are related to remediation and collaboration. An administrative participant emphasized, “We methodically looked at the academic results and began to drill down on the issues we were facing with English Language Arts and with mathematics.” The teachers are not the only ones placing an emphasis on data, the No Child Left Behind Act considerably changed how instructional leaders look at and use data (Bernhardt, 2015). That Act brought about a level of accountability that has continued to grow into one of, if not the most, important component in the process of continuous school improvement. Participant one stated:

Again, we start with administrator two here, where the data was a very important part of this administrator’s instruction in terms of modeling data, using it to explain why that data was based on TVAAS scores. Teachers were provided data in data team meetings on a weekly basis or every other week as we first began. So, the data did come into play in terms of what we could use in terms of remediation needs, which are now being addressed as response to intervention.

Preble and Gordon (2011) wrote about the difficulty some teachers have with accepting data results. There is such a great emphasis placed on being accountable for students’ performance, that some teachers are not emotionally able to analyze themselves for growth in the classroom without argumentative bias on performance. Participant four echoed the sentiments of the previous participant, stating:

There still needs to be improvements on how we use the data and the leader needs to be able to guide teachers in what is most important. It is the leader’s responsibility to make sure that everyone is on the same page with which data to use for the best results. A good



leader is going to be able to break down the results and analyze next steps and make it relative to you. The leader must know what is relevant to the school, what is relevant for the individual classrooms, and how to make an impact on the success of the school based on the data.

Using the right data is as important as knowing how to analyze the data, claims Kachur et al. (2013). Sometimes we use the wrong data for the wrong reasons in respect to student growth, student achievement, and teaching strategies. There is a major difference in formative data, summative data, and observational data. All are very important to growth and achievement for both student and teacher, but each have a unique impact in determining next steps for school wide improvement. An administrative participant explained the reconstruction of the math department and the data process, “Common formative assessments and formative assessment lessons became an everyday part of the way our math teachers planned, taught, and assessed.” Participant five associated the importance of using the right data for the right reasons:

Numbers of how we have grown from year to year is proof of what we are doing is working. However, it is comparing apples to oranges, it is not the same kids, and it just tells you that what you are doing kept them on track. You must look at a student’s data to determine what needs to change to help that individual student get better. The student must be identified, their data attached to their name, and an individual plan tailored to help that student grow. The data must be real for the teacher to be able to use it. The data must mean something to the teacher for the teacher to be able to utilize it. An instructional leader may be able to use data to make decisions that concern the school, but the instructional leader must be able to help teachers understand data in the classroom to show growth in student learning.

It takes a lot of time, practice, and energy to be a skilled analyst of the data that will move you or your institution to progress (Louis et al., 2010). Reflection, evaluation, and utilization of the data you choose, are three crucial components of being a good data analyst. Instructional leaders must be skilled in data analysis. Participant six affirmed:

In today's educational world the instructional leader must know how to determine what data makes the most difference and how to build plans around the results that the data offers. A leader must be able to use all sorts of data from that acknowledging who needs remediation to keeping the cohort list of graduates clean and updated. Today's instructional leader has to be able to model how to use data in a variety of venues, from the teacher and the individual classroom to collaborating in data teams to solve issues of the school as a whole. Careful planning of next steps in school reform should take place utilizing various data types, in order to determine how to get the biggest bang for your buck.

Using collected data as a collaboration tool for a faculty allowed many different viewpoints on how best to do three fundamental practices for success. Those practices included targeting remedial and enrichment sessions for students, forming next steps in reaching at-risk students for dropout prevention, and providing vital information for determining what strategies are needed to improve everyday instruction in the classroom (Protheroe, 2010). Participant seven talked about data usage and the importance of success through data declared:

I believe that the instructional leader that I was working for during the school improvement grant made every decision based on assessment data. The instructional leader used data to work on the graduation rate, English Language Arts improvements and Math improvements. Basing remediation for the most needy and enrichment for

those who scored at proficient or advanced in state and national assessments. Everyone was responsible for looking at the data, but the instructional leader felt that a data team made up of the Math department was beneficial to begin with. That instructional leader would use data consistently in presentations and meetings with the entire faculty, modeling the techniques used in making decisions concerning the school and the initiatives we were about to implement of in the process of implementing.

Bernhardt (2015) explicates the need to continuously analyze school data in order to tweak classroom practices for prime effectiveness. Some schools seem to be on autopilot, no real change, but rather just maintaining status quo. When it comes to accountability, however, Bernhardt is adamant that if you are just maintaining, you are not in a state of continuous school improvement. During the interview, participant eight asserted:

It is definitely one of those things that the instructional leaders must lead the charge in; but modeling data use is very time consuming and takes a lot of knowledge of what the appropriate data is to use and on how best to use the data.

Williamson and Blackburn (2009) caution of the pitfalls of using a lot of resources in gathering data from vast sources and then not needing most of the data or worse, not utilizing the data properly in guiding your school in the path of success. In the interview, participant nine replied:

I think their role is to help you learn how to interpret data. Many leaders know how to find lots of data, the right data even, and are able to interpret data; but only about 90% of them know how to explain it to their teachers. If the data does not mean anything to them then they are not going to know what to do with it or help others use the data to

collaborate effectively. It is very important that an instructional leader not only breaks down the data, but makes it personal to you and everyone in the school.

Utilizing collected data wisely in establishing remediation and enrichment to boost student performance has the most impact in raising student performance (Wilhelm, 2011). Instructional leaders who are able to model the use of the data for faculty will teach a skill that will impact in the lives of teachers and students. Participant 11 accentuated:

It is important for the instructional leader to model use of the data so that teachers are able to learn from them, the best data to use, and how to use it wisely. Data usage has varied widely in the various schools I have been in, but my past instructional leaders used many different sources for data collection. I do believe that the push for data analysis in decision making in education has really become a necessity since the accountability for students' results has been placed on the local districts and school leaders.

Datnow and Park (2015) stress the necessity of setting the proper groundwork before expecting successful use of any data. Datnow and Park credit common planning time for educators to collaborate collegially over data as the one most shared traits of schools experiencing success with a data driven focus. There are many things that aid the ability of a school in use data effectively, however, Datnow and Park declare that, "Without collaboration and collegiality, data use is impossible" (p. 13).

Participant five summarized the vital role the instructional leader plays in the use of data in making decisions pertaining to the school, but furthermore as being able to facilitate collegial collaboration in utilizing the data affecting classrooms:

It takes a lot of knowhow on an administrator's part to be able to teach educators how to best utilize data. It takes an even savvier leader to build a collegial community where

educators are willing to share out how they teach a particular topic because they have the best scores and for the other educators to be receptive of the information.

*Research Question #6*

Table 7

*Summative Content Analysis for Question Six*

Teacher Interview Question: How do you perceive the instructional leader role in the utilizing and aiding the faculty in utilizing the assessment data in planning school improvement initiatives, events, and professional development?					
Key Prevailing Behaviors	Focus and data teams using data	Common planning with leadership	Data usage in weekly faculty meetings	PD with Internal or external provider	Student / parent involvement initiatives
Participant #1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant #2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant #3	✓				✓
Participant #4	✓		✓	✓	✓
Participant #5	✓	✓		✓	
Participant #6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant #7	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant #8				✓	✓
Participant #9		✓		✓	
Participant #10	✓	✓			
Participant #11	✓	✓	✓	✓	

An important part of being able to lead others instructionally requires the leader to be able to teach. In an administrative interview, the process of helping the faculty to utilize or learn to utilize data in improving classroom instructional practices was described.

As part of the administrative team, we would gather the data and try to find the most important aspects of the data to drive change. We consistently tried to find every possible way of looking at the data and how we could use it so that when it was presented to the faculty we could clear up any misconceptions and faulty thinking.

The teachers were consistent when talking about using data and allowing the data to be the controlling factor in focus and data teams. The teachers realized the fact that there was a need for common planning with internal and external leaders providing and facilitating professional development. In an interview with an administrator, data was reinforced as critical to the teachers' success, "The most powerful tool we gave the teachers, however, was how to use the data to tweak their instructional practices...not all teachers were willing and able to understand and utilize the results of the data to improve their data." In responding to question six, participant five elaborated on the guidance of the instructional leader in all things the teachers were doing at the school and how well the leader coached everyone along. This type of encouraging and coaching is what leads to building the teacher leader capacity in the building. Participant five described the learning process as allowing teachers to "build their voice."

Participant five continued:

In the case of developing professional development at our school, our instructional leader would look at the data, determine who was performing at the optimal level, and have that person share their strategies with all who would listen. This would allow the teacher who was providing the professional development to hone what he or she was doing and begin to build leadership in that teacher. It would also encourage others to try something that was being used successfully in a classroom with their own building. An instructional leader must be able to recognize greatness within their own building as to utilize those resources to make that data work for him or her.

Eaker and Keating (2012) list the responsibilities of collaborative team work, including sharing data, practicing using the data, and learning about data as a team. Common planning

time allows that built in collaborative window, when teachers can practice the art of learning and planning together. Participant 11 noted:

I do rely heavily on my colleagues to help me with the data now, although the instructional leader during the grant knew a lot about various data and how to use it best. We used to talk about data and use data in our faculty meetings, in our focus or data team meetings, and during professional development. I do think that it is best for the instructional leader to be able to explain why certain changes are being made or initiatives implemented due to the data. And I do want to see the data and know that my leader knows how to interpret the data and be able to explain it to the faculty.

It is not enough for the instructional leader to be the only one utilizing data. All the faculty must be able to analyze and utilize the data. In an interview with an administrator, the process of utilizing data was described:

We regularly focused on our progress and weekly data gathering during our faculty meetings. And began an all-out blitz of parent and student events aimed at educating them about what we were trying to accomplish, resources that would aid them, and opportunities that had previously been overlooked by our community.

Mooney and Mausbach (2008) explain that the five components every data user must understand is how and what data to collect, institution of the data, analyzing the data, taking ownership of the data, and actually utilizing the data to cause change. When it comes to data usage, participant ten stated:

When we were under the grant there was a lot more decisions made through the group process, with many helping to determine the best avenue for the school. We all looked at

the data and learned from one another...It works better if all the teachers and the instructional leader is working together and sharing the data.

Zmuda et al. (2004) recognize the necessity of having deep conversations about what data is used for, how it is collected, trusting that it is accurately proving what it is supposed to prove, and trusting as a team that the data will be used to insure improvement. Ultimately, some teacher members of a collaborative team may not like the direction the data leads for decision making. However, through lots of collaboration in the initial data collection phase through the results phase, everyone realizes outcomes that changes will come from data utilization. Using achievement data from various sources is important, as participant nine offered:

Great instructional leaders put those teachers where they are the most effective and where they will do the best with the students. The instructional leader sees what the school needs to reach their school wide goals and uses the data to plan a strategy of arriving at that goal.

Participant two remarked:

It was good in that you saw what was working and you could stay with and continue to keep that part of your improvement plan and how to weed out things that you might have saw as being ineffective and formalize new things to try.

DuFour (2015) determined educators and instructional leaders must ask the right questions about data in order to use the data properly and for improvement. Knowing which students are mastering the content and which ones need more in order to master the data, goes a long way in pushing those few up to the next level of achievement. When it comes to the usage of all kinds of data, from achievement data that influences performance to statistical data on managing the school building, participant seven replied:



It is not enough for the only person using data to be the instructional leader. It is important that the instructional leader be able to recognize, analyze, and interpret the data in order to make decisions concerning the building, and most importantly to show others how to do the same.

Just as participant seven pointed out about data usage, Gray and Streshly (2010) argue the instructional leader should be able to recognize, analyze, and interpret data, but also be able to instruct faculty members how to do the same. Most importantly, however, is that in the most successful schools, the teachers taught the students how to recognize, analyze, and interpret achievement data. Participant one offered:

Administrator two, I felt, did a really good job of utilizing data, also incorporating it into different types of school events that involved parents, so that parents were aware of the data showing progress, lack of progress and where we were heading in the direction of progress with students and their results. There were different types of events, lots of professional development that emphasized and helped teachers better understand this. There were just numerous professional development opportunities for teachers so that we could better understand. There were focus and data team meetings that alternated every week, so that all of this information could come together and be used in a way that it was showing progress and showing where we needed to focus our attention.

Data may be one of the most intimidating components of a school improvement process (Zmuda et al., 2004). When educators are not really sure of themselves as a transfer medium of knowledge, the teachers certainly do not want someone pointing them out when the data reveals flaws and inadequacies in the classroom. Having a coach come in to your classroom or

collaborate with you personally sometimes eases those fears of collecting and analyzing data.

Participant six reinforced the notion about collaboration and replied:

The data has to be meaningful to each individual educator for them to have a connection with the data and realize its best use. Sometimes this requires that consultants go straight into the classroom to work one on one with the teachers. The instructional leader may not have a total grasp of every content area, but must be able to read the data, make sense of the data, and be able to explain it to others when they do not understand it.

Quality work on the part of the instructional leader and teachers begins with collaborative teams building trust in the fact that the learning community of colleagues is a safe place to learn about data (Eaker & Keating, 2012). Just as we make our classrooms a place that all feel comfortable learning, so should our collaborative teams. Participant four acknowledged:

I want to be a part in determining what we do as a school, and through our focus teams, leadership team meetings, and faculty meetings I was able to voice my opinion and learn about the data that was the drive behind what we were doing at the time.

*Research Question #7*

Table 8

*Summative Content Analysis for Question Seven*

Teacher Interview Question: How do you perceive the instructional leader role in trusting the teachers to make decisions about instructional and assessment issues?					
Key Prevailing Behaviors	Instructional training is provided	Implementation of initiatives	Planning together or lesson plans	Leader uses appropriate teacher leaders	Leader holds all teachers accountable
Participant #1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant #2	✓	✓	✓		✓

Table 8 (continued)

Participant #3		✓	✓		✓
Participant #4	✓	✓		✓	✓
Participant #5	✓	✓			✓
Participant #6	✓	✓	✓		✓
Participant #7	✓	✓	✓		✓
Participant #8	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Participant #9	✓	✓	✓		✓
Participant #10		✓			✓
Participant #11	✓	✓		✓	✓

Trusting teachers to make decisions about curriculum and assessment in the classroom is not supposed to be a hard thing to do, after all educators are professionals who have been trained to make such decisions. The administrative participant detailed how the leadership went about finding teachers considered to be doing the absolute best job in the classroom to build capacity as teacher leaders.

We were always looking for those teacher leaders who were able to step up and lead others to greatness through collaboration and convincing them to try to use differentiated teaching strategies, use data to help change instructional practices, relationship building techniques with students to help them stay in school, and generally collaborating with one another to plan and develop assessments.

Based on the confirmability matrix, the teachers appreciated the instructional training and professional development prior to implementing an initiative. Teachers want the trust from the instructional leader that the initiatives are implemented with fidelity as evident in lesson plans. In an administrative interview, trust was acknowledged, “We trusted that the teachers would use the strategies and practices that were being brought into the school through professional development opportunities.” Teachers also feel instructional leaders should check for

accountability in the implementation of the initiatives. Participant five expanded on accountability for implementing what the teachers had been exposed to in professional development and the expectations from the leadership:

I believe that the instructional leaders I have had in the past trust me to implement the strategies and practices that we had be exposed to in all of the professional development we had to that point, because they know the job I do and that they can walk in my room and know that I am going to be doing what I am supposed to be doing close to 100% of the time...Overall, however, if you are doing your job you will have the trust of the instructional leader to make decision about instructional and assessment issues in your classroom. We have had so much training that has proven effective in the classrooms, like with the Literacy Design Collaborative, Math Design Collaborative, common formative assessments, remediation, and enrichment...The data has proved that these things work.

Participant one echoed:

Administrator number two did give teachers responsibilities, did trust teachers to handle those responsibilities, and there definitely was an accountability factor there. That administrator followed through, made sure that teachers were doing what they had been entrusted to do, and doing it at a standard of expectation...Lesson plans come into this, that was something that was expected and required of all teachers. Administrator number two made certain that it was done.

Trust is one of the three key elements in building relationships in a PLC (Gray & Streshly, 2010). Trust is like the string that binds two objects together and makes it possible for those two objects to work as one. Participant four commented:

The instructional leader has made sure that we have had a lot of professional development in improving our classroom practices. I do know how to make things happen, and based on that, I feel that my leadership trusts me to be accountable for what I say I am going to do. I appreciate that they do trust me, but that also leads to things being dumped on me a lot. Leaders do not realize that when they consistently hand a lot of things to take care of to a certain few, while other people never have to do any extra work, the trusted educators end up burnt out.

Combs et al. (2015) confirm trust in one another as the most important facilitating factor in establishing a school that is improving. Combs et al. explicates that trust is on the part of the educator that the instructional leader has a plan and the plan is viable. Trust is also, reiterates Combs et al., on the part of the instructional leader in that the educators are going to follow through with the model and expectations. In an administrative interview, it was revealed:

Throughout the grant we looked for those who had a positive attitude or an attitude of wanting to do better and collaborate on a collegial level to make things better. We wanted those who genuinely wanted to grow in their profession and help others to grow as well. Some teachers volunteered to step up in these roles, while others took a little bit of coaxing to get them to step out of their comfort zone. We specifically tried to find ways to get some of the ones who were positive about what we were trying to accomplish, or at least willing to try, to be the teacher leaders in some of the initiatives we tried.

Research Question #8

Table 9

Summative Content Analysis for Question Eight

Teacher Interview Question: How do you perceive the instructional leader role in encouraging teachers to participate in leadership roles?					
Key Prevailing Behaviors	Teacher being asked to take a lead role	Progressively more lead responsibilities	Appointing appropriate leaders/chairs	Leadership is based on ability	Leadership team or academy
Participant #1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant #2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant #3	✓		✓	✓	
Participant #4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant #5	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Participant #6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant #7	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant #8	✓		✓	✓	
Participant #9	✓			✓	✓
Participant #10	✓		✓	✓	
Participant #11	✓		✓	✓	

In an administrative interview a continual effort of using teachers as leaders in all kinds of meetings, teams, professional development, and during common planning times was described.

We continually asked for teachers to join in the leadership team meetings and be a part of the planning and decision making process. The instructional leader was very purposeful in asking certain people to handle certain things based on their specific strengths.

Department chairs were very deliberately chosen. Focus team and data team leaders were chosen based on the teachers' ability to facilitate a group in the right direction without

getting mad, blowing up, or shutting others in the group down for an unpopular idea or thought presented in the group.

The perceptions of the teachers were strongly geared toward the instructional leader encouraging them to step into lead roles by asking them to be a part of the leadership, focus, or data teams, chair a department, or generally take a lead role in any area. Likewise, all felt that these roles should be given to only those having the ability to lead and that the instructional leader should be selective, based on ability, when appointing leadership roles and department chairs.

Jaquith (2013) advises instructional leaders may build a tremendous amount of capacity in teacher leaders through the opportunities in professional development and collaboration.

Participant one responded:

Administrator one and two, I feel, did a really good job in encouraging leadership roles. Not only encouraging teachers with experience and with a lot of foresight to step up to the plate and become a leader, but to also be someone who provided a good example for those who were on the team and to create team roles.

Cody (2013) attributes successfully building independent teacher leaders to the process of collaborative leadership. In this model teachers know to ask for help, advice, and input from anyone at the school at any time, but otherwise there is an expectation of independence and are in control of the classrooms. The teachers are able to grow and experience autonomy in the classrooms. Pertaining to independence and being utilized as a teacher leader, participant four enlightened:

I do feel that I am encouraged as much as I am requested to do certain things or complete tasks that I would consider a leadership responsibility. I still think it all comes down to

the fact that the leaders trusts that I have the ability and that I will complete tasks correctly, in a timely manner, and on my own.

Although autonomy is important in those experiences provided by the instructional leader in order to spur growth, it is crucial that the instructional leader model leadership regularly in various situations for the teacher leaders to imitate (Jaquith, 2013). Additionally, participant four offered, "...a good leader is able to coach up some of those people who never have extra things asked of them or may not be using their total ability."

Good effective capacity building experiences include extending the educational pedagogy of the teacher, having the proper resources to aid the learning, collegial collaboration, and establishing educational venues conducive for them to practice lead roles (Jaquith, 2013). In an administrative interview, district efforts were credited with successful practices:

Our district also sponsors an academy for aspiring leaders, with many going on to be selected as instructional leaders. Anyone interested in becoming an instructional leader in the county, licensed or not, is encouraged to sign up and be a part of a cohort group. We would personally ask those teachers who were doing great things in the classroom to step up...

Participant six echoed Jaquith's sentiments and affirmed the practices of the district:

The instructional leaders have always encouraged me to take on leadership roles through the process of being assigned various duties to take care of. I have always been fortunate that the instructional leaders have provided me with the tools, information, and authority to get these leadership roles completed. I have been the chair of departments and the team leader of focus and data teams because I was able to facilitate a group of people



through a process. All three of the administrators at this school knew that I would take care of things that they were assigning me due to my ability and work ethic.

With very similar experiences, participant seven resonated about teacher leader opportunities:

Most of the instructional leaders I have worked for have been great models for leadership. They have always given me leadership roles mainly pertaining to data analysis. They tend to know that numbers are my thing. That is a trait of an excellent leader, though; knowing the strengths of those you are giving leadership roles. I know that I will always be assigned these types of roles, and that I will always be supported in finishing the task with whatever I need.

### *Chapter Summary*

This chapter is dedicated to reporting the perceptions of the participants being interviewed. The responses of the participants varied due to the educational experiences, roles held over the years, and content area expertise. While investigating the perceptions of each of the educators pertaining to the instructional leadership in the school improvement process, four consistent themes emerged. These themes, or roles, expected by the followers were brought up by the majority of the participants, as indicated in the responses. The perceptions were that these common themes were indicative of behaviors that brought about progress on the part of the leader. Key themes as related to the interview questions are represented in Table 10.

Table 10

### *Interview Questions and Key Themes Indicative of Progress*

Interview Question Topics	Key Findings from Responses
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Table 10 (continued)

<p>Leader role in the development of PLCs with a focus on collegial collaboration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Common planning time</li> <li>• Professional development during the day</li> <li>• Professional development with pay</li> <li>• Having a plan, focus, and goals</li> <li>• Providing coaching or facilitating</li> </ul>
<p>Leader role in the development of PLCs with a focus on helping faculty understand and implement changes for school reform</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintaining transparency</li> <li>• Helping teachers understand the change</li> <li>• Provide data bringing about the change</li> <li>• Reform with teacher input</li> <li>• Leadership that is actively engaged</li> </ul>
<p>Leader role in the development of the school improvement plan with a focus on collegial participation in the process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty participates in the SIP process</li> <li>• Leader facilitates SIP process</li> <li>• Faculty knows expectations of the SIP</li> <li>• Data driven SIP goals and action steps</li> <li>• Faculty accountable for SIP goals</li> </ul>
<p>Leader role in the development of the school improvement plan with a focus on collegial responsibility for the established goals and action steps to meet the goals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being a part of developing the SIP</li> <li>• Knowing the expectations of the SIP</li> <li>• Consensus on agreed upon action steps</li> <li>• Teachers being accountable for the SIP</li> <li>• Proof that the SIP is working</li> </ul>
<p>Leader role in the utilizing and aiding the faculty in utilizing the assessment data in making all decisions concerning the school</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Variety of data from various sources</li> <li>• Using the graduation cohort data</li> <li>• Modeling data usage for the faculty</li> <li>• Using data for remediation</li> <li>• Using data as a collaborative tool</li> </ul>
<p>Leader role in the utilizing and aiding the faculty in utilizing the assessment data in planning school improvement initiatives, events, and professional development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus and data teams using data</li> <li>• Common planning with leadership</li> <li>• Data usage in weekly faculty meetings</li> <li>• PD internal or external provider</li> <li>• Student/parent involvement initiatives</li> </ul>
<p>Leader role in trusting the teachers to make decisions about instructional and assessment issues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructional training is provide</li> <li>• Implementation of initiatives</li> <li>• Planning together or lesson plans</li> <li>• Leader uses appropriate teacher leaders</li> <li>• Leader hold all teachers accountable</li> </ul>

Table 10 (continued)

Leader role in encouraging teachers to participate in leadership roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Teacher being asked to take a lead role</li><li>• Progressively more lead responsibilities</li><li>• Appointing appropriate leaders/chairs</li><li>• Leadership is based on ability</li><li>• Leadership team or academy</li></ul>
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Four themes that emerged from the interview responses are parallel to one another. The most common themes included a culture of continuous improvement brought about through common planning time, use of data, leader being actively engaged, and teacher inclusion and input.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### *Summary*

This case study examined educator perceptions of instructional leadership in the school improvement process. Responses included perceptions of the instructional leader's ability in developing and establishing a PLC, persuading educators to embrace a SIP, using data and teaching data usage in the decision making process, and encouraging teachers to be future leaders in the schools. The participants deemed these behaviors as being crucial in the school improvement process.

#### *Conclusions*

The key indicators of sound instructional leadership have resulted into four behaviors or themes of good instructional leadership. Key behaviors identified were: maintaining a culture of continuous school improvement, having every faculty member participate in the development and implementation of the school improvement plan, knowing how to use data to make crucial decisions, developing leadership capacity in the school, and being an engaged leader during the school improvement process. Developing a qualitative understanding of the perceptions of effective instructional leadership will enhance greater understanding of leadership practices in the school improvement process.

From the data that were collected during the interviews, four themes emerged as potential practices for implementation during the school improvement process. It is these four themes that could have the most impact in the school improvement process.

### Theme #1 – Culture of Continuous School Improvement:

The educators felt it was important to maintain a culture of continuous school improvement through protected common planning time for collegial collaboration. The perception of instructional leadership providing data as a tool for collaboration was important to the educators. Common planning time and collaboration were reoccurring perceptions that were in the top five key findings four times in the eight interview questions. (Table 10, indicated in blue.)

### Theme #2 – Engaged Leader:

The perception of the educators was that the instructional leader should be actively engaged in or facilitating the school improvement process. The instructional leader facilitating or being actively engaged in the school improvement process was a reoccurring perception that was in the top five key findings six times in the eight interview questions. (Table 10, indicated in green.)

### Theme #3 – Data:

The instructional leader should utilize data for a variety of reasons according to the educators. Educators emphasized the importance of the data being used by the instructional leader for the decision making process. There was an importance placed on the instructional leader facilitating educator use of data for making decisions in classrooms. Educators expressed the need for data to be used as a collaborative tool in focus team meetings. Data usage was a reoccurring perception that was in the top five key findings seven times in the eight interview questions. (Table 10, indicated in orange.)

#### Theme #4 – Teacher Inclusion:

Teacher inclusion in all aspects of running the school was very important to the educators. The instructional leader should be insistent upon all faculty participating in the development of the SIP. Teachers should be allowed to have a voice, the instructional leadership valuing teacher input, and being included in some way in every event, decision, and initiative. The educators perceived that the instructional leader builds leadership capacity in the school through teacher inclusion. Inclusion and involvement were the most reoccurring perceptions in the top five key findings, at 12 times in the eight interview questions. (Table 10, indicated in purple.)

The resulting themes for this case study are associated with the primary behaviors reflective of the instructional leadership during the school improvement process. The determining factor in the themes was the perceptions of the educators considered to be impacted by the behaviors and practices during the school improvement process. The four emerging themes specifically indicate the answers for the four overarching guiding research questions. As indicated in the findings of this study, instructional leadership practices are crucial in the school improvement process.

#### *Recommendations for Future Practice*

It is the recommendation of the researcher for an effective leader to consider and utilize the emergent themes from this study when developing a SIP. Based on the information from the interviews, the following recommendations are for use in future transformation efforts in the school improvement process:

- Develop and establish a culture of continuous school improvement by ensuring protected common planning time for collegial collaboration and providing tools for collaboration.

- Utilize formative and summative data for all decision making processes. Teach and facilitate data usage among the educators for making decisions in classrooms. Lead data discussions as a collaborative tool in focus and specialty teams.
- Be an actively engaged leader when facilitating the school improvement process. The students, staff, and faculty know how vested a principal is by the amount of actively engaged participation. Instructional leaders must be actively engaged in professional development that is crucial for progress.
- Include the teachers in all aspects of running the school. The instructional leader must be insistent upon all faculty participating in the development of the SIP. Allow the teachers to have a voice and value teacher input. Find ways to include teachers in every event, decision, and role necessary for school improvement. The instructional leader should build leadership capacity in the school through teacher inclusion in leadership teams and opportunities.

#### *Recommendations for Future Research*

Further research in the area of instructional leadership in school reform could be promising in establishing behaviors and practices that will facilitate progress. It is the recommendation of the researcher for future research to replicate this study in schools that do not have the same demographics, to confirm that these themes are plausible in other school improvement plans. In addition to the recommendation for study sites with different demographics, another recommendation would be to include schools that have not been through a SIG process. Finally, it is the recommendation of the researcher for future research using the themes from this study in developing a quantitative survey for a multiple site, district, or state study to confirm results on a larger scale.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

#### Interview Protocol

The following two appendices contain interview questions for educators and administrators. The interview questions were designed to address the guiding research questions. For the purpose of this case study, the following overarching questions guided the research:

For Educators –

What are the perceptions of teachers regarding the instructional leader in the school improvement process?

How did the instructional leader facilitate the school improvement process?

For Administration –

What are the perceptions of administration regarding the implementation of the school improvement process?

How did the instructional leader facilitate the school improvement process?

There are two groups of participants, the educators and an administrator. Each educator participant was asked to reflect on individual experiences during the implementation of the school improvement process, giving thoughts and perceptions concerning instructional leadership. An administrator was asked to reflect on thoughts, reasoning, and actions, while giving an account of implementing each stage of the school improvement process.

## APPENDIX B

### Interview Questions for Teachers

- How do you perceive the instructional leader role in the development of professional learning communities with a focus on collegial collaboration?
- How do you perceive the instructional leader role in the development of professional learning communities with a focus on helping faculty understand and implement changes for school reform?
- How do you perceive the instructional leader role in the development of the school improvement plan with a focus on collegial participation in the process?
- How do you perceive the instructional leader role in the development of the school improvement plan with a focus on collegial responsibility for the established goals and action steps to meet the goals?
- How do you perceive the instructional leader role in the utilizing and aiding the faculty in utilizing the assessment data in making all decisions concerning the school?
- How do you perceive the instructional leader role in the utilizing and aiding the faculty in utilizing the assessment data in planning school improvement initiatives, events, and professional development?
- How do you perceive the instructional leader role in trusting the teachers to make decisions about instructional and assessment issues?
- How do you perceive the instructional leader role in encouraging teachers to participate in leadership roles?

## APPENDIX C

### Interview Questions for Instructional Leaders

- How did you establish a professional learning community that allowed time for educators to collaborate?
- How did you go about providing guidance to help faculty members understand and implement changes necessary for school reform?
- How did you provide opportunities and encourage all faculty members to participate in creating objectives and a strategic school improvement plan?
- How did you go about empowering faculty members to take responsibility for the established goals and action steps to meet the goals in the school improvement plan?
- How do you go about gathering and utilizing data to make all decisions concerning the school?
- How do you go about helping the faculty to utilize or learn to utilize data in improving classroom instructional practices?
- How do you build teacher leaders or teacher capacity in the school?
- How do you go about encouraging teachers to participate in leadership roles?

## APPENDIX D

### Institutional Review Board Approval



Office for the Protection of Human Research Subjects • Box 70565 • Johnson City, Tennessee 37614-1707  
Phone: (423) 439-6053 Fax: (423) 439-6060

#### IRB APPROVAL – Initial Expedited Review

August 4, 2015

Lori Brown

**Re:** Educator Perceptions of Instructional Leadership in the School Improvement Process

**IRB#:** c0515.8s

**ORSPA #:**

The following items were reviewed and approved by an expedited process:

- xform New Protocol Submission; ICD version 5/5/2015\*; Email; Interview Questions\*; Bibliography; CV\*

The following documents with the incorporated requested changes were received by the IRB Office:

- requested changes xform, PI response to requested changes, revised ICD version 5/5/15, revised recruitment email, revised CV

On **August 3, 2015**, a final approval was granted for a period not to exceed 12 months and will expire on **August 2, 2016**. The expedited approval of the study *and* requested changes will be reported to the convened board on the next agenda.

The following **enclosed stamped, approved Informed Consent Documents** have been stamped with the approval and expiration date and these documents must be copied and provided to each participant prior to participant enrollment:

- Informed Consent Document (ver 5/5/15 SA 8/3/15)
- Email Recruitment Script (no ver date SA 8/3/15)

Federal regulations require that the original copy of the participant's consent be maintained in the principal investigator's files and that a copy is given to the subject at the time of consent.

The study has been granted a Waiver of Requirement for Written Documentation of Informed Consent under category 45 CFR 46.117(c)(2). The research involves no more than minimal risk to the participants as the study involves a benign interview process and it involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context as written documentation of consent is not required for answering questions. The investigator has provided a script of the consent



Accredited Since December 2005



discussion that meets the requirements for the consent process and includes all required and appropriate additional elements of disclosure.

**Projects involving Mountain States Health Alliance must also be approved by MSHA following IRB approval prior to initiating the study.**

Unanticipated Problems Involving Risks to Subjects or Others must be reported to the IRB (and VA R&D if applicable) within 10 working days.

Proposed changes in approved research cannot be initiated without IRB review and approval. The only exception to this rule is that a change can be made prior to IRB approval when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the research subjects [21 CFR 56.108 (a)(4)]. In such a case, the IRB must be promptly informed of the change following its implementation (within 10 working days) on Form 109 ([www.etsu.edu/irb](http://www.etsu.edu/irb)). The IRB will review the change to determine that it is consistent with ensuring the subject's continued welfare.

Sincerely,  
Stacey Williams, Chair  
ETSU Campus IRB

cc: Flora, William

## APPENDIX E

### Transcribed Interview Responses

In an attempt to maintain the truest results while protecting the anonymity of the participants in this research case study, the transcribed interviews have been referenced in Chapter 4, but omitted in its entirety from this Appendix. In accordance with the ETSU IRB stipulations, the researcher will maintain a copy of the transcribed interview responses for a period of five years, at which time the transcripts will be destroyed.

VITA

LORI LYNNE BROWN

**Education:** Public Schools, Maury County, Tennessee

A. S., Columbia State Community College, Columbia, Tennessee, 1993

B. S., Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, Tennessee, 1996

M. S., Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, Tennessee, 1999

Ed. S., Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, Tennessee, 2004

Ed. D., East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee, 2016

**Experience:** Maury County Public Schools, Columbia, Tennessee:

Interim Kindergarten Teacher – July 1996 to October 1996

Sixth Grade Reading/Language Arts Teacher – October 1996 to December 1997

Second/Third Grade Split & Third Grade Teacher – December 1997 to July 1999

Pre-Kindergarten through Fourth Grade Teacher – July 1999 to July 2006

Library Media Specialist – July 2006 to November 15, 2010

School Improvement Grant Coordinator – November 16, 2010 to June 30, 2013

Assistant Principal – July 16, 2013 to June 30, 2015

Supervisor of Career and Technical Education – July 1, 2015 to Present

**Publications:** *The SIG Review* was a monthly publication highlighting the progress of the high school due to the efforts of the administration, faculty, staff, students, parents, and community stakeholders. *The SIG Review* was published January 2011 through May 2013.

**Presentations:** *School Improvement Initiatives that Empower Faculty: Effectively Preparing College and Career Ready Graduates*

Venue: SREB: HSTW - National 27th Annual Summer Staff Development

Location: The Charlotte Convention Center in Charlotte, North Carolina

Date: July 18, 2013

*School Improvement Grants: Implementation and Implications*

Venue: SREB: HSTW - National 26th Annual Summer Staff Development

Location: The Ernest N. Morial Convention Center in New Orleans, Louisiana

Date: July 11-14, 2012

<b>Awards:</b>	Phi Kappa Phi National Honor Society Nominee – ETSU Grad Chapter	2013
	Who’s Who Among Executive and Professional Women	2009
	Who’s Who Among Executive and Professional Women in Education	2008
	Quill E. Cope Scholarship for Outstanding Potential	2006
	Phi Kappa Phi Scholar Honor Society – Education	2004
	Kappa Delta Pi International Honor Society – Education	1995