

University of Denver

Digital Commons @ DU

---

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Graduate Studies

---

1-1-2018

## Leadership Practices in Similar Schools with Varying Primary Grade Reading Outcomes: A Comparative Multiple-Case Study

Jacqueline M. Cuthill  
*University of Denver*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd>



Part of the [Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Commons](#), [Educational Leadership Commons](#), and the [Elementary Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Cuthill, Jacqueline M., "Leadership Practices in Similar Schools with Varying Primary Grade Reading Outcomes: A Comparative Multiple-Case Study" (2018). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. 1454.  
<https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd/1454>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Studies at Digital Commons @ DU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ DU. For more information, please contact [jennifer.cox@du.edu](mailto:jennifer.cox@du.edu), [dig-commons@du.edu](mailto:dig-commons@du.edu).

Leadership Practices in Similar Schools with Varying Primary Grade Reading Outcomes:  
A Comparative Multiple-Case Study

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of the Morgridge College of Education

University of Denver

---

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

---

by

Jacqueline M. Cuthill

June 2018

Advisor: Susan Korach, EdD

©Copyright by Jacqueline M. Cuthill 2018

All Rights Reserved

Author: Jacqueline M. Cuthill  
Title: Leadership Practices in Similar Schools with Varying Primary Grade Reading Outcomes: A Comparative Multiple-Case Study  
Advisor: Susan Korach, EdD  
Degree Date: June 2018

## ABSTRACT

Students who are below grade level before they leave third grade are less likely to graduate. A large number of schools are failing to increase student achievement in reading, especially for students of color and those who are economically disadvantaged. Leadership can influence student achievement; however, literature lacks specifics about leadership practices that could help school leaders improve student outcomes. This multiple-case study explores the leadership practices in three similar elementary schools with varying primary grade reading outcomes and contributes details about the leadership functions of Setting Direction, Developing People and Redesigning the Organization (Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). The findings suggest that a strong focus on literacy in primary grades (early literacy) and on a specific instructional practice for reading provides coherence for leadership practices which enhances both leadership and instruction.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to Dr. Allen, Dr. Anderson, Dr. Hesbol, and Dr. Korach for serving on my dissertation committee. I am especially grateful to Dr. Korach, my dissertation director and advisor, for her wisdom and guidance.

Thank you to the schools who opened their doors with a warm welcome and made this study possible.

Thank you to my mother for her unwavering love and patience, to my father who taught me that to reach your goals must to aim past them, to my brothers and sister who keep me laughing, and to all of my family, friends, and colleagues who encourage me. Soli Deo gloria.

“Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life” (Proverbs 4:13)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One: Introduction .....	1
Background .....	1
Statement of the Problem .....	4
Purpose .....	6
Research Question .....	6
Conceptual Framework .....	6
Definition of Terms .....	10
 Chapter Two: Review of the Literature .....	 12
School Leadership for Improved Academic Outcomes .....	12
Setting Directions .....	14
Developing People .....	16
Supporting Instruction .....	16
Professional Development .....	18
Redesigning the Organization .....	20
Summary of Leadership to Improve Academic Outcomes .....	25
Best Practices for Reading Instruction .....	26
Summary for Best Practices in Reading Instruction .....	34
Summary of the Literature Review .....	35
 Chapter Three: Methodology .....	 37
Research Design .....	37
Cases .....	39
Data Collection .....	42
Data Analysis .....	45
Reliability and Validity .....	47
Limitations .....	48
 Chapter Four: Results .....	 50
Thomas Elementary .....	51
Survey Results- Thomas Elementary .....	51
Setting Directions .....	53
Developing People .....	60
Redesigning the Organization .....	67
Conclusion- Thomas Elementary .....	71
Andrews Elementary .....	73
Survey Results-Andrews Elementary .....	74
Setting Directions .....	76
Developing People .....	84
Redesigning the Organization .....	87
Conclusion- Andrews Elementary .....	90
Robertson Elementary .....	92
Survey Results .....	92

Setting Directions.....	94
Developing People.....	101
Redesigning the Organization.....	104
Conclusion- Robertson Elementary .....	109
Cross Case Analysis.....	111
Staff Survey Results.....	111
Setting Directions .....	114
Developing People.....	118
Redesigning the Organization.....	121
Conclusion- Cross Case Analysis.....	123
Chapter Five: Discussion.....	127
Implications.....	132
Future Research .....	139
Conclusion .....	140
References.....	143
Appendix A.....	153
Appendix B.....	157
Appendix C.....	159
Appendix D.....	161

## LIST OF TABLES

### Chapter Three:

Table 1: Percentage of students in At-Risk categories at each School in 2015/2016...	40
Table 2: Early Literacy Growth: School Performance Framework 2016 .....	41
Table 3: Grades K-3 Overall Read Act Results: Percent of Students Reading On-Grade-Level (Spring) .....	41
Table 4: Adjusted Grades 1-3 Overall Read Act Results: Percent of Students Reading On-Grade-Level (Spring).....	49

### Chapter Four:

Table 5: Thomas Elementary READ Act Results: Percent of Students Reading On-Grade Level .....	51
Table 6: Thomas Elementary Survey Results.....	52
Table 7: Thomas Elementary: Practices Aligned with Leadership Functions.....	72
Table 8: Andrews Elementary READ Act Results: Percent of Students Reading On-Grade-Level.....	74
Table 9: Andrews Survey Results .....	75
Table 10: Andrews Elementary: Practices Aligned with Leadership Functions .....	90
Table 11: Robertson Elementary READ Act Results: Percent of Students Reading On-Grade-Level .....	92
Table 12: Robertson Survey Results .....	93
Table 13: Robertson Elementary: Practices Aligned with Leadership Functions .....	110
Table 14: Comparison of Survey Data .....	112
Table 15: Comparison of Practices Associated with Setting Directions .....	114
Table 16: Comparison of Practices Associated with Developing People.....	118
Table 17: Comparison of Practices Associated with Redesigning the Organization..	121



## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn the more places you’ll go.” (Dr. Seuss, 1978). Words like those of Dr. Seuss have inspired many young children, stirring in them an excitement to learn to read. Sadly, this portal to knowledge and opportunity is one that is often closed to countless children before they even leave elementary school.

### **Background**

In both 2015 and 2017, according to the National Assessment of Education Progress report, 65 percent of fourth grade students were reading below grade level (NAEP, 2015; NAEP 2017). Students who are below grade level in reading by the end of third grade may never catch up to their proficient peers (Farkas, Hibel, & Morgan, 2008; Juel, 1988; Lesnick, Goerge, Smithgall, & Gwynne, 2010; Reschly, 2010). Students who are not on grade level by third grade are more likely to drop out of high school (Hernandez, 2012). One out of six children who are not reading on grade level by third grade do not graduate from high school on time (Hernandez, 2012). Thirty-one percent of African Americans in poverty and 33 percent of Hispanics in poverty who are not on grade level by third grade do not graduate from high school at all (Hernandez, 2012).

The significance of the problem of low reading achievement is made apparent by a number of policies at the state and national levels that have been enacted to increase reading achievement. The two most recent state policies in Colorado are Colorado Basic

Literacy Act (1997) and the Colorado Reading to Ensure Academic Development Act (2012). The intent of the Colorado Basic Literacy Act (CBLA) was to identify students who were struggling to read and to provide intervention to help them reach grade-level proficiency by the end of third grade. While students who were on grade level in primary grades remained on grade level by the end of third grade, students who had been identified as reading below grade level in primary grades did not make the desired gains by the end of third grade (Hall, McKenna, Austin, & Meyer, 2013). The Colorado Reading to Ensure Academic Development Act (READ Act) replaced CBLA in 2012. While the READ Act maintains a focus on identifying students who are below grade level in kindergarten through third grade, it is different from CBLA in two ways. First, it calls for a closer partnership between teachers and parents. Second, retention must be mentioned as a possible response to students being below grade level in kindergarten through third grade.

Raising reading achievement outcomes is a common challenge in elementary schools that are failing to increase student achievement more generally (Duke, Tucker, Salmonowicz & Levy, 2007). National policies with heavy sanctions like the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) have been enacted with the purpose of boosting academic outcomes, including (but not limited to) reading outcomes. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) policy required schools receiving Title One funding through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) determined by an increase in test scores. Among other things, the policy aimed to have all students reading on grade level by 2014. NCLB attempted to accomplish this through the Reading First Program which promoted practices outlined by the National Reading Panel

including the five components of reading instruction (NCEE Evaluation Brief, 2009). Reading First did not improve reading comprehension in grades one, two, or three (NCEE Evaluation Brief, 2009). Despite corrective actions of NCLB, which often included the removal of the principal and staff, the problem of low student achievement persists.

In 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) replaced NCLB. While ESSA also addresses student achievement in multiple content areas, one purpose of ESSA is to improve student achievement in reading and writing and to provide high quality literacy instruction to students who need it most (ESSA, 2015). ESSA is different from NCLB in that states now have control over decisions about corrective action for failing schools. While control has shifted, the corrective actions are similar to those of NCLB. Under ESSA, schools in the bottom five percent that struggle for up to four years will be subject to punitive actions including replacing principal and staff, converting the school into a charter, or the state taking over the school (ESSA, 2015).

Despite the implementation of state policies that aim specifically to increase achievement in reading and despite national policies that address reading achievement among other subjects, low student achievement in reading continues. Research has identified promising instructional, classroom-level solutions to the problems of low reading achievement. High quality instruction and intervention when provided in the primary grades have the potential to increase student achievement (Reschly, 2010; Torgesen, Alexander, Wagner, Rashotte, Voeller, & Conway, 2001).

The National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read (2000) identified five components of reading which, if addressed through instruction, will better enable

students to read well: (a) phonemic awareness, (b) phonics, (c) fluency, (d) vocabulary, and (e) comprehension. Best practices for accelerating improvement in reading such as small group guided reading instruction have also been identified (Fountas & Pinnell, 2009). While these solutions have proven to be effective at a classroom level, increasing the reading outcomes of an entire school in need of improvement remains a significant challenge.

### **Leadership to Improve Literacy Outcomes**

There are a high number of schools with low reading outcomes in the United States—especially schools with high numbers of students of color and high levels of poverty. However, there are some schools with similar student populations that do have significantly higher outcomes (Herridge, 2013). The reason for different outcomes may lie in leadership. School leaders impact student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood & Lewis, 2012). In fact, leadership ranks second only to the quality of teaching in its influence on student learning (Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). In the most challenging schools, the effects of leadership are even greater (Leithwood et al., 2004). It follows then, when the specific goal is to improve reading instruction, school leaders are in a position to influence school conditions that impact student achievement in reading (Herridge, 2013; Murphy, 2004).

### **Statement of the Problem**

If students are not on grade level in the earliest grades it can be difficult for them catch up (Lesnick et al., 2010; Reschly, 2010) and if they not on grade level by third grade they are less likely to graduate from high school (Hernandez, 2012). Despite research that indicates that early intervention and high quality instruction in primary

grades can improve reading outcomes, and despite all schools being governed by the same state and national policies, a large number of schools are failing to increase student achievement in reading especially for students of color and those who are economically disadvantaged. While this is true, there are some schools that beat the odds.

Differences in leadership actions may account for the differences in reading achievement outcomes. Literature on leadership that makes a difference in student outcomes offers general principles of effective instructional leadership but is limited with respect to specifics (Hallinger, 2011; Herridge, 2013). Leithwood et al. (2004) explained:

Evidence about the nature and influence of those (leadership) practices is not yet sufficiently fine-grained to know how a carefully selected feature of a district or school could be systematically improved through planned intervention on the part of someone in a leadership role. (p. 12).

If student achievement is influenced by leadership practices, it is important for leaders to know these details.

Educational research needs to have a “laser like” focus on discovering the leadership practices most likely to improve the condition or status of schools (Leithwood, Patten, & Jantzi, 2010, p.698). The effectiveness of leadership for increasing student achievement “hinges on specific classroom practices which leaders stimulate, encourage and promote” (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006, p. 223). Leaders need to know what to prioritize (Leithwood et al., 2004).

Murphy’s 2004 literacy leadership framework states that a school must have literacy as a priority. One would be hard pressed to find an elementary school where literacy is not at least an espoused priority since providing reading instruction is one of the main functions of most elementary schools. Currently, leaders who seek guidance

from literacy leadership literature will be met with vague leadership principles and few concrete examples from schools that have raised student achievement in reading (Herridge, 2013). It is important to provide leaders with specifics.

Furthermore, studies on leadership tend to focus on successful schools. This is problematic since both high achieving and low-achieving schools may be doing the same basic things (Bracey, 2008). It is important to discover nuances and specifics in how schools with both high and low reading achievement outcomes apply leadership practices.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this comparative, multiple-case study was to identify specific leadership practices in similar at-risk schools that have varying reading outcomes in primary grades. Studying schools with different reading achievement outcomes in primary grades adds a new dimension to understanding the leadership actions in schools that are beating the odds and, in comparison, in schools that struggle to increase reading achievement in primary grades.

### **Research Question**

What are the specific leadership practices in three similar schools with varying reading achievement outcomes in primary grades?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework of this study emerged from a review of research about school leadership actions that support student learning and literacy outcomes. The review identified connections between different approaches to leadership and their influence on student achievement. A combination of leadership approaches holds the best promise for

increasing student achievement (Seashore Louis, Dretzke, & Wahlstrom, 2010; Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2010). The leadership functions of Setting Directions, Developing People and Redesigning the Organization (Leithwood et al., 2004) are broadly conceptualized, can include practices from different approaches to leadership, and can also have an instructional focus.

### **Setting Directions**

Leaders who set directions develop a shared vision (Leithwood et al., 2004; Murphy, 2004; Supovitz et al., 2010; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty (2003), set expectations for achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004; Murphy, 2004), and monitor progress towards those goals (Leithwood et al., 2004; Printy & Marks, 2006; Waters et al., 2003). Successful leaders will not only know what to do but will have a strategy which includes “when, how and why to do it” (Waters et al., 2003, p. 4).

### **Developing People**

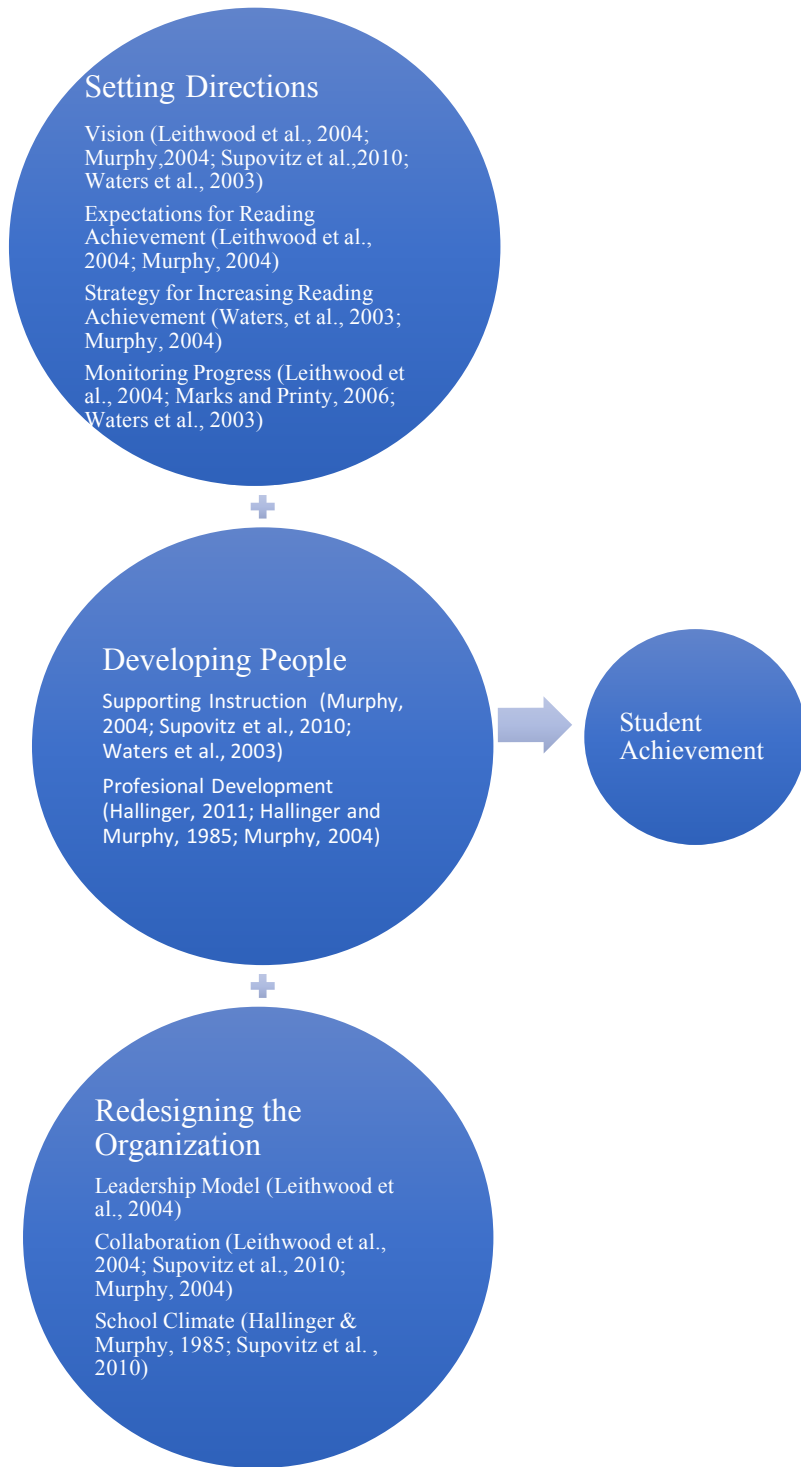
Teachers are developed through instructional support (Murphy, 2004; Supovitz et al., 2010; Waters et al., 2003) and professional development (Hallinger, 2011; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Murphy, 2004).

### **Redesigning the Organization**

Schools are designed differently to meet their objectives through varying leadership models and collaborative structures (Leithwood et al., 2004; Murphy, 2004; Supovitz et al., 2010). Redesigning the Organization includes working to strengthen the school culture (Leithwood et al., 2004) and climate (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Supovitz et al., 2010).

Applying this framework to leadership associated with primary grade reading achievement outcomes provides an organizational framework to capture leadership actions. The following diagram represents the synthesis of the research and the conceptual framework of this study (Figure 1).





*Figure 1. Conceptual framework*

## **Definition of Terms**

*At-risk*: students and schools that face challenges which impede the likelihood of the school or the students having high reading achievement outcomes.

*Coach*: refers to a person who gives feedback to teachers with the purpose of improving the teacher's capacity to instruct students.

*Distributed Leadership*: an approach to leadership where authority, influence and leadership roles are shared among various stakeholders.

*Early Literacy*: refers to literacy (particularly reading) in kindergarten through third grade (the grades the Colorado READ Acts targets).

*Leadership functions*: the actions of setting directions, developing people, and redesigning the organization (Leithwood et al., 2004).

*Guided Reading*: small group reading instruction where a teacher guides a student through a book that a student cannot read independently (Pinnell & Fountas, 2009).

*Guided Reading Plus*: Guided Reading Plus is a guided reading intervention which includes alternating days of reading and writing instruction. The reading day includes word-work, a book introduction, students reading while teacher provides focused feedback, and a brief discussion. The writing day includes a response to reading and feedback on students' writing (Dorn & Soffos, 2012).

*Instructional Leadership*: refers to leadership which focuses on building teachers' capacities to instruct. This approach to leadership is often hierarchical in nature and relies on the principal having instructional knowledge (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

*Istation*: a computerized adaptive reading assessment. In grades Kindergarten through third grade the test assesses items including phonemic awareness, letter knowledge, vocabulary, spelling, comprehension, and fluency. According to the vendor (and the district at the time of the study), students are considered on grade level if they score in tier 1, below grade level if they score in tier 2, and significantly below grade level if they score in tier 3.

*Running records*: A formative reading assessment in which a teacher listens to a student read a short passage, marks the errors, and analyzes the miscues to determine how well student uses and integrates meaning, structural, and visual cues while reading.

*Senior Team Lead*: a teacher assigned to a role of teaching half time and coaching/evaluating half time.

*Site Assessment Leader*: a person in a school who is in charge of organizing assessments and making sure that teacher and students adhere to test-regulations.

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In light of research that indicates that early reading intervention can prevent reading problems, and considering corresponding policies such as the current Colorado READ Act, which focuses on raising student achievement in primary grades (K-3), this study aimed to look closely at the literacy leadership practices of three schools with high numbers of students of poverty and high numbers of students of color. Reflecting the purpose of this study, the literature review begins with a focus on leadership practices that improve academic outcomes and is organized by the leadership functions of Setting Directions, Developing People, and Redesigning the Organization (Leithwood, et al., 2004). With the understanding that leadership is “hinged” to instruction (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006, p. 223), the review then shifts to the topics of best practices for reading instruction and early-intervention.

### **School Leadership for Improved Academic Outcomes**

Leaders are in a position to influence school conditions that impact student achievement (Murphy, 2004). Louis et al. (2010) define leadership, regardless of form, as providing direction and exercising influence. Leadership ranks second only to the quality of teaching in its influence on student learning (Leithwood et al., 2004). In the most challenging schools, the effects of leadership are even greater (Leithwood et al., 2004). While leadership has an influence on student outcomes, the effects of leadership on student learning are indirect (Kannapel, 2005; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Although

there is no evidence of direct effects on student outcomes, those in leadership roles are “uniquely positioned” to ensure the “synergy” of school variables which on their own make little difference but when working together have great effects on student learning (Leithwood et al., 2009, p. 9).

While leadership has influence on student outcomes, research lacks specific recommendations to help those in leadership positions improve student outcomes in particular settings: “The next generation of research in our field will need to focus on contextualizing the types of leadership practices. There is a need for more information not just about “what works but what works in different settings” (Hallinger, 2011, p. 138). More quantitative and qualitative studies are necessary to fill in the gaps (Hallinger, 2011). Educational research needs to have a “laser like” focus on discovering the leadership practices most likely to improve the condition or status of schools (Leithwood, Patten, & Jantzi, 2010, p. 698).

Research does reveal connections between different leadership approaches. Below are several different approaches to leadership with similar key functions:

- **Instructional:** Defining the mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school learning climate (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985)
- **Transformational:** Setting directions, developing people, and redesigning the organization (Leithwood et al., 2004)
- **Combination (of instructional and transformational):** Establishing mission and goals of the school, actively supporting instruction, and supporting collaboration (Supovitz et al., 2010)

- **Leadership for Learning:** Vision and goals, academic structures and processes, and people (Hallinger, 2011)

Seashore Louis, Dretzke, and Wahlstrom (2010) identify that the combination of transformational leadership and instructional leadership practices holds the best promise for increasing student achievement. The leadership functions of Setting Directions, Developing People, and Redesigning the Organization (Leithwood et al, 2004) are broadly conceptualized and can include an instructional focus. For example, Murphy's 2004 Leadership for Literacy framework describes prioritizing literacy (Setting Directions), fostering staff development (Developing People), and constructing a quality program (Redesigning the Organization). The following section provides a review of the literature concerning the leadership functions of Setting Directions, Developing People, and Redesigning the Organization.

### **Setting Directions**

Leithwood et al. (2004) describes setting directions as creating and communicating a vision, encouraging the adoption of group goals, creating high expectations for performance, monitoring the performance, and supporting effective communication. Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) echo this definition when they explain that those charged with improving academic outcomes will create a school vision and have high expectations for performance. With respect to increasing reading outcomes, it is important to set the direction by "establishing literacy as a priority" (Murphy, 2004, p. 75).

**Vision.** Successful schools will set directions by establishing "collective goals" (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006, p. 204; Supovitz et al., 2010). They will define the mission

(Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Supovitz et al., 2010). For school improvement, vision and goals should be focused on learning (Hallinger, 2011). Clear goals are the foundation for decisions on staffing, programs and resource allocation (Hallinger, 2011). The goals should be kept at the “forefront of the school’s attention” (Waters et al., 2003, p. 4). Goals contribute to student achievement by “limiting staff attention to a narrow range of desired ends and scope of activities” (Hallinger, 2011, p. 129). As Hallinger (2011) explains, “Visions written down on paper only come to life through the routines and actions that are enacted on a daily basis” (p. 137). Vision statements need to be actualized to be effective. When the desired end is increased reading outcomes, schools will have a “clear focus” on reading (Murphy, 2004, p. 76).

**Expectations.** Successful leadership will create “high performance expectations” (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 8; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). The belief in the ability of all students to succeed is associated with improved academic outcomes (Hoy, 2012). In schools with high levels of reading achievement, schools will have both high expectations and a sense of shared responsibility and dedication to students and their success (Murphy, 2004). It is important to develop a platform of beliefs about students commensurate to increasing reading achievement (Murphy, 2004).

**Strategy.** Instructional leaders will know more than what to do, they will have a strategy which includes “when, how, and why to do it” (Waters et al., 2003, p. 4). The effectiveness of leadership for increasing student achievement “hinges on specific classroom practices which leaders stimulate encourage and promote” (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006, p. 223). According to Waters et al. (2003) if leaders focus on the right practices, there are positive effects on student outcomes, however, if they employ “wrong

school and/or classroom practices” then student outcomes can decrease (p. 5). Principals play a central role in the development of successful reading programs (Fisher & Adler, 1999; Hall, 2008). Murphy’s literacy leadership framework (2004) indicates that it is important to establish a coherent and aligned reading system where time for instruction is maximized.

**Monitoring Progress.** Monitoring progress informs the process of setting directions by helping to identify next steps. Principals in successful schools closely monitor their teachers’ performance (Printy & Marks, 2006). To increase reading outcomes, leadership will assess performance and ensure accountability (Murphy, 2004). When the goal is increasing reading achievement monitoring progress will mean looking closely at student progress in reading. Monitoring progress in reading should happen frequently. Doing so will enable those who are monitoring to estimate the rate of growth, identify students who may need intervention, and may provide a comparison of the effectiveness of different instructional approaches (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2011).

### **Developing People**

Ensuring quality of instruction is important in order to increase reading outcomes (Murphy, 2004). Developing people is important for ensuring quality instruction. This is accomplished by providing support and providing models of best practices and appropriate beliefs (Leithwood et al., 2004), and through professional development (Hallinger, 2011; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Murphy 2004).

**Supporting Instruction.** According to Murphy (2004), leadership charged with increasing reading outcomes must work to build teacher capacity and foster staff development. Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008) studied leadership practices and



found that developing a teacher's capacity has the greatest influence on altering a teacher's practice, which will then improve student achievement. However, the principals in his study had very little effect on building a teacher's capacity and the largest effect on working conditions. Working conditions had the least influence on a teacher's instructional practices and therefore the least influence on student outcomes. Reflecting on these findings they stated, "Thus it is clearly important to develop teacher's capacities" (p. 33). Leaders should make a "greater contribution to staff capacities" (Leithwood et al., 2008, p. 34). It is important to discover ways in which leaders can increase their influence on student achievement through developing their teachers.

**Coaching.** Teachers can be supported through coaching. However, a coach's ability to build capacity in teachers often depends on the principal's endorsement of the coach; and the endorsement often depends on the coach's level of expertise (Matsumura, Sartoris, Bickel, & Garnier, 2009). Therefore, districts must ensure that schools have access to highly qualified coaches who earn their principal's confidence by having expertise in literacy instruction (Matsumura et al., 2009). According to the International Reading Association (2000), reading specialists who are coaches should have expertise in teaching reading, knowledge of reading development, and knowledge of reading assessment. Principals can communicate their support of the coach by including them in leadership activities and by having the coach provide professional development to teachers. It is important that there is alignment between the vision for coaching and the school's instructional vision since too many goals and "conflicting goals" can "undermine" coaches' work with teachers (Matsumura, Garnier, & Resnick, 2010, p. 267). The role of a coach as an evaluator is one task/goal that may undermine the coach's

work. Coaches who want to effect significant change “must do so without evaluation” (Stover, Kissel, Haag, & Shoniker, 2011).

**Professional Development.** Professional development has a significant effect on learning outcomes (Hallinger, 2011; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). In a study on instructional leadership (Robinson et.al., 2008) the strongest effects were for the leadership dimension “promoting and participating in teacher learning and development” with moderate effects for goal setting and for planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum (p. 663). They concluded that the more school leaders focus their work on teaching and learning, the greater their impact on student outcomes, and that leaders should promote and participate in teacher learning and development (Robinson et al., 2008). Instructional leaders often place a premium on professional development and consider it important for building capacity. They will bring others into the school as well as releasing teachers to seek professional development outside of the school (Dinham, 2005). Principals in successful schools provide support for all staff though school-wide professional development in literacy specifically (Fletcher, 2011).

In schools with high literacy outcomes it is more likely that the principal is participating in and planning learning activities (Murphy, 2004). This finding is supported by Herridge’s 2013 case study of successful principals. Herridge reported that the principals of two schools with high student achievement actively participated in professional development with their teachers. She also noted in her case study that an effective principal realized her need to learn more about how to teach students to read and reached out to external experts to accomplish this. Leaders who are less involved in literacy reforms view their teachers as already having the basic and necessary expertise to

teach literacy, while those who are more involved express a need for external supports to improve literacy instruction (Burch & Spillane, 2003).

Burch and Spillane (2003) reported that a principal who had little interaction with teachers around literacy reforms, “dismissed faculty requests for more professional development and encouraged the faculty to discuss teaching with one another and to do more team teaching” (p. 530). When expertise is lacking, it may sometimes need to be infused from outside personnel who are more knowledgeable about literacy (Burch & Spillane, 2003; Fletcher, 2011; Herridge, 2013). For a principal to determine when outside help is necessary, a certain level of knowledge of literacy instruction will be necessary.

The depth of a principal’s knowledge of subject matter appears to give administrators a significant advantage as effective leaders (Herridge, 2013; Stein & Nelson, 2003). It is problematic, therefore, that many elementary school principals have secondary education certification and limited early childhood training (Stein & Nelson, 2003). Many graduate programs do not provide future principals with adequate knowledge of things like what the attributes of a good reading program are (Duke et al., 2007). Furthermore, increasing the content knowledge of leaders is not usually part of district-level professional development; when principals do receive professional development it usually addresses leadership strategies and not content (Coburn, 2005). The professional development of administrators should include continued acquisition of subject matter knowledge because they need to understand child development, what appropriate instruction should look like, and what professional development teachers need in order to support learning (Stein & Nelson, 2003).

## **Redesigning the Organization**

Leithwood et al., (2004) describe Redesigning the Organization as strengthening the school culture, modifying organizational structures, and building collaborative processes. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) also believed that it is important that the school's design contributes to a positive school climate. Collaboration (collaborative processes) can influence the climate of a school (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009).

**Leadership model.** Designing the organization includes determining how leadership will be structured and distributed. The leadership approach depends on the goals and expertise of those who will be leading (Leithwood et al., 2009). A school's educational leadership model may be one where leadership is shared (Hallinger 2011; Leithwood et al., 2004) or one which is more hierarchical with the principal having the most influence and authority as is the case with instructional leadership. There is a spectrum of leadership models between distributed/shared leadership and instructional leadership. There can be a combination of approaches (Printy & Marks, 2006; Seashore Louis et al., 2010; Supovitz et al., 2010). In relation to the basic leadership functions, Developing People is often distributed, whereas Setting Directions and Redesigning the Organization is more often enacted by those in "formal hierarchical leadership roles (Leithwood et al., 2009, p. 616).

***Distributed leadership.*** "Authority" and "influence" can be given to those who can inspire others towards "collective goals" (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006, p. 204). This approach associated with "transformational" leadership is supported by research that determines that teachers' peer influence has a higher direct association with change in

instruction than the influence of the principal (Suppovitz et al., 2010). Since, according to Waters et al. (2003), if a school has “wrong school and/or classroom practices” student outcomes can decrease, then it may be better to have instruction led by those with more expertise (p. 5). Principals and teachers should share responsibility for professional development, curriculum, and supervision of instruction (Marks & Printy, 2003). Giving authority to others besides the principal may result in a leadership model where leadership is distributed amongst stake-holders.

Principals can share their leadership with instructional coaches (Matsumura et al., 2009). However, if coaching is going to be a successful venture, the principal will be the one who makes it happen (Kral, 2012). Coaches can be included in leadership activities and by having the coach provide professional development. Providing the coach autonomy also supports the coach in their role (Matsumara et al., 2009). Literacy coaches/specialists should be careful not to take on too many roles, however, or it will limit their effectiveness (Galloway & Lesaux, 2014). Above all else, reading specialists (coaches) must remain dedicated to supporting students to become readers (Galloway & Lesaux, 2014).

***Instructional leadership.*** A more hierarchical model may be present when there is an instructional leadership approach which is primarily concerned with developing teachers’ capacities. For school reform to be successful school leaders must “champion” the effort by being an instructional leader (Galloway, 2014). Schools that are most effective in teaching children to read are characterized by “vigorous” instructional leadership, and the leader of the effort is usually the principal (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985, p. 112). A premise of instructional leadership is that instruction will

improve if leaders give teachers detailed feedback to teachers on their instruction (Louis et al., 2010). Principals who are instructional leaders will generally have higher student achievement outcomes than principals who are not (Cotton, 2003). The instructional leadership approach is supported by research that states that the average effect of instructional leadership on student outcomes is three to four times that of transformational leadership (Robinson et al., 2008). When leaders are focused on teaching and learning, they are more likely to positively impact student outcomes (Cheney & Davis 2011; Robinson et al., 2008; Waters et al., 2003). The principal's instructional leadership is the key element in the achievement of low SES schools where achievement is higher than similar schools. If a school adopts an instructional model of leadership, the principal(s) may solely be responsible for evaluation.

In a hierarchal model where the principal is the primary instructional leader, it is important that the principal has a degree of knowledge about subjects and about how students learn (Stein & Nelson, 2003). A leader's knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment is a significant predictor of student performance (Stein & Nelson, 2003). Stein and Nelson add, "Without knowledge that connects subject matter, learning and teaching to acts of leadership, leadership floats disconnected from the very processes it is designed to govern" (p. 446). In other words, leaders ought to know something about the task they are leading. At minimum, the leaders should learn a "slice" of a particular subject, both how to teach it and how students learn it, so that they are able to identify good instruction (Stein & Nelson, 2003, p. 443). While having a deep and comprehensive knowledge is beneficial, there are common elements of good instruction that apply to many content areas.

It seems logical that those who observe and evaluate teachers would benefit from understanding subject matter in order to make valid judgments about how well a teacher is able to instruct (Browning, 2003; Nelson & Sassi, 2000). A principal's ability to determine if teachers are experts in teaching reading is especially important since "effective and powerful instructional from knowledgeable teachers is key to successful early reading achievement" (Fisher & Adler, 1999, p. 3). If principals are going to effectively evaluate reading instruction they need to know something about reading instruction.

Leithwood et al. (2008) believe the principal would have to be "heroic" in order to be expected to have the necessary amount of curriculum and content knowledge that they would need to be effective instructional leaders (p. 32). They warn that this type of expectation does more harm than good as it discourages potential principals and does little to improve the practice of current principals. They point to a lack of evidence that shows most principals have the time or ability to give the feedback that is required. In addition, "some principals may be curriculum meddlers rather than curriculum leaders" (Ross, 1992, p. 62). When this is the case, it may be better to have a distributed leadership model where instruction is led by those with more expertise than the principal.

***Combination of approaches.*** Portin et al. (2009) studied the leadership in 15 urban schools that were finding ways to improve. In these schools, leadership was shared among principals, assistant principals, and teacher leaders. The culture of the schools was team oriented and focused on data. Principals and supervisory leaders had both formal and informal interactions on a regular basis. Principals also led the instructional leadership team. These findings support a model of leadership that combines a focus on

instruction and shared leadership. Principals alone are unable to improve student achievement, nor can teachers do it without strong leadership (Printy & Marks, 2006). Optimal results occur through the combination of strong leaders who promote teacher leadership (Printy & Marks, 2006).

**Collaboration.** Collaboration is a practice that is a part of the organizational design of many successful schools (Chenoweth, 2012; Hallinger, 2011; Kanter, 2004; Waits et al., 2006). In high-performing schools, it is not just principals making decisions, teachers are also empowered to make decisions (Chenoweth, 2012). Collaboration will often come in the form of Professional Learning Communities where the goal is for teachers to learn from one another (Fullan, 2006).

In addition, in successful schools, collaboration will go beyond the teachers to include families that contribute to helping create community events and to shaping school policies (Anderson & DeCesare, 2007). Parent involvement contributes significantly to student achievement (Hattie, 2009). Murphy (2004) indicated that for reading achievement to increase there must be links between home and school. Schools are also more likely to experience successful outcomes if they not only collaborate within the school but also collaborate with other schools (Fullan, 2006; Harris, 2006). Unfortunately, while schools that are doing well are often given the freedom to be innovative and to collaborate, those that are struggling are penalized with tighter controls (Fullan, 2006; Harris, 2006).

With respect to reading instruction, reading specialists/coaches and classroom teachers should collaborate to address students' difficulties in reading (Galloway & Lesaux, 2014). While collaboration is important, the positive effects of collaboration may



be exaggerated if collaboration is not hinged to knowledge of reading instruction (Burch & Spillane, 2003). While some believe that collaboration is a vehicle for teachers to increase their knowledge and ultimately the levels of student achievement, others believe that in order for there to be effective collaboration, a high level of knowledge must be pre-existing. Collaborative efforts to improve instruction should include school leaders including teacher leaders, curriculum coordinators, and assistant principals (Burch & Spillane, 2003).

**Climate.** School learning climate refers to the “norms and attitudes” that “influence learning” in schools (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985, p. 223). Climate measures the organizational health of a school (MacNeil, Prater & Busch, 2009, p. 75). School climate is also a powerful determinant of teacher and student outcomes (Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012) so it is important that organizations work to create a positive school climate. Increased student achievement is associated with a school climate in which academic success is the primary goal (Hoy, 2012).

Collaboration can affect the climate of a school (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009). In a school with a positive climate, decision-making will be shared and diversity will be valued (Cohen et al., 2009). Collaboration should be authentic because forcing collaboration may increase teacher stress and impact the climate negatively (Collie et. al, 2012). Through fostering a climate of instructional collaboration, principals can positively impact student learning (Supovitz et al., 2010).

**Summary of leadership to improve academic outcomes.** The literature about school leadership’s positive impact on academic outcomes reveals many connections between different leadership approaches. A combination of approaches seems to have the

most promise to influence outcomes (Seashore Louis et al., 2010; Supovitz et al., 2010). Key leadership practices like collaboration are viewed as beneficial so long as there is a high degree of instructional knowledge in the system. While there are many approaches to leadership, leadership associated with increasing student achievement will address the general functions of Setting Directions, Developing People, and Redesigning the Organization.

### **Best Practices for Reading Instruction**

Leadership is hinged to instruction (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Successful schools must provide high-quality reading instruction (Murphy, 2004). Low reading outcomes are a problem that plagues low performing schools (Duke et al., 2007). Duke et al. (2007) studied the perceived challenges that faced principals of 19 low performing schools. All 19 schools reported that they had problems concerning reading and literacy, which was the only condition that was a common challenge for every school. Leaders need to know the best practices for reading instruction in order to improve reading achievement.

### **Reading Wars**

There has been much debate about the most effective approach for reading instruction and the argument is often referred to as the “Reading Wars.” The spectrum of approaches ranges from emphasizing primarily phonics instruction (matching letters and sounds) to “whole language” instruction where teachers prioritize comprehension (Schneider, 2016). The criticism of teaching reading through phonics alone is that it isolates the activity of decoding from the end goal of understanding what is being read (Schneider, 2016). When the pendulum swings too far in the direction of whole language

instruction, students who need more explicit instruction in order to solve words may be hindered in their reading development (Schneider, 2016). Due to the potential pitfalls of taking either approach to the extreme, a more balanced approach is often preferred and is referred to as “Balanced Literacy” instruction. With a balanced literacy approach, students are given access to authentic, high quality literature—through read alouds and independent reading—but are also given direct, integrated instruction on the essential components of reading.

The National Reading Panel (2000) identified five essential components of reading which must be addressed through instruction for a student to be able to read well: (a) phonemic awareness, (b) phonics, (c) fluency, (d) vocabulary, and (e) comprehension. The following are paraphrased descriptions of each of the components drawn from an abridged monograph of the National Reading Panel Report (Shanahan, 2005):

Phonemic awareness: The result of phonemic awareness instruction is that children will be able to hear the sounds within words. Being able to distinguish the sounds in words will prepare them to make the connections between letters and sounds that will enable them to read. Phonemic awareness instruction should be “simple, brief, and enjoyable.” It can be taught through songs, games, and other activities. Learning to segment words with ease can be accomplished during kindergarten and first grade.

Phonics: Phonics instruction enables students learning to read to be able to use letters/letter sounds and spelling patterns to decode words. Phonics instruction is appropriate for students in kindergarten through second grade as well as for

“remedial” readers. Systematic approaches like dictation and invented spelling are more beneficial than “opportunistic” or “responsive” approaches.

Oral Reading Fluency: Instruction in oral reading fluency aims to improve accuracy, speed, and expression. Repeated readings of text are key to increasing fluency. Students benefit from guidance and feedback. In addition to reading text repeatedly, students who take turns reading to partners also increase their oral reading fluency.

Vocabulary: Teaching students the meaning of words and word parts (such as prefixes and suffixes) can increase students’ reading comprehension. Vocabulary should be taught directly through explicit instruction and indirectly through independent reading and reading to them in a “read aloud.” Vocabulary instruction should incorporate reading, writing, and talking and there should be ample review of new words.

Comprehension: Comprehension can be developed through the use of strategies including summarizing, asking questions, story maps, graphic organizers, and monitoring comprehension. A combination of multiple strategies is effective and should be applied to both fiction and non-fiction. A gradual release approach is beneficial for students’ learning comprehension strategies. This means that the teacher models first, then the student practices with the teacher, and then the student practices independently.

According to the National Reading Panel, students who read well will have a strong foundation in the five components of reading. Many students who struggle with reading

need explicit, differentiated instruction in the various reading components in addition to having access to high quality, authentic reading materials.

### **Instruction for Struggling Readers**

Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) wrote, “Children who are having difficulty learning to read do not, as a rule, require qualitatively different instruction from children who are getting it” (p. 12). Instead, they more often need application of the same principals by someone who can apply them expertly to individual children or who are having difficulty for one reason or another (Snow et al., 1998).

**Reading recovery.** Reading Recovery is a reading intervention system developed by Marie Clay (1985). Reading Recovery’s individualized one-on-one instruction has been used throughout the world. Clay discovered that students’ processing of reading changed over time in a predictable manner as they gained independence. Students were able to use meaning structure and visual information efficiently in increasingly complex text as they developed as readers. Students who struggled were not able to process text efficiently, and with the intensive intervention and support from a trained teacher students were able to learn to process correctly. Reading Recovery was designed to accelerate the development of young readers who failed to learn to read in a traditional classroom setting (Clay, 1985). Lessons were designed to last 30 minutes for 20 weeks with a teacher who is a trained Reading Recovery specialist. Reading Recovery lessons consist of the following components:

- re-reading two or more familiar books independently
- giving a “running record” assessment in which the teacher listens to a student reading and monitors the errors to determine if they are due to meaning,

structural, or visual miscues and to determine if students are “self-correcting” when errors are made

- word work (and letter work when needed)
- writing with an emphasis on hearing sounds in words (reading/writing connection)
- reassembling a story which was cut up
- introducing a new book
- reading a new book

Clay believed that through these lesson components students would receive the differentiated instruction they needed in order to accelerate their reading.

**Small group guided reading instruction.** Unlike Reading Recovery which is one-on-one, small group guided reading instruction allows a teacher to work with more students while still giving them individualized instruction. In the Institute of Education Sciences’ 2009 practice guide report, small group instruction was cited as an essential element of intervention (Jones, Yssel, & Grant, 2012). Small group instruction is a practical way of increasing instructional time for students who struggle to read and is more effective than increasing the quantity of whole group instruction (Foorman & Torgesen, 2001). Hattie (2009) identifies providing instructional feedback to students as a highly effective practice. The small size of the group, compared to whole-class instruction, increases the opportunity for individual feedback from the teacher.

Guided reading instruction is a method of small group instruction that is considered an important “best practice” of a balanced system of reading instruction (Fawson & Reutzel, 2000, p. 96). It is an effective instructional strategy for children in

the early years of literacy development (Mooney & Teale, 2009). In fact, coaching provided in quality guided reading instruction may be one of the most significant factors that separates highly effective schools from lower performing ones (Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 1999).

Effective guided reading instruction requires skillful teaching that helps young readers learn the strategies that they need to develop into independent readers (Iaquinta, 2006). A form of small group guided reading instruction that incorporates the five components of reading is prescribed by Pinnell and Fountas (2009). It is an instructional method used to accelerate reading achievement for struggling students and is based on the work of Marie Clay. With the support of the teacher, students self-monitor; crosscheck for meaning, structure, and visual cues; and solve unfamiliar words while maintaining the meaning of the text (Pinnell & Fountas, 2009). Students learning to read with this systematic approach that includes an emphasis on these cueing systems will have superior outcomes in reading (Pinnell & Fountas, 2009).

Pinnell and Fountas developed Clay's ideas to create a guided reading lesson structure that includes the following general components:

1. A teacher works with a small group of students who are at the same reading level.
2. The teacher assists the student to read increasingly challenging books over time.
3. Students are regrouped as often as needed through observation and assessment.

The specific elements found in the three parts of a traditional guided reading lesson (Pinnell and Fountas, 2009) are:

1. Word-work
2. Introducing the text

3. Reading the text (while the teacher prompts, teaches, and reinforces)
4. Teaching for processing strategies
5. Discussing the text

In addition to these items, the teacher supports students in learning previously unknown vocabulary in addition to unfamiliar sentence and text structures within the guided reading lesson (Pinnell & Fountas, 2009).

**Guided reading plus and leveled literacy intervention.** Leveled Literacy Intervention (Fountas & Pinnell, 2009) and Guided Reading Plus (Dorn & Soffos, 2012) are two guided reading intervention systems that incorporate the elements of Reading Recovery (Clay, 1985) and which were used (but not required) in the district at the time of this study. The interventions differ from regular guided reading instruction (Pinnell & Fountas, 2009) due to the addition of a writing lesson every other day in which students compose a message in response to the previous day's text. Both formats require the teacher to give a student a running record assessment prior to the writing portion while the other students in the group read a book at their independent reading level.

Although they have similar formats, a key difference between Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) and Guided Reading Plus is that LLI is a boxed intervention system which provides scripted lessons. The lessons are aligned with leveled books which accompany the kit. Guided Reading Plus is an unscripted method, so the teacher designs the lessons based on students' individual needs and can apply the lesson to any book at the students' instructional level. The district offered trainings for both systems. At the time of the study teachers could enroll in a two-year early literacy course offered through



the district to learn to implement Guided Reading Plus and to develop expertise in taking and analyzing running records.

In a study which explored the effectiveness of LLI, students who received the intervention significantly outperformed students in a control group who did not receive the intervention (Ransford-Kaldon, Flynt, & Ross, 2011).

**Early intervention.** Research indicates that *when* students learn to read is just as critical as *how* they learn to read. Students who start their schooling below grade level in reading generally stay below grade level in reading (Farkas et al., 2008; Juel, 1988; Lesnick, et al., 2010). In Juel's seminal 1988 study, the researcher followed 54 students from first grade to fourth grade. Juel discovered that there was an 88 percent chance that a poor reader in first grade would remain a poor reader in fourth grade. It is in the early grades that high quality instruction and intervention have the greatest potential to increase student achievement (Lesnick, et al., 2010; Reschly, 2010; Torgesen, 1998). Beyond primary grades, it becomes more difficult to intervene with significant results (Lovett et al., 2000). Schools with high literacy outcomes develop "safety nets" to prevent young students from falling behind (Murphy, 2004). They develop interventions to ensure that students who have fallen behind their peers are able to catch up (Fletcher, 2011; Murphy, 2004).

There are some cautions that accompany the promises of early intervention including that intervention may need to continue beyond primary grades (Hurry & Sylva, 2007). Allington (2011) believes that there is promise for intervention in middle school and suggests that the lack of middle school research may be due to federal policies that have emphasized reading proficiency by the end of third grade. The fact that correlation

does not mean causation must also be considered for studies that suggest that if students are not on grade level by third grade they are less likely to graduate. Getting students on grade level by third grade does not guarantee high-school graduation. Factors like poverty may contribute greatly to the failure of students to graduate even if they are brought to grade level in reading by third grade (Lesnick et al., 2010). Regardless, if reading on grade level early is an indicator of later success, while other factors like poverty should not be ignored, neither should the potential benefits of ensuring that students get off to a good start with reading.

**Summary for best practices in reading instruction.** The National Reading Panel (2000) determined that reading instruction should address five components of reading: (a) phonemic awareness (the ability to hear and segment sounds in words), (b) phonics (the relationship between sounds and letters), (c) fluency (reading with accuracy, speed, and expression), (d) vocabulary (learning and understanding new words), and (e) comprehension (understanding a text). A balanced literacy approach to reading instruction gives students access to high quality, high-interest text in addition to providing direct integrated instruction on the five components of reading.

When students struggle to read, instruction should address the same principles as students who are reading on grade-level but with someone who can apply the principles expertly (Snow et al., 1998). Reading Recovery is a one-on-one reading intervention developed by Marie Clay (1985) with a goal of supporting a student's ability to process text by addressing meaning, structural, and visual cues. Small-group guided reading instruction (Pinnell & Fountas, 2009) addresses the same processing issues but can meet the needs of more students since it is in a small group setting. Guided reading

intervention systems such as LLI (Fountas and Pinell, 2009) and Guided Reading Plus (Dorn and Soffos, 2012) are two small group reading interventions which have increased reading outcomes for primary grade students. The literature indicates that through early intervention and integrated instruction on the five components of reading that students reading abilities can improve.

For students who struggle to read it is important to intervene early. Students who are below grade level by third grade generally stay below grade level without intervention in the primary grades (Farkas et al., 2008; Juel, 1988; Lesnick, et al., 2010). Schools with high literacy outcomes provide early reading intervention (Murphy, 2004).

### **Summary of the Literature Review**

Raising the level of academic achievement on a large scale is challenging for schools with high numbers of at-risk students. The literature suggests that student achievement will increase when leadership effectively addresses Setting Directions, Developing People, and Redesigning the Organization (Leithwood, 2004). In order to operationalize general leadership functions, more detail about how they are expressed in different contexts is needed (Hallinger, 2011; Herridge, 2013; Leithwood et al., 2010).

Leadership is hinged to instruction (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Low performing schools characteristically have low reading outcomes (Duke et al., 2007). In order to improve reading achievement, research on best practices for reading instruction recommends a balanced approach where students have the opportunity to read high quality, high interest texts as well as receive direct, integrated instruction on the five components of reading. Students who struggle will benefit from one-on-one interventions such as Reading Recovery or small group guided reading instruction.

Literature on early intervention indicates that it is important for students to read proficiently in primary grades to ensure later academic success and that with intervention many students can achieve this goal.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

An explorative, comparative, multiple-case study design was used to answer the research question: What are the specific leadership practices in three similar schools with varying reading achievement outcomes in primary grades?

Case studies are useful for answering questions about why or how something happened (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2015). Case studies are used when one wants to find answers to explain a complex phenomenon. Schools are complex systems so understanding how leadership actions in three similar schools may have contributed to significantly different reading outcomes required close observation and careful listening to the people in the schools. Unlike other methodologies, case studies often rely a great deal on interviews and observations in order to get a first-hand account of what contributed to the phenomenon being studied. In this case study, interviews, observations, documents, and a survey were used to gain an understanding of the leadership practices at each school.

### **Research Design**

Yin (2014) provides clear explanations of design, data collection, analysis, and composition which should be adhered to in the production of a quality case study. This case study followed Yin's guidelines. In this case study, findings were strengthened and validated through triangulating information from multiple sources including interviews, surveys, documents, and observations (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014) as well as through

studying multiple cases (Yin, 2014). The goal of this case study was to expand and refine theory without suggesting that findings can be applied to other settings. It is impossible to make generalizations in case studies due to the small sample sizes. Although the results are not generalizable, “rich, thick description” (Geertz, 1973) was provided to help readers determine the extent that they believe the results of this study may be transferrable to another setting (Merriam, 2009). The onus is on the reader to determine if a case they are viewing has similarities to the ones in this study.

Successful case studies often begin with a theory or hypothesis (Yin, 2014). The operating theory of this case study was that leadership in all of the schools would Set Directions, Develop People and Redesign the Organization (Leithwood et al., 2004) but that there would be differences in how they did these things which contributed to their primary grade reading outcomes.

This case study used a multiple-case study design due to the analytic benefits of studying multiple cases (Yin, 2014). The more cases there are, the stronger the effects, so a case study having at least two cases is preferable (Yin, 2014). This case study consisted of three similar schools and therefore has stronger results than if the study had only one or two schools.

By studying multiple cases, by triangulating data from multiple sources, and by providing “thick description” the researcher was able to fulfill the purpose of this study which was to provide specific information about leadership practices in three similar schools with different primary grade reading outcomes.

## Cases

The three schools in the study were Thomas Elementary, Andrews Elementary and Robertson Elementary (all pseudonyms). They were in the same urban school district in Colorado and had similar demographics and differing levels of achievement in reading in primary grades according to 2015/16 Colorado READ Act data. High percentages of free and reduced lunch (indicating poverty) and high percentages of students of color are two factors commonly associated with schools that have low reading achievement outcomes. Therefore, using district's School Performance Framework Report (SPF), the three schools that were selected had at least 70% of students who received free and reduced lunch and where at least 70% of the students were students of color.

In order to make sure that the schools not only met the criteria but were also as similar as possible, the SPF's "At-Risk" scores were used to identify the schools. Schools are assigned an "At Risk" score as part of the SPF according to risk factors including the percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch, the percentage of students of color, and the percentage of English language learners. The lower the score, the fewer at-risks students. The 2015/16 "At Risk" scores on the SPF similar schools report ranged from 4.0 (lowest risk school in the district) to 57.8 (highest risk school in the district). Thomas Elementary had an at-risk score of 50.3, Andrews Elementary had an at-risk score of 52.1, and Robertson Elementary had an at-risk score of 51.6. All three schools also had a high percentage of English language learners among other "risk" factors, including percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch, percentage of minority students, and percentage of students receiving special education. At each school, most students in Kindergarten through second grade who spoke Spanish as their first

language received instruction in Kindergarten through second grade primarily in Spanish according to district guidelines (unless their parents opted out). READ Act data includes Spanish-speaking students who are on grade level in Spanish as being proficient. The table below provides percentages of students in each school for Free and Reduced Lunch, English Language Learners, Special Education, and Minority students (students of color) for the 2015/16 school year.

Table 1

*Percentage of Students in At-Risk Categories at Each School in 2015/2016*

School	Free and Reduced Lunch	English Language Learners	Special Education	Minority
Thomas Elementary	91%	50%	10%	97%
Andrews Elementary	92%	60%	10%	94%
Robertson Elementary	88%	67%	8%	95%

Choosing schools with varying reading outcomes was important since the same practices that occur in high-performing schools may also occur in failing schools (Bracey, 2008). Therefore, the selection criteria required at least a 20 percent-point difference between the highest and lowest scoring similar schools in 2015/16. The difference between the highest and lowest scoring schools in the 2015/16 school year was 35% points. Two of the schools selected had increasing primary grade reading outcomes over three years from 2013/14 to the 2015/16 school year (one with higher outcomes than the other) and the third school had lower and “flat” outcomes over the same three-year



period (decreasing over a two-year period). It was important to include data from previous years to show the school’s trajectory over time and to ensure the scores themselves were not anomalies.

Early literacy outcomes reported in the district’s School Performance Framework (SPF) provided confirmation that the selection of schools was appropriate. According to the SPF report, the highest-scoring school in this study was “meeting” expectations in early literacy, the second highest-scoring school was “approaching” expectations, and the lowest-scoring school was “not meeting” expectations. The designation was made using two years of data: 2014/15 and 2015/16.

Table 2

*Early Literacy Growth: School Performance Framework 2016*

School	READ Act Growth (Early Literacy)
Thomas	Not Meeting
Andrews	Approaching
Robertson	Meeting

Table 3

*Grades K-3 Overall Read Act Results: Percent of Students Reading On-Grade-Level (Spring)*

School	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016
Thomas	45%	49%	46%
Andrews	49%	52%	56%
Robertson	68%	69%	81%

## **Data Collection**

Once the schools were selected, permission granted, and access to participants was secured (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014), the researcher collected data to capture specific leadership practices that corresponded to three leadership principles from the conceptual framework: Setting Directions, Developing People, and Redesigning the Organization (Leithwood et al., 2004). The researcher collected data from multiple sources including surveys, interviews, observations, and documents. The study began with the administration of the survey and was followed by interviews and observations (see Appendix B for interview questions). Each school's principal sent the survey link to school staff through school e-mail. Teachers were notified about the opportunity to be interviewed and observed and volunteered to participate. Data collection spanned for just over one month in the Spring from April 21 to May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2017. Survey, interview and observation participants received a \$10 gift card.

## **Interviews**

Interviewing is important for researchers who want information which cannot be observed or found in a document. It is especially important when a researcher is trying to find out about events that happened in the past (Merriam, 2009). The interview questions were drawn from the conceptual framework including Setting Directions, Developing People, and Redesigning the organization (Leithwood et al., 2004). The interviews were recorded and transcribed. One principal, one assistant principal, two teachers, one reading interventionist and one instructional coach, were interviewed at two sites. The third site had the same participants minus the instructional coach since the coach was the researcher. Interviews lasted from 20 minutes to 45 minutes.

Interviews in qualitative studies tend to use more open-ended questions using a semi-structured or unstructured format (Merriam, 2009). Open-ended questions yield richer results (Merriam, 2009). For this study, it was also important to use open-ended questions so that respondents were not led in a particular direction. For example, although the study is interested in leadership practices associated with primary grade reading outcomes, there were no interview questions asking directly about early literacy or early intervention practices. If these things were important they would emerge from the data. The questions were prepared in advance. Questions were followed up with more probing questions for clarification or explanation such as, “Tell me more about that.”

While interviewing, it is important to make the person being interviewed feel at ease. The interviewer must be non-judgmental, respectful, and sensitive to the interviewee (Merriam, 2009). Prior to the interviews and with the desire to make the subject feel at ease, the researcher explained the purpose of the interview, let the participants know that the interview would be recorded with their permission, and asked the subjects if they had any questions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009). At the end of each interview it was important to let the subject share final thoughts (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009). This allowed the interviewee to share anything that they thought was missed and that that they felt was important.

### **Observations**

Observations are a valuable source of information in case studies (Yin, 2014). In this case study, the researcher observed leadership meetings, the reading blocks of two primary teachers at each school, and primary grade interventionists conducting a reading lesson at each school.

As with interviewing, prior to observing it was important to put the subject at ease and to explain the purpose of the observation. The researcher jotted down notes during the observation and then recorded descriptive field notes as soon as possible after the observation. Field notes included descriptions of the setting, people, activity, direct quotations, and comments (Merriam, 2009).

### **Surveys**

In order to capture more voices across grade levels and positions at the school, a survey was distributed to all instructional staff, support staff and leaders in the school. The survey items were drawn from the conceptual framework in the study (Setting Directions, Developing People, and Redesigning the Organization; Leithwood et al., 2004) and also included items to gather descriptive information from the school and participants including the position of the respondent, how many years in education, how many years at the school, and additional certifications. Some survey items had a Likert Scale, some items were short written responses, and one question required items to be placed in rank order (see Appendix C).

The sixteen survey respondents from Thomas Elementary included eight primary teachers, one intermediate teacher, two school leaders, four support staff, and two paraprofessionals. Of the eighteen survey respondents from Andrews Elementary, six were primary teachers, five were intermediate teachers, five were support specialists, and two were paraprofessionals. There were twenty-two survey respondents at Robertson Elementary including five primary grade teachers, five intermediate grade teachers, four leader/teacher leaders, five specialists/support, and three paraprofessionals.

## **Documents**

Documents are a common source of data in case studies (Yin, 2014). The documents analyzed in this study were the Unified Improvement Plans for each school. The Unified Improvement Plan provided data about the school's goals and priorities. The use of the documents in this case study served to corroborate evidence.

## **Human Subject Protection**

Schools were given pseudonyms and participants were not named. The district was not named and was simply referred to as "the district." The district's teacher evaluation framework is not named and when teachers refer to it in interviews or survey responses it is referred to as "the teacher evaluation framework." All participants signed a consent form which stated that their responses would be confidential (see Appendix A). Participants could opt out of the study at any time.

## **Data Analysis**

One strategy for analyzing data in a case study is to address the theoretical propositions of the case study (Yin, 2014). In this case study, the theoretical propositions arose from the literature review and culminated with the Leithwood et al. (2004) framework as the lens through which data would be collected and analyzed. The theoretical proposition of the study was that all the schools would Set Directions, Develop People, and Redesign the Organization (Leithwood et al., 2004) but that these functions would be applied differently in schools with different primary grade reading achievement outcomes. Since the literature about school leadership lacks specificity about leadership practices (Herridge, 2013; Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood et al., 2010) the results of this study would contribute details in the area of literacy leadership.

The researcher used the Dedoose computerized qualitative analysis program to assist with the analysis, organization, and retrieval of the data. Open coding was used to assign codes as they emerged from the data. The data was coded and analyzed for each school separately. According to Merriam (2009, p. 178), other names for “answers” to research questions are “categories,” “themes,” “patterns,” or “findings” and so the research question guided the analysis. Repeated codes and codes that were similar were combined into categories that would help answer the research question. As subsequent data for each school was analyzed, it was determined if findings corresponded with the initial codes and categories. If they did, the same code was assigned, and if they were different, a unique code was assigned. Through the open-coding process, the most significant categories (answers) became apparent. The Dedoose program assigns different colors to codes depending on the density of the codes that emerge which also helped with the identification of major categories. Once coding revealed a major category, then the description of corresponding leadership and instructional practices was retrieved easily with the assistance of the Dedoose program which links the codes to the data in the transcriptions, documents, survey responses, and observation notes.

Since this was a multiple-case study, there were stages of analysis which Merriam describes as the within-case analysis and the cross-case synthesis (Yin, 2014). As it was a comparative study the researcher analyzed each case separately (within-case analysis) and then compared findings (cross-case analysis). Comparing the findings of the three cases in this study served to confirm or dismiss the hypothesis of the study: While all schools would Set Directions, Develop People, and Redesign the Organization, there

would be differences in how corresponding leadership practices were enacted in schools with different primary grade reading achievement outcomes.

### **Reliability and Validity**

In order to ensure reliability, the researcher made sure that the results were consistent with the data that was collected (Merriam, 2009). The color coding through Dedoose helped to check research bias since things that appeared to be important during data collection could be confirmed or denied by considering the colors that Dedoose assigned to codes. During analysis, the researcher was careful to consider whether the interview or question specifically asked about a particular practice which could result in a code being assigned often but not necessarily suggesting significance. Therefore, when a code emerged frequently even though a survey or interview question didn't directly ask about it, or when a code was assigned often as well as broadly across the spectrum of interview and survey questions, the code was considered particularly significant. Most codes could be absorbed into representative categories. Data which did not seem to fit a representative category was still considered important as the incongruence itself shed light on leadership practices at each school.

In order to ensure internal validity, data was triangulated through the collection of data from several sources including interviews, documents, observations, and surveys (Merriam, 2009). Within each source of data, findings were strengthened by doing several interviews, conducting multiple observations, and collecting surveys from multiple leaders and staff members. In doing so, the findings felt saturated in that the researcher "hear[d] the same things over and over again" (Merriam, 2009). The coding process increased the sense of saturation. The researcher also ensured internal validity of

the study by conducting member checking. All participants of the interviews were provided with their interview transcripts to review in an effort to ensure that the researcher captured what they intended to say (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995).

### **Limitations**

Because of the qualitative nature of this study and the small sample size (three schools), the results of this study are not generalizable (Creswell, 2013; Mirriam, 2009). Although the schools are similar according to the SPF (the criteria for the study), there are differences in the number of kindergarteners at each school from 2013/14 through 2015/16, the years for which READ Act data is provided for this study. All of the schools had at least partial kindergarten programs. Some kindergarteners who would have previously attended the schools now attended one of the district's early childhood centers. To address this limitation, READ Act scores adjusted for grades one through three are displayed in Table 4 below. According to the adjusted scores, the schools still met the criteria for the study with a difference of at least 20 percentage points between the highest and lowest-scoring schools in the 2015/16 school year (43% points difference). Since the adjusted scores (first through third grade) and the original kindergarten through third grade (K-3) READ Act scores are consistent and follow the same patterns as the original K-3 data, the original (unadjusted) K-3 READ Act results from the SPF report will be used for reference throughout the study.



Table 4

*Adjusted Grades 1-3 Overall Read Act Results: Percent of Students Reading On-Grade-Level (Spring)*

School	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016
Thomas	39%	45%	38%
Andrews	45%	51%	52%
Robertson	69%	69%	81%

Another limitation is that teachers and principals who are interviewed may not have been aware of all the factors that impacted student achievement and will be reporting their perceptions. Also, although instruction in the observed classrooms may be representative of instruction across classrooms, instruction could vary widely across primary grades. The Unified Improvement Plans may reflect espoused plans and foci and not what actually happened at the school in 2015/16.

Researcher bias may also be a limitation. The researcher was the literacy facilitator/coach at the highest-scoring school during the time of this study. The researcher did not know in advance that her school would be the highest-scoring school that met the criteria for selection, and it was selected with the conviction that it would have been a natural choice for another researcher who used the same criteria for selection. The potential bias was also mitigated by having multiple schools in the study since having three schools increases the strength of the results (Yin, 2014).

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This study aimed to answer the following research question: What are the specific leadership practices in three similar schools with varying reading achievement outcomes in primary grades? The results of the study are reported for each school followed by a cross-case analysis. Insights into how the leadership practices are functioning as a system at each school are also be provided in the conclusion of the comparison section.

The results for each school begin with the report of the survey outcomes. The conceptual framework for the study (Leithwood et al., 2004), composed of leadership functions that must be addressed improve student outcomes (Setting Directions, Developing People, and Redesigning the Organization), guides the presentation of results from the open-ended survey responses, interviews, observations, and the Unified Improvement Plans (UIPs). Each leadership function is further divided into specific practices.

For each school the section entitled “Setting Directions” includes the sub-sections of “Vision,” “Expectations for reading achievement,” “Strategy for increasing reading Achievement,” and “Monitoring progress.” The section “Developing People” includes the sub-sections “Support for instruction” and “Professional development.” The section “Redesigning the Organization” includes the sub-sections “Leadership model,”

“Collaboration,” and “School climate.” As with the main sections, the subsections are leadership practices that are tied to the conceptual framework of the study.

### **Thomas Elementary**

The data for Thomas Elementary comes from 16 online surveys, six observations of leaders and teachers, the Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) for the 2015/2016 school year, and six interviews including one of the principal, assistant principal, instructional coach (Senior Team Lead), a first-grade teacher, a second-grade teacher, and a reading interventionist. For reference, the READ Act Results for Thomas Elementary are below.

Table 5

*Thomas Elementary READ Act Results: Percent of Students Reading On-Grade-Level*

Year	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016
READ Act Outcomes	45%	49%	46%

### **Survey Results- Thomas Elementary**

The sixteen survey respondents from Thomas Elementary include eight primary teachers, one intermediate teacher, two school leaders, four support staff, and two paraprofessionals. Survey participants were asked to list additional certifications, years at the school and in education, to rate the level of support they have to increase reading achievement, and the degree of collaboration. They were also asked to place factors in rank order that they believe contributed to the reading achievement at their school in primary grades (including teacher skill, school leadership, professional development, socio-economic status, family and cultural background, language, and other). Specific

survey items and responses are included in the appendices (Appendix C and Appendix D).

Table 6

*Thomas Elementary Survey Results*

School	Additional Certifications or Licenses	Years Working at School	Total Years in Education	Support to Increase Reading Achievement: Agree or Strongly Agree	High Degree of Collaboration: Agree or Strongly Agree	Positive School Climate: Agree or Strongly Agree	Top Factors that Contribute to Reading Achievement
Thomas 46% on grade level	50% (6 out of 16)	Mean:5.6 Median:3.5 Mode:3	Mean:8 Median:8 Mode:8	100%	95%	75%	1. Teacher Skill 2. Leadership

Referring to Table 6 above, half of the survey participants at Thomas Elementary had an additional license or certificate beyond a teaching license. Out of seven survey participants who listed additional certificates, four had a master’s degree and two were board certified suggesting a well-educated staff (although less so than the other two schools in the study when considering the percentage of participants with additional licenses or certificates). Based on the mean, median, and mode, the staff was relatively novice when considering total years in education (compared to the other schools in the study). The mean, median, and mode for the number of years at Thomas Elementary suggests that the staff was rather new to the school, yet this is similar to the other schools in the study and so implications are negligible. It is notable that 100 percent of survey participants at Thomas Elementary believed they had the support they needed to increase reading achievement. The percent of participants who believed that they have a high degree of collaboration is also high at 95 percent. The climate was fair with 75% of

participants believing that there was a positive climate. Participants believed that teacher skill and leadership are the top two factors contributing to reading achievement.

**Setting directions.** The following section describes the leadership actions for Setting Directions through vision, expectations for student achievement in reading, strategies for increasing reading achievement and monitoring progress at Thomas Elementary.

**Vision.** Most teachers and leaders at Thomas Elementary were able to recite or write the school's vision word for word even though in the survey and interviews they were only asked to describe the school's vision in their own words. Responding to the question about the school's vision, a teacher said, "We actually try to memorize ours, so I can say it verbatim. We at Thomas Elementary in partnership with parents and community foster our students' independence, critical thought, and enduring love for learning." The assistant principal likewise quickly stated the vision and upon completing her recitation remarked, "That's it, word for word." Ten out of fifteen teachers surveyed stated the vision word for word or included most key words in the description of the vision. Four out of six teachers and leaders who were interviewed recited it word for word and of the two that didn't recite it verbatim, one still included all the key words and only one interviewee stated just one of the key phrases.

According to the principal, the vision was "developed with leaders first and then with the teachers." Although most of the teachers and leaders appeared to know it based on the representative sample in the study, the principal stated that the vision hasn't yet been realized. He said, "The vision—what that looks like in practice, we're definitely not where we want to be yet." Although the vision did not specify reading, teachers and

leaders report a strong focus on reading at Thomas Elementary. A teacher and the assistant principal said that every day ends with the words “Read baby read!” coming over the loud speaker. One teacher said, “I think reading is just in every pore of what we do.” Another teacher described the school as “reading-centric.”

*Expectations for student achievement in reading.* Teachers and leaders at Thomas Elementary stated that they set high expectations for their students’ achievement in reading. The codes “high expectations” and “big goals” were repeated often throughout the coding process and were combined into one category, “high expectations.” “Big goals” was a phrase that interviewees used consistently when responding to the question, “What is your school’s expectation or goal for reading achievement?” Teachers and leaders who were surveyed and interviewed stated the expectations in different ways, but the most common responses were either “at (or on) grade level” or “at or above grade level.” Most respondents indicated that the expectations apply to all students. The school used the district’s aim-line as their measurement tool to determine whether students were reaching monthly grade-level benchmarks throughout the year. The district aim-line provided monthly goals based on DRA (Development Reading Assessment) levels. The open-ended survey responses suggest that the school’s expectations for reading are high overall, although varying responses suggest that individually there is variance in how high. Among 16 survey participants, five indicated that students should be at or above grade level, three indicated they should be on grade level, three suggested one or more years’ growth, three suggested growth in general, three said “all students are readers,” and two included the phrases “love of learning” or “enjoying reading” as goals which echoed the formal school vision.

A teacher described the process they use to set goals for reading:

The teachers at the beginning of the year set big hairy audacious goals, b-hags they call them, and one of them is around reading—that students will either finish their class on grade level or grow more than a year and a half to be able to close their gap. (Interview, Spring, 2017)

These goals reflect the commonly reported expectation that all students would be at or above grade level. The principal also described the school's goals for reading achievement:

So, my school leaders and I have some very high expectations. We want kids in kindergarten to be at a DRA 16, which is incredibly high, it's much higher than the district, it's much higher than what lots of teachers have, but as a school we come together each August and we set big goals for the year. So, teachers will say, qualitatively quantitatively by end of year what's my goal for achievement? And we do that before we look at beginning of year data, before we look at anything, and just if we taught zero days of this school year and we can shoot for the stars and land on the moon or land on the stars, and we have every day in front of us to make that happen... (Interview, Spring 2017)

The principal perceives that the schools goals for reading are high and that it is important to aim high.

In summary, using the district's aim-line to determine the standard for grade level proficiency, teachers and leaders at Thomas Elementary set high expectations for reading achievement although there is variance in how the expectations were articulated, indicating a variance in how high the expectations were from one teacher to another.

*Strategy for increasing reading achievement.* As their strategy to increase reading achievement, Thomas Elementary primarily focused on conferring with students and providing extended time for independent reading. The codes “independent reading” and “conferring with students” were assigned often throughout the coding process. The category “independent reading” was comprised of the combination of the codes “read long” and “independent reading” which were both assigned frequently.

Students read independently every day with “just right” books that were at their individual reading levels. On the topic of independent reading, one of the assistant principals who worked primarily with primary grades said:

If you have the opportunity to sit ... and read for 30 min and your teacher comes and listens to you with fidelity, you're reading every single day for 30 minutes, you're becoming a better reader just by reading. You don't necessarily need instruction happening all the time to you. (Interview, Spring 2017)

This indicates that the assistant principal believes that providing extended time to read independently is more beneficial than providing extended time for direct reading instruction.

Each grade had goals for the amount of independent reading time. For example, in kindergarten teachers aimed to have their students read 20 minutes and first grade teachers aimed to have students read 25 minutes. The assistant principal added, “Just right books are a huge piece because if you don't have the right books you're not going to read for an extended period of time.” The principal said whole group “mini lessons” are to be short. They are to be “ten to twelve minutes—ten to fifteen minutes—so that there’s time for that independent reading.” The principal indicates that it is important to



ensure that students have ample independent reading time and that a lesson that is too long will take time from independent reading. A teacher was observed reminding her students to “read long and strong” during independent reading. She explained that this was to increase endurance. Students were observed doing independent reading in the hallways and in classrooms.

In addition to independent reading, teachers focused on conferring with students. The assistant principal said that conferring with students is “a huge emphasis.” Teachers reported that they confer with students at least once a week. Teachers were observed circulating amongst the students during independent reading and conferring with individual students. A teacher explained that during the conference the teacher listens to individual students read and then gives each student a tip to practice which they will check the next week to make sure students are doing it. The teacher explained, “I have journals on each kid, so I do lots of conferring with them where I listen to them read and give them a strategy to use next time, and then I have it on paper so I can ask them again, are you scooping now, are you using word attack strategies? Are you using any of those things?” Keeping a record of conferences helps the teacher to monitor students’ use of reading strategies. Another teacher confessed that it can be difficult to confer with every student every week when you have 27 students.

***Monitoring progress.*** Monitoring progress using data was a major practice at Thomas Elementary. In fact, improving data-driven implementation was the first strategy listed in the school’s UIP (Unified Improvement Plan) designed to increase student achievement in the 2015/2016 school year. The density of codes also indicated that “progress monitoring” was the school’s most emphasized practice. The codes that were

combined to create the category of “progress monitoring using data” were “data teams,” “use data,” “school wide tracker,” “progress monitoring,” and “Istation.” Istation is the computerized assessment which the district uses to monitor reading achievement.

Teachers monitored students’ progress in reading monthly using data received from the Istation test. Teachers also monitored their students’ progress during individual reading conferences. Every Wednesday after school, grade level teams had data-team meetings for 50 minutes. The meetings were led by a “team specialist” (a teacher on the grade level team). Teachers focused on analyzing reading data once every three weeks. Writing and math were the focus the other two weeks.

As a form of accountability teachers entered their data in a school-wide data tracker using Google Docs prior to the data team meetings, which allowed teachers to see each other’s data. According to one teacher, they entered the data prior to the meetings instead of “wasting everyone’s time just trying to understand what is the data and instead we’ll focus on what we’re going to do about it next.” She added, “We’re really using that time most wisely.” The school-wide trackers were implemented after the current principal arrived three years ago. The principal explained the reason for having this transparent system for tracking student growth:

It was a ‘rip the band aid off’ type of situation for teachers. Before it was all housed in that room next door, and it was closed most of the time, and it was... teachers felt very guarded about their own data. There was lots of talk when I came to this school. Everyone wanted to talk about how so-and-so is inflating the data and all this other stuff. I didn’t know, I didn’t know the kid. Coming in and basically saying, ‘we’re just going to open up everything.’ So now any teacher in

the school can open up and see what grade level any kid is on in reading, how the trajectory has grown. (Interview, Spring 2017)

The trackers provide transparency and accountability with respect to sharing students' reading progress.

The principal changed the process for analyzing data upon his arrival three years ago. Previously, teachers analyzed data only once a month. There was a data wall at that time but it wasn't updated. Data teams used to meet once a month from 7:30 to 8:10 in the morning. According to a teacher leader/coach they switched the time to the afternoon after school because it was difficult to focus before school started. She said:

All you're really trying to think about is what you're going to do all day with the kiddos, making your copies or whatever, so it wasn't really a productive time and there wasn't a lot of accountability in terms of what you should bring or have prepared in order to study the data and make plans from it. (Interview, Spring 2017)

Switching the time to the afternoon allowed teachers to be more prepared and to pay more attention to the work. Previously, administrators led the meetings, but at the time of this study, grade-level team specialists led the data meetings.

***Setting directions- summary.*** Three themes arose with respect to how Thomas Elementary sets directions: high expectations, monitoring progress using data, and a combined instructional focus on conferring with students and independent reading.

Participants' consistent use of key words and phrases when stating the vision statement also resulted in a high number of repeated codes; however, these codes were mostly confined to instances where participants were prompted directly by the survey or

interview questions to describe the vision. What is notable concerning the vision of Thomas Elementary School is how well the teachers and leaders can recite it. According to the principal, the vision has yet to be realized.

In light of the results concerning setting direction, there appears to be a philosophical tension at Thomas Elementary between the vision of engendering an “enduring love for learning” and the data-driven goal of having all students on grade level. Students spent time reading independently mirroring the authentic way which adults enjoy books, however, the love of learning was not a theme which arose from the data outside of the formal vision statement.

**Developing people.** The following section describes the leadership actions for developing people through supporting instruction and professional development at Thomas Elementary.

**Supporting instruction.** Teachers reported a very high level of support to improve reading achievement. One hundred percent of survey respondents reported that there is a high level of support to increase reading achievement. Support was provided primarily through coaching and external professional development. The major category of “coaching” arose from the combination of the codes “coaching,” “support by coaches,” and “feedback,” which were assigned often throughout the open-coding process.

Teachers were supported by coaches including four “Senior Team Leads” and three administrators, including the principal and two assistant principals. Each coach had a case load of seven to eight teachers. A teacher describing the support he received said, “There’s coaching, a lot of real-good coaching.” He added, “We’re a heavily coached team, I meet with my coach once a week. We’re observed on an extremely regular

basis.” The coaches gave feedback (“lots of feedback,” according to another teacher) on what teachers were doing well and on what they needed to do to improve. This indicates that teachers receive coaching and feedback often.

The Senior Team Leads were selected through a “pretty rigorous process” according to the assistant principal who led kindergarten through first grade. First of all, they had to be proficient teachers themselves according to the district’s evaluation framework. They had to interview, analyze a video, and write how they would coach the teacher. They also had to participate in a role-play with the principal where the principal behaved like a resistant teacher. If the applicant did well they progressed to meeting with the principal. The senior team leads received support from the administrators to improve their coaching. The administrators wanted to be “aligned” with the senior team leads on the feedback they gave to teachers who were struggling.

The coaching model is something that changed over the past three years. One of the teachers said, “They’ve gotten more coaches so that the coaching happens more frequently. Each coach now had less teachers so that they were able to come in more.” The principal elaborated on this change:

Two years ago, my two APs (and I) basically took that model and tried to do it as thoroughly as we could. So, every teacher had a one-on-one coaching conversation every week, and we had set locked in times and they’d have an observation a day or two before that. That was another shift for the building in that folks were like, ‘what are you doing in my room?’ but then over the year relationships grew really strong with teachers, and teachers welcomed the feedback for the most part. Last year was our first year with the differentiated

roles. Now [there is] teacher [and] leadership collaboration, we have senior team leads coaching teachers one-on-one every week. (Interview, Spring 2017)

In other words, coaching expanded from only the administrators providing coaching to administration and teacher leaders (Senior Team Leads) providing coaching.

All of the coaches aimed to coach their teachers at least once a week through observation and feedback. Coaches also supported teachers with lesson planning and writing objectives. The principal reported that teachers received coaching on how to make the whole group “mini-lesson” last less than fifteen minutes to ensure students had ample time to read independently. They tried to align coaching with evaluation so if teachers were being coached in reading and writing then the corresponding instruction would be evaluated.

While Senior team leads proposed to align their work with the instructional foci, especially areas concerning conferring and independent reading, the tool they used to evaluate teachers and provide feedback was the district’s evaluation framework which measures a broad range of teacher actions such as creating a positive classroom culture and climate; effective classroom management; masterful content delivery; and high-impact instructional moves. There appears to be a lack of alignment between the instructional foci and the tool the coaches used to measure teacher effectiveness.

Despite the reported abundance of coaching, a first-grade teacher said she needed more coaching, especially on the topic of conferencing:

I’m not very fast at it. You’re ideally meeting with each kid each week which is a lot with 27 kids. Plus, [we have to meet with] groups in a 30-minute time [period

each] day. So that's one area I definitely want to improve to get faster and to just improve my quality of conferring. (Interview, Spring 2017)

Another teacher suggested that the school needs to support teachers more with direct instruction as she didn't believe conferencing and independent reading met many of the student's needs:

I think that we really need some guidance around balancing the Lucy Caulkins curriculum with the traditional way reading is done with guided reading groups and moving kids around during that time. There is a huge difference between the two. Lucy is very much like everyone is workshopping the whole time, and it is much more on conferring and everyone is reading the whole time and there is less of small group work and so I think there has been a huge shift in really doing some targeted skills instruction and leveled instruction versus just having kind of a chat about the book they are reading. So, I think we are needing a little bit of both so that kids aren't just becoming better readers just from the volume of books they're reading but from the actual targeted instruction from the teacher. (Interview, Spring 2017)

This teacher did not think that teachers were able to meet all of their students' needs through independent reading and conferencing. The teachers interviewed seemed concerned with the quantity of direct instruction students were receiving and having the time to do it.

Considering the abundance of coaching support, the reported lack of efficacy around conferring and a teacher's concerns about the instructional strategies raises questions about the strategies and their alignment with the tool used for evaluation and

feedback. The evaluation framework focuses on a myriad of teacher moves but does not have specific indicators for speed of conferences, length of independent reading, or length of mini-lessons.

***Professional development.*** The density of codes indicated that professional development (PD) is an important part of developing teachers, although it is to a lesser degree than coaching. Teachers were developed primarily through external professional development opportunities (rather than in-school PD). The code “outside-PD” recurred frequently throughout the coding process. A teacher described professional development as “mostly the off-campus stuff.” For example, teachers had either already gone or would be going to training in New York. The principal sent twelve people to the Reading and Writing Institute in New York two years ago in his first year and last year he sent seven. The Senior Team Lead reflected on traveling for professional development:

They send us to trainings all the time. The principal worked with the reading and writing project for a long time so he kind of has an in to get us into the day workshops or the summer week-long programs, and I think I'm one of probably 10 teachers who are going to go to a week-long training in New York, expenses paid. The workshop is paid, the flight is paid, the hotel is paid so the school prioritizes teachers learning the curriculum and having the supports so that we don't feel like we're on our own trying to foster literacy and follow this curriculum. (Interview, Spring 2017)

Sending teachers to New York indicates that the school is invested in their instructional strategies for reading.



Teachers also went to “outside-PD” in Denver. The AP said that they go to trainings when “Lucy [Caulkins] comes [to Denver] with her with her whole team.” She added, “It’s some of the best PD you’ll ever have because they go very deep on things and we’ve gone ourselves so we know exactly what it looks like and we have great content knowledge of it because we’ve gone.” In his first year, the principal said he sent 17 teachers to this training. The year of this study they sent 19 to the same workshop. Teachers also visited classrooms in other schools as another form of “outside” professional development.

The principal stated that data teams were the primary means of professional development within the building and took the place of staff meetings.

Data teams actually have been, for three years now, our main professional development, so looking at standards, looking at how students are doing, planning from the data, is probably what most of our professional development has been.

(Interview, Spring 2017)

The principal indicates that using data to drive instruction is considered their main form of professional development. The idea of data teams as professional development was supported by a teacher who said, “Other than that [outside PD] a lot of professional development has been the data teams work that we’ve tried. Another teacher further described data teams as professional development:

We look at the data teams as a time for professional development because it allows the teachers time to really dig into their data. See which kids are making progress and which kids are not, and then to be able to brainstorm with their team and their coach all at the same table [to see] what can we do to get these kids to

move and what strategies we have for these other kids who are moving. And so, we really do look at that PD time—sorry, data time—as professional development. (Interview, Spring 2017)

It is clear that analyzing data and identifying next steps for students was considered to be a form of professional development at the school.

In addition to data teams which were considered professional development, the principal and others led optional in-house PD sessions usually early in the morning. He stated, “There’s a large handful of folks that come to some of those things. So, we’ve done it around conferring or around mini-lessons and a lot of other ones also.” Most coaches in the school also provided modeling as a form of professional development.

***Developing people- summary.*** After coding and analyzing the data two themes arose with respect to how teachers are supported. Support was provided through coaching and “outside” professional development. The density of codes indicates that professional development was important, but to a lesser degree than coaching. The emphasis on coaching as well as the fact that all teachers (100%) believe they have adequate support to increase reading achievement raises a question about the effectiveness of the instructional practices that the coaching revolved around and the alignment of coaching to the school’s instructional strategies. The teacher evaluation framework which the coaches used addresses general teacher actions and not specific instructional strategies for reading other than in an appendix for intervention teachers. Externally, the “readers workshop” was the focus of professional development, while internally data teams were considered the primary form of professional development. Teachers were supported to

grow professionally through external professional development but there did not seem to be an internal mechanism to leverage their collective learning.

**Redesigning the organization.** The following section describes the leadership action for Redesigning the organization through the leadership model, collaboration, and school climate.

**Leadership model.** Thomas Elementary School’s organizational design was one of distributed leadership and team collaboration, which was made evident in coaching and evaluation processes as well as in the data-team meetings. It was a small-school model where one assistant principal led ECE through first grade, one assistant principal led second and third grades, and the principal led fourth and fifth grades as well as overseeing all grades. The roles of coaching and evaluation were shared amongst the three administrators and the Senior Team Leads. In addition, each grade level data team had its own team specialist who led the work.

**Collaboration.** Collaboration was emphasized by the educators at Thomas Elementary, and teachers reported that it primarily occurred within grade-level teams. Ninety-five percent of survey respondents believed that there was a high level of collaboration at the school. The three often-repeated codes “collaborate in teams,” “team planning,” and “collaborate” were combined and produced the major category, “collaboration.” Grade level teams meet at least twice a week for data teams and also for team planning.

Collaboration in teams varied by grade level. The principal stated that some teams divvied up the work and some teams planned each subject together. A teacher described collaboration on his team: “We meet regularly to collaborate... we put our calendars

together, we put down what we're doing every single day and share information." He added, "The teachers here are more than willing to help, our model of helping others. We're going to have a new teacher next year and I said something about sharing my lesson plans with her and [she] was like, 'you'd share your lesson plans?'" Another teacher described collaboration on her team: "And I think this year has been really good, like I said my team has formed a really nice team, and so we do a lot more talking and problem solving outside of what's required just because we do get along so well." She added, "We spend a lot of time at lunch talking about how the morning went, and how this lesson went, and then helping each other modify if we're ahead or behind a day or two." The teachers collaborate by planning and supporting one another collegially.

Although it wasn't referred to as much as "team collaboration," collaboration did occur across teams and with administrators and students. For example, teachers and leaders collaborated to create a school-wide goal for increasing reading achievement. According to the Senior Team Lead, teachers first created "bhags" (big, hairy, audacious goals) and when realizing that many teams prioritized reading levels as their goals, this became a school-wide goal. Staff meetings were vertical and teachers and administrators worked together to plan lessons, review student data, and create next steps. Teachers had formal meetings with special education teachers and interventionists as well as informal meetings, and had quick check-ins as they passed in the hallways. Administrators had an open-door policy which also contributed to the sense of school-wide collaboration. A teacher described his relationship with administration.

They are very willing to listen to things. This is a second career for me, I came from the business world where I had bosses that were like 'I don't pay you to

think,' literally, and I am consistently amazed and pleased with how much they are willing to listen to me, even though maybe my ideas are something they've heard a thousand times and they know it doesn't work, but I think I'm a genius for bringing it up and they listen to me and they respect my practice which is very, very important to me. (Interview, Spring 2017)

This teacher feeling heard and respected is an indication of a collaborative environment.

There was also collaboration with parents. Every Friday morning each "small school," led by its administrator, had a community meeting with students, teachers, and parents. In an observation of a primary grade community meeting, the administrator shared students' progress in reading with the parents who attended. In his interview, the principal shared that he wished to increase collaboration and communication with parents. Since a high level of collaboration is generally associated with positive outcomes a question was raised as to what is missing in the collaborative process in light of primary grade reading outcomes. Results indicate that collaboration at the school is defined by distributing coaching and evaluation duties, by working together on grade-level teams to analyze data and discuss their instructional response to the data, by inviting parents to community meetings, and by being heard by administration. The high number of novice teachers at the school indicates that the voices of experienced teachers may be missing from the collaborative conversation.

***School climate.*** Overall, teachers and administrators believe there is generally a positive climate at the school. 75 percent of survey respondents agreed that there was a positive climate. A teacher described his perception of the climate:

I love it here. It is my favorite place I've ever worked in my life. I'm not saying everybody's perfect here, I'm certainly not perfect, but I love it, people are more than willing to help, they're nice people, I hang around after school and do stuff. It is the best place I've ever worked. I feel very, very lucky that I've been able to work in this building. It's a great school and we've had some teachers come from other schools because they've heard this is a great school, it really is, it is a fantastic place to work. (Interview, Spring 2017)

While 75 percent of respondents indicated that there was a positive climate, 25 percent—a significant percent—did not think it was positive. A teacher said, “There was a belief by some teachers last year, and I wasn't one of them, who believed that administration would ask (for) people's opinions, but then not listen to their opinions.” She added, “I mean I still think these teachers were kind of used to being the head of our classrooms, [and were] kind of like ‘you should have listened to us.’” The principal also described the climate:

Actually building-wide we have a very positive school-student climate and culture. But I think that some of the loudest voices in the room, sometimes like at a team meeting, are some of the folks who have their own little island in the building and therefore can be negative sometimes and negative with other staff which then sometimes leads to things with students. (Interview, Spring 2017)

Not everyone was part of the collaborative culture and not everyone felt heard. The fair climate suggests that the organization is relatively healthy; however, 25 percent of teachers reporting a negative climate suggests that systems in the school could function more optimally.

***Redesigning the organization- summary.*** Thomas Elementary has a distributed leadership model where teacher leaders and administration share the role of evaluation and coaching. Collaboration was a major theme at Thomas Elementary with the majority of collaboration occurring within teams. Since a high level of collaboration is generally associated with positive outcomes, a question is raised as to what or who might be missing in the collaborative process. Data indicate that teachers define collaboration as working together congenially to analyze data and to plan lessons. Their ability to make the most of collaborative structures may have been impacted by having a relatively small gene pool of mostly novice teachers since collaboration is strengthened by diversity (Cohen et al., 2009). Climate is an indication of the overall health of the organization and the reported climate indicates that there was an underlying issue that needed to be addressed.

### **Conclusion- Thomas Elementary**

The following table summarizes the practices associated with the leadership functions of Setting Directions, Developing People and Redesigning the Organization at Thomas Elementary.

Table 7

*Thomas Elementary: Practices Aligned with Leadership Functions*

Leadership Functions						
<u>Setting Directions</u>			<u>Developing People</u>	<u>Redesigning the Organization</u>		
Set High Expectations for Reading Achievement	Emphasized Monitoring Progress for Reading	Focused on Reading	Provided High Level of Support	Formal Distributed Leadership	High Level of Collaboration	Created Positive Climate
X	X	X	X+	X	X	X

*Note.* X+ indicates the practice was present at the school to a high degree. X indicates it was present. -- indicates the practice was mostly absent.

As illustrated in Table 7, the results of the study of Thomas Elementary indicate that the school articulated high expectations for reading achievement, they emphasized progress monitoring using data, and had a dual instructional focus on conferring and independent reading as the strategy for increasing reading achievement. The formal school vision that the teachers had memorized sought to engender an “enduring love of learning,” and yet participants in the study didn’t talk about the love of learning and the love of reading more broadly throughout the study. This suggests that the vision was not yet realized.

In relation to developing people, the school had a major emphasis on coaching and a secondary emphasis on external professional development. Despite 100 percent of teachers reporting that they received the support they need to increase reading achievement, one teacher said she needed more coaching since she struggled trying to confer with all 27 of her students every week and another said that many students



appeared to need more direct instruction. While there appeared to be ample support, there is some evidence of a struggle to meet students instructional needs.

Concerning redesigning the organization, Thomas Elementary had a small-school model where leadership was distributed amongst teacher leaders and administration. This practice of having teachers and leaders sharing evaluation and coaching responsibilities and having collaborative structures like data teams and led to teachers reporting a high degree of collaboration. While 95 percent of teachers reported a high degree of collaboration, 75 percent of survey participants reported a positive climate. Diversity and communication is important for effective collaboration (Cohen et al., 2009) and at Thomas Elementary most teachers were novice (compared to the other schools in the study) and not everyone felt heard. The fair climate indicates systems in the school are functioning but not optimally.

Overall, there is a sense that Thomas Elementary implemented leadership practices associated with high student achievement outcomes. They articulated having a focus on reading, everyone could recite vision, leadership was distributed, the level of collaboration was reported as high, as was the level of coaching and support. It seems no cost was too high as teachers were flown all expenses paid to New York for professional development. Yet, despite having these leadership practices, the school had the lowest reading outcomes of schools in this study.

### **Andrews Elementary**

The data for the study of Andrews Elementary comes from 18 online surveys, six observations of leaders and teachers, the Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) for the 2015/2016 school year, and six interviews including one with the principal, assistant

principal, an instructional coach (Senior Team Lead), a first-grade teacher, a kindergarten teacher, and a reading interventionist. For reference, the READ Act Results for Andrews Elementary are below.

Table 8

*Andrews Elementary READ Act Results: Percent of Students Reading On-Grade-Level*

Year	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016
READ Act Outcomes	49%	52%	56%

### **Survey Results-Andrews Elementary**

Eighteen people responded to the survey at Andrews Elementary. Six of the respondents were primary teachers, five were intermediate teachers, five were support specialists, and two were paraprofessionals. Survey respondents were asked to list additional certifications, years at the school and in education, to rate the level of support they have to increase reading achievement, and to rate the degree of collaboration. They were also asked to place factors in rank order that they believed contributed to the reading achievement at their school in primary grades (including teacher skill, school leadership, professional development, socio-economic status, family and cultural background, language, and other). Specific survey items and responses are included in the appendices (see Appendix C and Appendix D).

Table 9

*Andrews Survey Results*

School	Additional Certifications or Licenses	Years Working at School (average)	Total Years in Education (average)	Have Support to Increase Reading Achievement: Agree or Strongly Agree	High Degree of Collaboration: Agree or Strongly Agree	Positive School Climate: Agree or Strongly Agree	Top Factors Contributing to Reading Achievement
Andrews 56% on grade level	67% (12 out of 18)	Mean:4.5 Median:4 Mode:4	Mean:12 Median:9 Mode: 6,7,14,15,20	61%	56%	39%	1. Teacher Skill 2. PD

Referring to Table 9 above, almost 70 percent of the survey participants at Andrews Elementary had an additional license or certificate beyond a teaching license. Among the twelve survey participants who listed additional certificates, five had a master’s degree and four had cultural/linguistically diverse certifications (the school had a higher percentage of additional licenses and certifications than the other two schools). Based on the mean, median, and mode, the staff is fairly experienced when considering total years in education. Overall, they are more experienced than the staff of Thomas Elementary and less experienced than the staff at Robertson Elementary. The mean, median, and mode for the number of years at Andrews Elementary specifically (5.6, 4.5, and 5.6 respectively) suggest that the staff overall is rather new to the school, yet this is similar to the other schools in the study. It is notable that only 61 percent of survey participants at Andrews Elementary believe they have the support they need to increase reading achievement. The percentage of participants who believe that they have a high degree of collaboration is also relatively low at 56 percent. Likewise, a very low percent of participants—39 percent—believe that the climate is positive. Participants believe that teacher skill and PD are the top two factors contributing to reading achievement.

**Setting directions.** The following section describes the leadership practices aligned to Setting Directions including vision, expectations for reading achievement, strategy for increasing reading achievement, and monitoring progress.

***Vision.*** The vision statement of Andrews Elementary is: “To develop independent, innovative learners through bi-literacy and enrichment to ensure their future success in an ever-changing world.” There was some inconsistency in the degree that interview and survey participants knew the vision for the school. For example, ten out of twenty survey participants mentioned bi-literacy when describing the school vision, while only one out of twenty mentioned independent learners (both words/phrases are part of the formal vision). The principal and assistant principal didn’t believe that the school had a shared vision and planned to develop a stronger shared vision in the future. The principal described the current state of the school vision:

Sometimes the mission and the vision is just this big cloud out there and it sounds really, really good but we’re not constantly talking about it, our goals every month to, um, to that end. That just seems like a lofty thing that’s not as concise as our monthly goals. So, I think bringing those things together would be, would be a really good thing to do. And if we have to change it a little bit, we may need to do that too because it’s been three years since we’ve had that mission and vision and a few things are changing a little bit so that’s something to think about.  
(Interview, Spring 2017)

The assistant principal also believes that the school needs to establish a shared vision:

I think moving forward, we as a school need to have a shared common mission and vision, like I don’t know if you asked every single staff member you may get

34 different answers. I think going into next year '17-18 we need to all have a very clear focus on what our goals are and how we're going to get there.

(Interview, Spring 2017)

Teachers agreed that they were not on the same page. One teacher said, "We have no idea what goes on upstairs. They have no idea what goes on down here." Another teacher stated that if she could change anything she would want more PD so that "they could get us aligned with each other." A survey participant responded, "Our meeting agendas are not grounded and many of us have different ideas about what should be getting accomplished in a certain time period, and it does not happen. We need strong leadership in this regard." The school lacks a shared vision and, as a result, teachers are not aligned in their purpose.

***Expectations for reading achievement.*** While Andrews Elementary did not have a strong shared school vision that is connected to the formal vision statement, they did share high expectations for student achievement in reading. Two often-repeated codes of "growth" and "high expectations" were combined to form the category "high expectations." Teachers and leaders wanted their students to be at or above grade level in reading. They wanted 80 percent of students to be on grade level by third grade.

Responding to the question about expectations for reading achievement, one teacher said:

Well, on grade level. So, we have an Istation score that they need to hit and then we have a DRA score that they need to hit. So, the expectation is for them to all hit that. But, of course, we have students that came in not on the trajectory to hit that so their goal is a year or more of growth. (Interview, Spring 2017)

This teacher indicates that they wanted students to meet targets that determined grade-level proficiency.

The district aim-line provided monthly targets based on DRA (Development Reading Assessment). Hitting the monthly targets meant that they were on track to being on grade level by the end of the year. The administration expected teachers to move their students at least one proficiency band according to the computerized test, Istation. Tier 3 students (significantly below grade level) needed to move to Tier 2, and Tier 2 students needed to be Tier 1 (on grade level, according to Istation). In addition to using the Istation targets, the school used the district's aim-line as their measurement tool to determine whether students were reaching monthly grade-level benchmarks throughout the year. Survey participants were asked what the school's goals or expectations for reading were. Out of 18 responses, seven people said they wanted students to be on grade level, two said Tier 1 (which is on grade level according to Istation), two indicated at or above grade level, six said to grow in general, one said a year and a half growth, one said that students should exceed district expectations.

According to the principal, expectations changed over the past three years due to the new early literacy category on the School Performance Framework (SPF). The school would get points towards meeting expectations if students in primary grades increased their achievement. There was also an increased understanding about the importance of early literacy if their students were going to do well on the PARCC test. She said, "I think the main difference is just that now there are higher accountability measures and expectations [for early literacy]." The staff reported high expectations for reading prompted by accountability measures.

*Strategy for increasing reading achievement.* There were two main strategies for increasing reading achievement at Andrews Elementary: progress monitoring using data and small-group guided reading instruction. There was also a focus on early literacy although it was not emphasized to the same degree as using data or small group-guided reading instruction. “Using data” was by far the single most repeated code when analyzing the data for the school. Other codes were then combined with this code to produce the category “progress monitoring using data” were “progress monitor,” “aim-line meetings,” “data team meetings,” and “Istation.” The strategies of progress monitoring using data and small group reading instruction were aligned to the top two items on their UIP which were reported to be lacking in previous years and which they would need to focus on in the 2015/16 year. On their UIP they reported that the reason their students were not yet meeting their instructional targets was due to:

- Lack of data use in day-to-day lesson planning and differentiation
- Lack of targeted small group instruction based on data analysis
- Lack of fidelity to literacy squared & GLAD program
- Lack of consistency in planning for and teaching content language objectives

The principal confirmed the top two items in the UIP as major strategies when she was asked what the school’s main strategy was for increasing reading achievement. She responded, “This year we have really focused on data meetings and daily guided reading, and we have monthly aim-line meetings with every single teacher so that they really look at their students’ skills...” The principal hoped to increase outcomes through these practices.

The focus on data as the primary strategy for increasing reading achievement was confirmed by the assistant principal when she was asked what the school's main strategy was for increasing achievement:

Microscopic look at data, it really is. Coaching cycles, making—ensuring best practices happening in the class, ... but then once we move past that really looking at the data and finding out not only where they're at, but why they're there, and then targeting specific intervention skills or enrichment if that's necessary for that particular student... (Interview, Spring 2017)

This indicates that looking at closely at data drives their work towards their goals of increasing reading achievement. Regarding looking at data a teacher/Senior Team Lead said, "We've really geared ourselves with the literacy tracker and Istation to really look at data, and to be really purposeful about how we're re-teaching and working with the students on specific skills." This statement corroborates the use of data as the primary means of increasing reading achievement.

Another teacher referred to the Istation test as the school's sole strategy for increasing reading achievement to the degree that she couldn't think of another strategy, even when the question was followed up with a probing question about whether there might be other school wide instructional strategies:

Researcher: What is your school's strategy for increasing reading achievement?

Teacher: What we're using right now is what [the district] is using which is Istation.

Researcher: Ok.

Teacher: That's the main thing.



Researcher: That's like the main way to measure it? Do you have any particular strategies in your school that you are using to increase the performance on Istation?

Teacher: Oh, the strategies. School wide?

Researcher: Like the instructional strategies?

Teacher: Not school wide that I know of. (Interview, Spring 2017)

This teacher's response indicates that the school lacked a shared instructional strategy to increase reading outcomes

Students took the Istation test once a month. Teachers entered their data on an aim-line tracker and met once a month one-on-one for "aim-line" meetings with the SAL (Site Assessment Leader) to talk about where the students were in comparison to where they should have been according to the district's aim-line. Teachers had to come to the meetings prepared with their data and left the meetings with specific "next steps" for students. The principal, the assistant principal, and the Site Assessment Leader met once a week to discuss reading data. Grade level teams participated in weekly data teams for 45 minutes alternating between focusing on reading data and math data. The second-grade teacher noticed an increase in the use of data over the past three years which was consistent with the goal to increase use of data as outlined in the Unified Improvement Plan. She said, "We've looked much more carefully at data. I don't think the expectations have changed, but I think that the way that we're looking at data has changed." Teachers are looking at data more often to monitor their students' progress and to know what their students need to work on.

In addition to using data, small group guided reading instruction was a focus at Andrews Elementary. One teacher said, “In first grade we need to be doing guided reading every single day.” Another teacher said, “We have very specific plans for the students who are in Tier 3 and Tier 2 and what we’re going to teach in our guided reading groups and small groups to support those students.” The assistant principal stated that the teachers have a “strong command of what guided reading should look like.” Guided-reading instruction was observed in all of the classrooms that were visited in the study, including in two kindergarten classes (one was a combined first grade/kindergarten class), a second-grade classroom, and in the observation of a reading interventionist.

Teachers indicated that guided reading needed to be more of an emphasis in the future and that it is an area for improvement. A survey participant said, “We have not had any formal training in guided reading groups, and although we pull small reading groups, our data shows that this is an area where we could improve as a school.” Another survey participant said, “They have been focused on other areas for the last three years. Many teachers have stressed the importance of guided reading and small group instruction, but administration did not agree.” There is considerable variability amongst the teachers and administration regarding the best approach for reading instruction.

While teaching guided reading was a requirement, there was inconsistency in how it was administered. Some teachers guided two groups a day while others did three. According to one teacher, there wasn’t a stated expectation for how many groups should be led per day. Teachers had different approaches to their small group reading instruction. Some teachers did a “guided reading plus” model that is taught through a two-year certificate course offered in the district which consists of word work, a book

introduction, guided practice with feedback, a discussion, as well as a second day where students write a written response to the previous day's reading. A kindergarten teacher was observed practicing a different form of guided reading where students read to each other in pairs while the teachers gave them feedback. The group was ten minutes long. A group in second grade was longer.

While not an emphasis to the degree that using data and guided reading were, Andrews Elementary also focused on early literacy as a strategy for increasing reading achievement. The principal stated, "I think just the biggest shift for them is making sure that students are on grade level by third grade." The assistant principal described the purpose for this focus:

We want to make sure that when they leave third grade—but we go back to first grade too, because we know statistically, I don't know if you did any research on Allington, but if you don't leave first grade (on grade level), you're probably not going to leave third, if you don't leave third, you're not going to leave eighth, and if you don't leave eighth, you're not going to graduate. So honestly, we go back to everything making sure we make our benchmarks because third grade is too late.

(Interview, Spring 2017)

The assistant principal indicates that wanting to students to graduate motivates them to focus on early literacy. The first-grade teacher confirmed a focus on early literacy: "We really focus on literacy especially in the younger grades... early literacy." The school focuses on early literacy but the instructional practice (guided reading) needs attention to make it a more effective and a consistent school-wide practice.

***Monitoring progress.*** Andrews Elementary has a strong focus on monitoring progress, so much so that it is considered their primary strategy for increasing reading achievement, over and above the instructional strategy of providing guided reading instruction and as such was described in detail in the section Strategy for Increasing Reading Achievement.

To review, after students completed their monthly Istation computerized reading tests, teachers tracked their data monitoring the students' proximity to the district's reading aim line. Once a month teachers met with the SAL (Site Assessment Leader) to discuss how students were doing and what their next steps should be. The principal, assistant principal, and the SAL also met weekly to review reading data. Grade level teams conducted weekly data teams for 45 minutes revolving between monitoring reading and math data.

***Setting directions- summary.*** Three main themes arose with respect to how Andrews Elementary sets directions: high expectations, an intense emphasis on progress monitoring using data, and a moderate focus on small-group guided reading instruction. There is a notable, yet lesser emphasis on early literacy. While interview participants were able to describe many elements of the school's formal vision statement, there is agreement among teachers and principals that the school does not currently have a strong shared vision.

***Developing people.*** The following section describes the leadership actions aligned with Developing People including supporting instruction and professional development at Andrews Elementary.

*Supporting instruction.* The coding process revealed that developing people was not an emphasis at Andrews Elementary. Support by Senior Team Leads who are half-time coaches and evaluators was the only form of support that emerged with any regularity throughout the data. Senior Team Leads are teachers who are also half-time coaches and evaluators. The year of this study was the first year that the district's full teacher leadership model with Senior Team Leads was implemented at Andrews Elementary. The previous year there were some team leads who were teachers and half-time coaches but they didn't evaluate. According to the assistant principal, they just "got their feet wet as to how coaching looks and how it works." At the time of the study there were two more coaches who were Senior Team Leads and they all coached and evaluated. The coaches provided support with literacy and with math. Every teacher had a coach and every coach had a case load of about six people. The AP described the coaching process:

They going through coaching cycles, they go in and observe, sometimes it's a walk through, sometimes it's a scored partial, but then they have bitesize feedback that they give them as far as how to improve and what is the next step in literacy instruction. So, if they're observing writing and they are noticing something then they would target that. If it's the process of Guided Reading, then they target that. It's really the coaches in the building that really set up goals and structures for each of the teachers. (Interview, Spring 2017)

In other words, coaches evaluate teachers and give them feedback on their reading and writing instruction.

With respect to Senior Team Leads, one Senior Team Lead said, “I think there’s more support now with coaching, I just don’t know if that’s completely something that people have taken on yet, to be completely honest.” The range of responses indicate that there were mixed feelings about having Senior Team Leads serve as coaches as well as about their role as evaluators.

***Professional development.*** On the topic of professional development, an early literacy specialist (who is also a Senior Team Lead and half-time intervention teacher) brought back information around early literacy from the district for primary teachers. There were several two-hour modules that she narrowed down to 40 minutes each because the teachers were upset about it, perceiving it as a repeat of the summer PD that all primary teachers had already had to attend. The early literacy specialist completed the Guided Reading Plus training offered by the district. The course is a two-year graduate-level certificate course. She modeled guided reading for teachers and helped them create a schedule so that they could do guided reading every day. Teachers were encouraged to take the district’s Guided Reading Plus course. According to the assistant principal, five or six teachers had either taken the Guided Reading Plus course or were currently enrolled.

The principal reported that the school network’s literacy partner came in to provide guided reading support and provided planning templates for guided reading. There were also some learning labs for “literacy-squared” which is a curriculum for teaching bilingual Spanish-speaking students and other than that a survey participant responded that teachers learn from each other.

There was a sense that professional development activities were lacking or needed to be improved. One teacher said, “I think that our school could maybe do a better job maybe focusing on one specific thing that we could grow in with literacy, and developing PD around that.” Another teacher said, “Haven’t had a lot [of PD].” The assistant principal expressed hope that the following year, when they would have early release days, they could offer individualized professional development, which is another indication that professional development opportunities were lacking.

***Developing people- summary.*** Developing people was not multi-dimensional or strategic at Andrews Elementary as “support by Senior Team Leads” was the only code of any significance related to developing people. The apparent lack of support is consistent with the survey data that indicated that only 61% of survey participants felt they had the support they needed to increase reading achievement. Teachers felt they needed more professional development to improve reading instruction.

**Redesigning the organization.** The following section describes the leadership actions corresponding to Redesigning the Organization and includes the leadership model, collaboration, and school climate.

***Leadership model.*** Andrews Elementary had a distributed leadership model having adopted the district’s distributed leadership model in which teachers are leaders. There were four Senior Team Leads who coached and evaluated a case load of teachers. The principal and assistant principal also evaluated teachers.

***Collaboration.*** Collaboration in teams was an important feature of the school but there was a marked consensus that there was a lack of school-wide collaboration. “Lack

of collaboration” was a code that was assigned often throughout the coding process. A survey participant commented on this apparent contradiction:

As a grade level, we have great collaboration. We are constantly meeting and discussing our students—data, pacing, behavior, ideas, etc. However, as a school, we have very little collaboration. We don't have time to meet as a whole school very often, and that makes it difficult to collaborate. (Interview, Spring 2017)

The school prioritizes team collaboration above school-wide collaboration.

The codes “team planning,” “data teams,” and “collaboration with teams” were combined to form the category “team collaboration.” Teams met two to three times a week for team planning and data teams. One teacher said, “Well, the teams all collaborate and work with each other in every aspect. At least we do, I think the other teams do.”

Another teacher agreed that there was an emphasis on team collaboration:

I think there's a lot, like team collaboration is huge. And I think it's... we do a lot here ... I feel like I'm super open to talking to lots of people or asking for help from different people. And I get coached from my team lead and I work really well with my team mate and to talk about kids and data and all that. (Interview, Spring 2017)

Grade level teams collaborate through coaching, looking at data together, helping one another, and planning together.

Concerning a lack of school-wide collaboration, one teacher thought there could be more collaboration with coaches and administration. Another teacher said that whole school collaboration is not in place. A Senior Team Lead stated that there is no vertical collaboration. A survey participant explained why she believes collaboration is missing:



This has been a difficult year in terms of collaboration. I often think teachers feel like they are competing with each other and that should not be the case. Teachers need to have the attitude that the whole school is ours, not just our classroom. I do believe that the teacher evaluation framework has made certain teachers not want to share their ideas and classroom successes. (Interview, Spring 2017)

Many teachers have not embraced evaluation by their colleagues (Senior Team Leads) and as such collaboration has been hindered. Another survey participant said, “Everybody is worried about their own classroom and their own growth, not the school as a whole.” One reason for the sense of the lack of collaboration school-wide is that the staff never met as a whole group together in staff meetings or professional development meetings. According to the assistant principal, there was no common time for the whole staff to meet.

*School climate.* According to the survey, only 39 percent of teachers agree or strongly agree that there is a positive climate in the school. The principal stated that due to falling enrollment several teachers lost their positions, a factor that may also contribute to the school’s current climate. With respect to the climate at the school, the assistant principal said, “I just felt like we weren’t connected. Hence another reason why I think we have to extend our days somehow or do something different, and so that we can get our minutes in Monday through Thursday and take two hours to be together for professional development for collaboration or just culture and climate.” The level of collaboration can affect school climate (Cohen et al., 2009) and only 56 percent of teachers stated that there was a high degree of school-wide collaboration. A survey respondent said, “Many are excluded from the planning process which leads to low

morale.” Another said, “Administration uses the terminology frequently, but doesn’t provide ways for the collaboration to occur. There is continual monitoring, evaluating, and decision-making that excludes those that are teaching the students.” The low level of collaboration contributed to a negative climate.

**Redesigning the organization- summary.** The organizational design at Andrews Elementary lacks cohesion. Despite a distributed leadership model, there was a notable lack of school-wide collaboration. Although there was a lack of school-wide collaboration there was a strong sense of collaboration on grade-level teams. The whole staff never met together, yet grade-level teams met regularly which further explains the contradiction. The associated school climate was mostly reported as negative with teachers expressing that they were excluded from planning and decision-making.

**Conclusion- Andrews Elementary**

The table below (Table 10) shows the leadership practices which were present at Andrews Elementary and is followed by a summary of the practices.

Table 10

*Andrews Elementary: Practices Aligned with Leadership Functions*

Leadership Functions								
<u>Setting Directions</u>					<u>Developing People</u>	<u>Redesigning the Organization</u>		
Set High Expectations for Reading Achievement	Emphasized Monitoring Progress for Reading	Focused on Reading	Focused on Early Literacy	Focused on the Reading Assessment	Provided High Level of Support	Formal Distributed Leadership	High level of Collaboration	Created Positive Climate
X	X+	X	X	X+	--	X	--	--

*Note.* X+ indicates the practice was present at the school to a high degree. X indicates it was present. -- indicates the practice was mostly absent.

Major themes aligned to setting directions were: high expectations, an intense focus on using data and on the primary grade reading assessment (Istation) to the point that one teacher called it their only strategy to increase reading achievement, and a focus on small group guided reading instruction. There was a reported focus on early literacy.

Developing people was not an emphasis other than support for teachers by Senior Team Leads (coaches). The support from Senior Team Leads hadn't been completely embraced by teachers which appears to stem from discomfort with peer evaluation. Survey and interview participants also reported a lack of professional development and a lack of support.

With respect to redesigning the organization, results indicate that there was a lack of school-wide collaboration despite adopting a distributed leadership model. There was higher degree of collaboration reported within grade-level teams. Only 39 percent of survey participants stated that there was a positive climate.

The data indicate that Andrews Elementary is missing many leadership practices that are associated with improving student achievement. There was a lack of support to increase reading achievement, a lack of professional development, a lack of collaboration, and a negative school climate. The school did utilize guided reading but the implementation was varied, expectations were unclear, and teachers desired more support to improve their practice. Despite the lack of leadership practices associated with increased student achievement, the school had higher outcomes than Thomas Elementary who appeared to have these leadership practices in place. While guided reading instruction possibly made a difference despite its low level of implementation, an

emphasis on progress monitoring and a focus on the reading assessment (Istation) may have contributed to the school having higher reading outcomes than Thomas Elementary.

### **Robertson Elementary**

The data for Robertson Elementary comes from 22 on line-surveys, six observations of leaders and teachers, the Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) for the 2015/2016 school year, and five interviews including one of the principal, assistant principal, two first grade teachers, and an interventionist. The table below with Robertson Elementary’s Read Act results is provided for reference.

Table 11

*Robertson Elementary READ Act Results: Percent of Students Reading On-Grade-Level*

Year	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016
READ Act Outcomes	68%	69%	81%

### **Survey Results**

Five primary grade teachers, five intermediate grade teachers, four leader/teacher leaders, five specialists/support, and three paraprofessionals responded to the survey at Robertson Elementary. Respondents were asked to list additional certifications, years at the school and in education, to rate the level of support they have to increase reading achievement, and the degree of collaboration. They were also asked to place factors in rank order that they believe contributed to the reading achievement at their school in primary grades (including teacher skill, school leadership, professional development, socio-economic status, family and cultural background, language, and other). Specific

survey items and responses are included in the appendices (see Appendix C and Appendix D).

Table 12

*Robertson Survey Results*

School	Additional Certifications or Licenses	Years Working at School (average)	Total Years in Education (average)	Have Support to Increase Reading Achievement: Agree or Strongly Agree	High Degree of Collaboration: Agree or Strongly Agree	Positive School Climate: Agree or Strongly Agree	Top Factors Contributing to Reading Achievement
Robertson 81% on grade level	59% (13 out of 22)	Mean:5.6 Median:4 Mode:4	Mean:15 Median:14 Mode:10,12,14	85%	96%	91%	1. Teacher Skill 2. Leadership

Referring to Table 12 above, almost 60 percent of the survey participants at Robertson Elementary had an additional license or certificate beyond a teaching license. Among the thirteen participants who listed additional certificates, two had a master’s degree, two had a bilingual endorsement, two had an early-childhood endorsement, one was certified to teach gifted and talented students, one was a licensed psychologist, and one was a school counselor. This indicates that the school had a moderately educated staff in comparison to the other schools in the study (having a higher percentage of additional licenses and certifications than Thomas Elementary, but a lower percentage than Andrews Elementary based on the sample). With respect to the mean, median, and mode, the staff is very experienced when considering total years in education. According to the representative sample, they appear to be more experienced than the staff at both other schools. The mean, median, and mode for the number of years at Robertson Elementary specifically (5.6, 4, and 4 respectively) indicates that the staff overall is

somewhat new to Robertson when compared to their years in education more generally, yet this is comparable to the other schools in the study.

It is notable that 85 percent of survey participants at Robertson Elementary believe they have the support they need to increase reading achievement. The percent of participants who believe that they have a high degree of collaboration is high at 96 percent. Similarly, a high percent of participants—91 percent—believe that the climate is positive. Participants believe that teacher skill and leadership are the top two factors contributing to reading achievement.

**Setting directions.** The following section describes the leadership practices associated with Setting Directions through vision, expectations for reading achievement, strategy for increasing reading achievement, and monitoring progress.

**Vision.** The formal school vision at Robertson Elementary is: “Robertson Elementary is committed to creating an environment of success for all through hard-work, love, and inspiration.” When asked to state the vision in their own words, many participants stated key words from the vision statement including “love,” “hard-work,” and “inspiration.” Some teachers used the statement “we love hard and we push hard” when expressing the school vision. Others suggested that the vision was finding students’ “gifts,” or their finding their “Einsteins” which is a school mantra. The code “love” was repeated throughout the analysis of data more than the other words in the formal vision statement because it is a word found in both the formal vision and the motto “love hard, push hard” which some teachers viewed as the school vision. The codes relating to the vision were assigned primarily to the responses pertaining to the vision and were not distributed more widely throughout the data.

*Expectations for reading achievement.* Robertson Elementary had very high expectations for their students' achievement in reading. The often-repeated codes "high expectations," "very high expectations," "read above grade level," "a year of more growth," and "at or above grade level" were combined to form the category "very high expectations." Many participants stated that the goal was to not only be at grade level but to be above grade level.

In response to the questions about expectations for student achievement, one survey respondent said, "High, very high. At least one year above the criteria if possible, especially targeting primary grades." Another teacher said, "Eventually well above the targeted Tier 1 score." The reading intervention teacher said, "I think our mission is to make sure that our first and second graders are reading at grade level, reading above grade level actually, so they can be proficient in third grade and continue that success." The principal described her expectations for reading achievement:

...this year we had a goal that [in] first and second over 85 percent or more would be at grade level or above, and for intermediate 80 percent, and with that goal we believe that kids should be there by February knowing that the standardized test comes in March, knowing that they need to be able to access content in spring and it's not enough to get there by May. And so, we have a commitment to make sure that kids get their highest instructional level all year so that they are grade level or above in February. I think that the [district] aim-line is now the floor, no longer the ceiling. The biggest shift is people have felt that the aim-line expectations were the finish line and now they see it as more of a benchmark, a stop in each kid's individual journey... (Interview, Spring 2017)

In other words, expectations for reading achievement at the school have increased indicating that the goal is for most students to be above grade level by the end of the year.

Survey respondents were asked to state their school's goals or expectations for reading achievement. Results indicate that the school's expectations for reading achievement are very high, with some variance as to how high. Among the twenty-two participants surveyed, nine respondents indicated that students should be at or above grade level, one said "to be #1 in the entire district," two indicated that students should be on grade level, and five said that students should grow or succeed.

The principal believed that it was no longer enough to be at grade level. An interventionist supported this view when she explained that students who make it to proficiency can drop once they are no longer receiving intervention and so need to be above grade level to minimize the effects of any dips in achievement.

***Strategy for increasing reading achievement.*** The principal at Robertson Elementary stated that there is a "single focus on reading." More specifically, there is an intense focus on guided reading. "Guided reading" stood out as the most frequently repeated singular code in the study of Robertson Elementary. This is especially notable since there were no survey or interview questions that specifically asked about guided reading or any other instructional strategies. Once codes were combined into categories, the only category that equaled it in emphasis was "progress monitoring using data."

Early intervention is also an emphasis at Robertson Elementary. The principal explained that the strategy for increasing reading achievement was developed in response to the analysis of primary grade data several years ago which revealed that less than 30 percent of first and second grade students were on grade level (according to Colorado



Basic Literacy Act data). Since taking a closer look at primary grade level data, the school had been including primary data and strategies for improving reading achievement in primary grades in the UIP even though at the time there wasn't a dedicated space on the template provided by the state to do so. From that point, there had been a steady climb in achievement.

Guided reading was included in the Unified Improvement Plan for the 2015/2016 school year as a strategy for increasing reading achievement. It specified the expectation that 100 percent of classroom teachers would do two to three guided reading groups a day. More specifically, there would be three a day in first and second grades and at least two groups a day in intermediate grades.

A survey participant stated, "This is the fourth school where I have taught, however, it is the first to be truly dedicated to guided reading groups." According to a first-grade teacher described how the expectations for guided reading had changed over the past three years:

Guided reading is a focus now, it's no longer a, like I said, if you want to, you can. It's a you will do it, and you will not just give guided reading, you're going to give quality guided reading lessons every single time. (Interview, Spring 2017)

There was an expectation that teachers would provide quality guided reading instruction. Teachers started guided reading instruction in the second week of school, trusting the data from the previous year whereas, according to the principal, guided reading instruction used to start in October. Teachers saw the lowest students most often. The time allocated towards guided reading instruction in first grade had also increased in the past two years. In the 2015/16 school year the time for each group was increased from

twenty minutes to thirty minutes for each group for a total of 90 minutes of daily guided reading instruction in the classroom.

A survey respondent described the guided reading instruction at Robertson Elementary as “intentional and meaningful” and said that it “meets students’ needs.” Teachers in first through third grades followed the “guided reading plus” model which includes two days of instruction in reading and writing. This model was observed in two classrooms and in a lesson led by intervention teachers. Prior to reading they learned and reviewed high frequency words and phonics principles and were then given a short book introduction with an explanation of vocabulary words and concepts. While students read, the teacher listened to individual students whisper-reading and gave students feedback on their reading. After the lesson, the students had a brief comprehension discussion. The second day of the Guided Reading Plus model was also observed in a classroom observation. Students received a running record assessment while the other students in the group read independently, and then all of the students wrote to a prompt while the teacher gave each student feedback on their writing. First grade teachers starting using this model in the 2015/2016 school year.

Early intervention at Robertson Elementary was an important part of the strategy to increase reading achievement. The codes “early intervention,” “early literacy,” and “intervention” were combined to form the category “early intervention.” According to the assistant principal, all students who were below grade level in first and second grade received intervention. The principal said they made sure that “students were getting guided reading in the classroom as well not just supplanting guided reading with intervention.” The intervention provided to students was in the form of guided reading

instruction using the Guided Reading Plus Model like the classroom teachers used. They received guided reading instruction from their classroom teacher as well as daily from the intervention teachers. One difference between classroom instruction and the instruction from the intervention teachers was that intervention groups had only three to four students, while in the classroom groups of five or six students in a group were observed. Students receiving intervention received copies of the books they read in their groups to keep at home.

***Monitoring progress.*** Progress monitoring using data was an emphasis at Robertson Elementary. “Progress monitoring” was assigned most often after “guided reading” and “collaboration.” The codes “progress monitoring” and “use data” were combined to form one category: “monitoring progress using data.” A survey participant said there was “intense progress monitoring for each student.” Students took the district Istation test once a month in addition to taking running records for all students who were not on grade level. Teachers entered these data into a spreadsheet, turned it in to their assigned administrator, and met with them to review progress twice a month. There was a high level of accountability aided by administrators knowing each student’s data. An intervention teacher described the principal’s knowledge of data:

I’ve never been in a school where admin knows the students so well. They know exactly what their reading level is, what their strengths and their weakness are.

It’s amazing that this person can actually communicate that. I think that it’s a big role... so she knows exactly where the students are... 500 and some students.

(Interview, Spring 2017)

A survey participant echoed this sentiment, saying there is “high accountability by admin/principal to ensure all students are at grade level by February,” and adding that “admin (has) knowledge of all student reading abilities in building.” The principal and assistant principal made it a priority to know how students were progressing in reading.

The principal explained that accountability increased over the past three years with a big shift last year in the 2015/2016 school year. Administrators now looked closely not just at teachers’ reading data but often directly at their completed progress monitoring assessments/running records. The principal said they do this in order “to make sure that students are being instructed at their highest instructional level.” The highest instructional level means that the text will be too challenging for students to read independently but they can read it with the guidance of the teacher.

Students also participated with monitoring progress. According to the assistant principal, “...the kids all know their levels. They also know their focus goals.” The principal elaborated, “It’s no longer a hidden piece of data from children so children really understand what the aim line is in general.” Students are partners in tracking their improvement. A teacher described how students monitor their progress in his classroom:

So, my kids have, we have Smurfs and frogs. So, on the Istation we use Smurfs and I let them move 'em up and it's tier one, two, and three. And then the Frog goes with their DRA level, so they get to move their frog. And so, they [the students] are usually the ones to tell their parents. (Interview, Spring 2017)

He adds, “Really the kids need to know where they're at, and they get so excited when they get to move their frog.” Administrators, teachers, and students have an active role in monitoring reading progress.

***Setting directions- Summary.*** Three themes arose with respect to how Robertson Elementary sets directions. The three themes are: very high expectations, teacher and student progress monitoring using data, and a strong instructional focus on guided reading and early reading intervention.

Participants' consistent use of key words and phrases when stating the vision statement also resulted in a high number of repeated codes, however these codes were mostly confined to instances where participants were prompted directly by the survey or interview questions to describe the vision. The codes were not found more broadly throughout the data.

The fact that "guided reading" was the code that was assigned most often during the coding process suggests that there was a shared vision around using guided reading instruction to increase student achievement, although the approach was not named in the formal vision statement.

**Developing people.** The following section describes the leadership actions for Developing People through supporting instruction and professional development at Robertson.

***Supporting instruction.*** According to the survey, 85 percent of teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that they had the support they needed to increase reading achievement. Teachers received support from the literacy facilitator, administrators, and interventionists. The codes "feedback," "support," "coaching," and "modeling" were combined to form the category "support." A survey participant described the role of the facilitator:

We are able to watch quality lessons by our reading coach (literacy facilitator) and ask questions regarding next steps or confusions. Our reading coach (literacy facilitator) also comes in to observe us in a non-evaluative manner. She provides us with feedback and next steps. (Interview, Spring 2017)

This indicates that the literacy facilitator was effective in supporting teachers despite not formally evaluating them or perhaps because she did not evaluate them. An administrator also said that the literacy facilitator has played an important role:

[A] huge piece of teacher support is having a full time literary facilitator that dedicates the majority of her work around coaching and feedback to teachers, as well as modeling for teachers and even whole grade-level teams. And providing that professional development, I think that that support is a critical piece of our success. (Interview, Spring 2017)

The literacy facilitator had an active role in providing support to improve teachers' abilities to provide quality guided reading instruction.

Administrators also observed teachers and provided feedback as part of their teacher evaluation observations. One teacher said, "Everybody feels comfortable with the administration, they help to support us." A survey participant said, "Our principal also gives us flexibility to do what we feel is best for kids and their learning." According to the principal, "Feedback cycles have strategically always aligned with their guided reading in literacy." The assistant principal supported this claim when she said, "And also the coaching and feedback cycles this year specifically have been geared almost completely to guided reading or the literacy block. In fact, I've only done one formal teacher evaluation/observation on a math block this year." While the administrators used

the framework for evaluation and coaching, they used it as the lens to primarily view reading instruction and specifically guided reading instruction.

***Professional development.*** Professional development, specifically guided reading PD, was an emphasis at Robertson Elementary. The code “professional development” was the fifth most repeated singular code behind “guided reading,” “collaboration,” “progress monitoring,” and “use data.” Classroom teachers participated in two mandatory professional development sessions focused on guided reading every month for forty-five minutes. The professional development sessions took place on Wednesday mornings before school. There were also optional trainings for teachers who needed to learn how to take and analyze running records to inform their guided reading instruction. The assistant principal and the literacy facilitator led the professional development for teachers. They created the PD based on information from the two-year Guided Reading Plus certificate course they were enrolled in.

The literacy facilitator led the first-grade PLC and provided modeling on guided reading using the Guided Reading Plus format. A first-grade teacher who participated in the school’s guided reading PD as well as the district’s Guided Reading Plus training reflected on how his instruction has improved: “I have kids reading at fourth grade level in first grade and I truly think it's because now I know how to teach guided reading. Because before I didn't really know. I thought I did.” He added, “And now I'm so much more confident in my ability to teach guided reading that my kids are taking off.” The teachers’ efficacy around guided reading instruction improved through professional development targeted on guided reading.

Several teachers had participated in the district's Guided Reading Plus certificate course which occurred off-site and required a fee. The class was based on the work of Marie Clay and Fountas and Pinnell. The course instructor observed the teachers twice a year and provided descriptive feedback. In 2015/16, the assistant principal, the literacy facilitator, and three interventionists had completed or were enrolled in the two-year course.

***Developing people- summary.*** At Robertson Elementary, teachers were supported by a literacy facilitator who coached and observed lessons in a non-evaluative manner. Administration also conducted observations and gave feedback on a regular basis with a focus on guided reading and the literacy block. Professional Development was a major theme. Teachers received targeted and focused professional development bi-monthly, specifically on guided reading instruction. Many primary grade teachers and several interventionists, as well as the assistant principal and the literacy facilitator, also attended an external two-year certification course on guided reading (Guided Reading Plus). It is clear that the theme of guided reading instruction continued in the process of developing people.

**Redesigning the organization.** The following section describes the leadership actions for Redesigning the Organization through the leadership model, collaboration, school climate, and other.

***Leadership model.*** At the time of this study, Robertson Elementary did not have the differentiated roles model that the other two schools in the study had adopted. The formal leaders at Robertson Elementary School were the principal and the assistant principal and they were the only ones who evaluated teachers. The instructional



leadership team was composed of the principals, the literacy/humanities facilitator, and the math facilitator (who also facilitated the gifted and talented program and science).

The facilitators coached and supported teachers in a non-evaluative manner.

***Collaboration.*** Collaboration was an emphasis at the school. The only singular codes that were assigned more often than “collaboration” were “guided reading” and “progress monitoring.” Ninety-six percent of survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that there was a high degree of collaboration at the school.

The principal described the instructional leadership team as having highly effective collaboration:

So, I think the biggest part of successful collaboration is our instructional leadership team. I think having a team of strong individuals who see not only the school vision but see themselves in it allows for successful collaboration. And I think you know it probably doesn't look different than most schools where there is a meeting time and agenda and people are talking about data and next steps. I think what looks different in this building, at least from an instructional leadership team—and you'll see it trickle down to our other teams—is there's truly a respect and admiration for the skill set of everyone on the instructional leadership team, and so having expertise on a team, the collaboration just becomes naturally fluid and people want to hold each other and themselves accountable because they understand their role of expertise on the team. (Interview, Spring 2017)

The principal suggests that collaboration within the instructional leadership occurred naturally due to a mutual respect for the expertise of those on the team and that this

influenced collaboration on grade level teams. The assistant principal also described collaboration:

There's—I would say school-wide there is a high level of collaboration. Teachers are often invited to share at meetings and willing to share, especially amongst grade levels. I will say that the level of effective collaboration from one grade level to the next varies. (Interview, Spring 2017)

Supporting the assistant principal's description of collaboration, a teacher said, "It's every grade level working together. The whole staff, we talk about reading. I think everybody's on board. I think it's stronger within grade levels than across." A survey participant also described collaboration at Robertson:

The leadership promotes a collaborative culture, where teachers, leaders, special education teachers, and interventionists work together. Most teachers collaborate, but there are some that do not embrace collaboration or assume positive intent.

Collaboration works when teachers respect each other. (Interview, Spring 2017)

Collaboration was centered on reading and most teachers participated positively.

Teachers collaborated in weekly professional learning community (PLC) meetings once a week with a focus on reading instruction. Each team was assigned an administrator for accountability and each team had a leader. The first-grade team, described by the principal as a "highly collaborative team" was led by the literacy facilitator, second grade by a second-grade teacher, third grade by a third-grade teacher, fourth grade by the assistant principal, and the fifth-grade team was led by a fifth-grade teacher. Grade level teams also met together weekly for team-planning and for math data-

teams. This indicates that there were clear roles for people and for their work. A survey participant described team collaboration:

At my grade level, we work together to analyze running records/istation and to set student goals. We also have flexible grouping across the grade level, meaning that we share students for guided reading. Some of my students go to other classrooms and some of my teammates students come to me. There is a great level of trust!

We also lesson plan together as a team every week. (Interview, Spring 2017)

This teacher indicates that collaboration is centered on working together to determine student goals for guided reading and sharing students to meet their students' needs during guided reading.

According to the principal, interventionists also collaborate with one another by discussing data and shuffling students around to make sure they are in an appropriate intervention group. They also collaborated with classroom teachers to make sure that they both had students at their highest instructional level, to ensure that the students' personal areas of focus aligned, and to talk about next steps if there was a lack of growth. A survey respondent said, "Our team closely works with first and second grade teachers in making sure all students are receiving reading intervention." It is clear that interventionists also share responsibility for students' achievement in reading.

Collaboration at Robertson was defined as sharing responsibilities in leading teams, in analyzing assessments, and selecting focus areas for students for guided reading groups. This sharing of responsibility extends to sharing a responsibility for all students as evidenced by students switching classrooms for guided reading instruction if needed.

*Climate.* Ninety-one percent of survey participants believed that the school climate is positive, the highest percentage compared to the other two schools in the study.

A teacher described the climate at Robertson Elementary:

It's a strong environment. Kids like coming here. We have a lot of positive things going on. Everybody seems to be showing a lot of growth... everybody feels comfortable with the administration, they help to support us. It's a lot of pluses going on as far as working with the kids showing a lot of growth, not only in reading, but all across the board. It's a good school to work at. (Interview, Spring 2017)

The teacher's description of the climate suggests that the climate is influenced by growth in reading and the support of leadership. The principal reflected on the school's climate:

When we have guests in the building, they routinely comment on how shocked they are, at how well our kids are behaved. Everything runs smoothly here, it's well organized, and I would say the climate among adults is mostly positive. I feel like there's some pockets of conflict that come up, and there's some pockets of negativity that come up. Usually that's isolated to a couple of people. For the most part people like being here, and they like being with each other. (Interview, Spring 2017)

The assistant principal indicates that the climate is reflective of an organized system which runs smoothly. The principal described collaboration as “naturally flowing” which suggests that it is not forced.

*Other.* Another design feature of the school that supported its reading goals was the allocation of interventionists to support primary grades. There were two full-time

reading interventionists completely dedicated to first and second grade. Interventionists provided supplemental guided reading instruction for all students below grade level for half an hour a day in addition to the guided reading instruction the students received in the classroom.

*Redesigning the organization- summary.* Robertson Elementary did not have a formal distributed leadership model. There were no Senior Team Leads and the instructional coaches did not evaluate. Yet, leadership was shared. The instructional facilitators (coaches) were part of the instructional leadership team and the assistant principal joined the literacy coach in teaching professional development. In addition, some teachers led their weekly professional learning community meetings. Ninety-six percent of survey respondents reported that the school had a high degree of collaboration and 91 percent of teachers reported a corresponding positive school climate. A design feature unique to Robertson Elementary was the allocation of two full-time reading intervention teachers dedicated to first and second grades. The interventionists provided supplemental guided reading to all first and second grade students who were below grade level.

### **Conclusion- Robertson Elementary**

The following table provides a summary of leadership practices at Robertson Elementary.

Table 13

*Robertson Elementary: Practices Aligned with Leadership Functions*

Leadership Functions							
	<u>Setting Directions</u>			<u>Developing People</u>	<u>Redesigning the Organization</u>		
Set High Expectations for Reading Achievement	Emphasized Monitoring Progress for Reading	Focused on Reading	Focused on Early Literacy	Provided High Level of Support	Formal Distributed Leadership Model	High level of Collaboration	Created Positive Climate
X+	X	X	X+	X	--	X	X+

*Note.* X+ indicates the practice was present at the school to a high degree. X indicates it was present. --indicates the practice was mostly absent.

With respect to setting directions, the results of the study indicate that Robertson Elementary set very high expectations for reading achievement and had a strong instructional focus on guided reading and early reading intervention, as well as an emphasis on progress monitoring using data by both teachers and students. Concerning developing people, the school had an emphasis on in-school professional development centered on guided reading. With respect to redesigning the organization, not having yet adopted the district’s differentiated roles model of teacher leadership, the school had a school leadership model where the administrators were the sole evaluators.

The instructional leadership team was composed of one principal, one assistant principal, one literacy (humanities) facilitator, and one math facilitator. Despite not having a formal distributed leadership model, collaboration was a key feature of the organization. Although there were no Senior Team Leads, the instructional leadership team and the teachers shared leadership responsibilities for professional development, coaching, analyzing assessments, and sharing students. The school allocated human resources to support a focus on early reading intervention in the form of guided reading.

There was a high level of trust and the school's climate was positive suggesting that the organization was healthy with systems that are functioning well. Guided reading and early literacy were common themes across all of the leadership practices of Setting Directions, Developing People and Redesigning the Organization.

### **Cross Case Analysis**

The following section presents a cross case analysis of reading achievement, teacher survey, interview, and observational data across Thomas, Andrews, and Robertson elementary schools. The research question that guided this study is: What are the specific leadership practices in three similar schools with varying reading achievement outcomes in primary grades?

Comparing the schools reveals important similarities and differences in how the schools Set Directions, Developed People, and Redesigned the Organization (Leithwood, et al., 2004). The data is significant especially because the lowest and the highest scoring school appeared to have high functioning leadership practices as indicated by survey data and yet had significantly different reading achievement outcomes. In addition, even though the middle scoring school appeared to have weaker leadership practices it still performed better according to primary grade reading outcomes than Thomas Elementary. A cross case analysis reveals key differences in how the leadership practices functioned as a system.

### **Staff Survey Results**

Staff survey results provide context about the staff's experience and their perceptions of support, collaboration, climate, and factors which they perceived impacted

reading outcomes. Table 14 below includes each school’s reading achievement outcomes and reveals similarities and differences in survey results.

Table 14

*Comparison of Survey Data*

School and Percent On Grade Level (READ ACT 2015/2016)	Additional Certifications or Licenses	Years Working at School	Total Years in Education	Have Support to Increase Reading Achievement: Agree or Strongly Agree	High Degree of Collaboration: Agree or Strongly Agree	Positive School Climate: Agree or Strongly Agree	Top Factors Contributing to Reading Achievement
THOMAS 46% on grade level	50% (8 out of 16)	Mean:5.6 Median:3.5 Mode:3	Mean:8 Median:8 Mode:8	100%	95%	75%	1. Teacher Skill 2. Leadership
ANDREWS 56% on grade level	67% (12 out of 18)	Mean: 4.5 Median: 4 Mode: 4	Mean:12 Median:9 Mode: 6,7,14,15,20	61%	56%	39%	1. Teacher Skill 2. PD
ROBERTSON 81% on grade level	59% (13 out of 22)	Mean: 5.6 Median: 4 Mode: 4	Mean:15 Median:14 Mode:10,12,14	85%	96%	91%	1. Teacher Skill 2. Leadership

These results from the representative samples indicate that Andrews Elementary had the highest percentage of additional certifications and/or licenses with 67 percent of respondents having a certificate/license beyond a teacher’s certificate. Thomas and Robertson Elementary had the highest average for years working at the school at 5.6 years, and Robertson Elementary had the highest average for years in education at 15 years. Schools were similar with respect to median and mode for the number of years at each school site—between three and four years. For total years in education, Thomas elementary had the least experienced teachers, followed by Andrews, and then by Robertson who had the most experienced teachers.

Thomas Elementary reported the highest degree of support to increase reading achievement at 100 percent followed by Robertson at 85 percent and Andrews at 65



percent. Robertson and Thomas reported high levels of collaboration, 96 percent and 95 percent respectively, while only 56 percent of respondents from Andrews reported a high degree of collaboration.

Ninety percent of respondents from Robertson indicated that the school had a positive climate, followed by Thomas with 75 percent and Andrews with 39 percent. Thomas and Robertson indicated that teacher skill and leadership respectively were the top factors that contributed to reading achievement in their primary grades, while Andrews Elementary reported that teacher skill and professional development contributed to their reading results in primary grades. Since Andrews Elementary reported a lack of professional development, their ranking of PD higher than leadership is more of a reflection of the weakness of leadership practices (ranked below PD) rather than the strength of PD. It is notable that at Robertson Elementary (the highest-scoring school) leadership and teacher skill were almost tied as factors that contribute to reading achievement whereas at the other schools, teacher skill was ranked significantly higher than leadership.

### **Other Results**

The findings from the interviews, observations, the UIP, and open-ended survey results revealed similarities and differences regarding how leadership relating to reading achievement was enacted through Setting Directions, Developing People, and Redesigning the Organization. The tables in the section below provide a summary of the presence or absence of leadership practices that emerged from the data and that are aligned with the framework of the study: Setting Directions (Table 15), Developing People (Table 16), and Redesigning the Organization (Table 17). An X in the table

indicates that the practice is present at the school, an X+ indicates that it is present to a high degree compared to the other schools, and a blank cell indicates that the item is not a significant practice at the school. A more detailed comparison of the practices aligned with each leadership function is provided following each table.

**Setting directions.** The table below provides a summary of how each school Set Directions and is succeeded by a more detailed comparison.

Table 15

*Comparison of Practices Associated with Setting Directions*

Setting Directions						
<u>School</u>	<u>Set High Expectations for Reading Achievement</u>	<u>Emphasized Monitoring Progress for Reading</u>	<u>Focused on the Reading Assessment</u>	<u>Focused on Reading</u>	<u>Focused on Instructional Strategy for Reading</u>	<u>Focused on early literacy</u>
THOMAS 46% on grade level	X	X	--	X+	X	--
ANDREWS 56% on grade level	X	X+	X	X	--	X
ROBERSTON 81% on grade level	X+	X	--	X+	X+	X+

*Note.* X+ indicates the practice appeared to be present at a higher level than the other schools. X indicates the practice was present. -- indicates the practice was mostly absent compared to other schools.

At Thomas Elementary, most teachers and leaders knew the vision verbatim although, according to the principal, a shared vision had yet to be realized.

At Andrews Elementary, participants indicated that they lacked a clear shared vision although most participants named elements from the formal vision statement. Although it was not a part of their formal vision statement, teachers and leaders appeared to have developed a shared vision around progress monitoring using data as this arose as

a major theme throughout the study of the school and was also evident in the density of responses around this practice throughout the study.

At Robertson Elementary, teachers were able to name elements from the formal vision when describing the vision in their own words. While teachers at Robertson Elementary were not completely on the same page with the formal vision statement, the strong focus on guided reading indicated a strong shared vision around guided reading instruction. This was also supported by the density of responses around guided reading throughout the study. The code “guided reading” was assigned more than any other code during the coding process. Results suggest that having a formal vision statement and being able to recite it does not result in a shared vision, and that when there is a realized shared vision which is internalized (even if not directly related to the formal vision statement) the reading outcomes are higher. Results also indicate that a shared vision is around a specific instructional practice for reading is associated with positive reading achievement outcomes.

Educators and formal leaders (principals and assistant principals) across all schools articulated high expectations for reading achievement. These expectations were articulated in varying ways across the schools; however, at grade level seemed to be a common attribute of expectations. Educators at both Thomas Elementary and Andrews Elementary tended to characterize the expectations as “at or above grade level;” while educators at Robertson Elementary articulated “very high expectations” and “read above grade level.” The principal at Robertson Elementary stated that it wasn’t enough to be at grade level anymore.

There was a great deal of variability across the schools with respect to the strategies used to increase reading achievement. Thomas Elementary emphasized conferring with students and independent reading as the instructional strategies they used to increase reading achievement. Andrews Elementary indicated that progress monitoring using data was their primary strategy for increasing reading achievement. Robertson Elementary had a clear focus on guided reading instruction (Guided Reading Plus) and early reading intervention as strategies for increasing reading achievement. Early reading intervention took the form of supplemental guided reading instruction.

Neither Robertson Elementary nor Andrews Elementary shared Thomas Elementary's emphasis on conferring and independent reading. While guided reading didn't have the same emphasis as it did at Robertson Elementary, Andrews Elementary school did focus moderately on guided reading as an instructional strategy for increasing reading achievement.

There were some differences in the implementation of guided reading between Andrews Elementary and Robertson Elementary. Robertson Elementary required primary grade teachers to conduct three guided reading groups per day and first grade teachers and all primary grade interventionists used a Guided Reading Plus format (which included alternate reading and writing days). First-grade teachers instructed each group for half an hour and second-grade teachers had to see three groups a day for at least twenty minutes each. According to a teacher at Andrews Elementary, there were no set requirements for the number of groups or times, or the method although some teachers were trained through the district course to use the Guided Reading Plus method. She indicated that she believed that most teachers taught two or three groups a day. The

principal stated that they would be increasing their focus on guided reading in the future, indicating that the practice needed to be refined.

Robertson Elementary had the strongest emphasis on early literacy and early intervention. All students who were below grade level in first and second grade received daily guided reading instruction from two full-time interventionists, in addition to receiving guided reading instruction from their classroom teacher. It was a pull-out model where students left their classroom for intervention. While Andrews Elementary did not focus on early literacy as much as Robertson Elementary, both the principal and assistant principal stated that they believed that early literacy is critical to students' success in subsequent grade levels. A teacher at Andrews Elementary also indicated that early literacy is a focus at the school. However, only one survey participant at Andrews Elementary mentioned early intervention, indicating that while early literacy was a priority (espoused), early reading intervention was not a focus. The school had two half-time intervention teachers who supported students across grade levels. At Thomas Elementary, no survey or interview participants mentioned early literacy or early intervention.

Progress monitoring using data was a strong emphasis at all three schools. They all administered the district's computerized Istation reading assessment every month and entered the information into data-trackers. Means of accountability varied at each school. At Thomas Elementary, data was entered into a Google Doc that could be viewed by all teachers and administrators, at Andrews Elementary teachers met once a month with the assessment leader to review their data, and at Robertson Elementary teachers turned in their data-trackers and met twice a month with their administrators to review their data.

The differences were related to technology, frequency, and the means of how teachers interacted, and who they interacted with regarding the data. A key difference was that at the highest-scoring school teachers met to discuss data more often (bi-monthly) and did so with their administrator.

**Developing people.** The table below summarizes the practices of Developing People at each school. A more detailed comparison follows the table.

Table 16

*Comparison of Practices Associated with Developing People*

Developing People					
<u>School</u>	<u>Provided High Level of Support</u>	<u>Provided Internal PD</u>	<u>Provided Evaluative Coaching</u>	<u>Provided Non-Evaluative Coaching</u>	<u>Focused Support on Instructional Strategy</u>
THOMAS 46% on grade level	X+	X	X+	--	X
ANDREWS 56% on grade level	--	--	X	--	--
ROBERSTON 81% on grade level	X	X+	--	X	X+

*Note.* X+ indicates the practice appeared to be present at a higher level than the other schools. X indicates the practice was present. -- indicates the practice was mostly absent compared to other schools.

At Thomas Elementary, 100 percent of teachers reported having a high degree of support to increase reading instruction. Coaches aimed to observe and to provide feedback to teachers once a week. The coaches were Senior Team Leads who taught half-time and coached and evaluated half-time. Senior Team leads had seven to eight teachers on their case-loads. Administrators supported Senior Team Leads in their coaching and

evaluating duties. Senior Team Leads intended to address the instructional foci (conferring and independent reading) during evaluation and coaching; however, the tool they used for evaluation and feedback was the teacher evaluation framework which consists of many teacher practices not specifically aligned to instructional strategies for reading in primary grades.

At Andrews Elementary, 61 percent of teachers reported having a high level of support to increase reading instruction. The teachers at Andrews were also supported by Senior Team Leads but it was reported that the coaching and evaluating model hadn't been completely embraced by teachers.

At Robertson Elementary, 85 percent of teachers reported a high level of support. The school had one literacy facilitator/coach, one math facilitator/coach, and no Senior Team Leads. The literacy facilitator coached teachers who were identified by administrators as needing support and by teacher request. The literacy facilitator/coach did not evaluate teachers and therefore did not use the teacher evaluation framework. (The principal and assistant principal did use the framework for evaluation.) The focus of coaching was on guided reading and on analyzing assessments to determine student focus areas for guided reading. The literacy facilitator modeled guided reading instruction for teachers. All schools supported teachers through coaching but the approach varied from a focus on the teacher framework for evaluation and feedback on teacher practice (Thomas and Andrews) to a coaching and modeling approach focused on an instructional model (guided reading), and on analyzing student assessments.

At Thomas Elementary, formal professional development related to instructional practices in reading usually happened externally. Many teachers went to New York for

training to learn how to teach using Lucy Caulkin's instructional methods. There were some optional professional development opportunities at school. Data teams were referred to as professional development.

At Andrews Elementary, there were no formal internal professional development opportunities. Some teacher sought external professional development opportunities such as taking the district's Guided Reading Plus early literacy certificate course.

At Robertson Elementary, professional development occurred at the school twice a month for 45 minutes, led by the literacy facilitator/coach and the assistant principal, and the topic was guided reading. First grade teachers, the interventionists, the literacy facilitator and the assistant principal were either enrolled in or had completed the Guided Reading Plus course.

In summary, at Thomas Elementary there was a high level of support reported but there was a lack of alignment between the instructional foci and the tool coaches used to evaluate and provide teachers with feedback. There was also a lack of continuity between external professional development (readers workshop) and internal professional development (data teams). At Andrews Elementary, teachers were supported by Senior Teams Leads (but it was reported many did not embrace them or their evaluation of them) and there was a widely-reported lack of professional development opportunities which led to a low level of support overall. At Robertson Elementary, there was a strong alignment between professional development centered on guided reading and coaching centered on guided reading.



**Redesigning the organization.** The table below provides a summary of elements at each school that align to the organizational design. A more detailed examination follows the table.

Table 17

*Comparison of Practices Associated with Redesigning the Organization*

Redesigning the Organization					
<u>School</u>	<u>Formal Distributed Leadership Model</u>	<u>Collaboration</u>	<u>Collaboration Focused on Instructional Strategy</u>	<u>Created Positive Climate</u>	<u>Allocated Most Interventionists to Primary Grades</u>
THOMAS 46% on grade level	X	X	--	X	--
ANDREWS 56% on grade level	X	--	--	--	--
ROBERSTON 81% on grade level	--	X	X	X+	X

*Note.* X+ indicates the practice appeared to be present at a higher level than the other schools. X indicates the practice was present. -- indicates the practice was mostly absent compared to other schools.

There was variability in each school’s organizational design. Thomas Elementary and Andrews Elementary had adopted a differentiated roles leadership model where leadership duties included evaluation and coaching and were distributed among a select group of teachers (Senior Team Leads) and administrators. In addition, Thomas Elementary had a small school model where one assistant principal led ECE through first grade, one assistant principal led second and third grades, and the principal led fourth and fifth grade in addition to overseeing all grades.

At Robertson Elementary School, the principal and assistant principal were the sole evaluators of teachers. Although there wasn't a formal distributed leadership model as in the other schools in the study, leadership was still shared. The literacy and math facilitators were part of the instructional leadership team and the assistant principal and the literacy facilitator led professional development on guided reading instruction. Many teachers led their weekly professional learning community meetings.

There were similarities and differences with respect to collaboration at each school. Thomas Elementary and Robertson Elementary reported a high level of collaboration. At Thomas Elementary, 95 percent of survey participants said they have a high level of collaboration and at Robertson Elementary 96 percent of teachers reported high levels of collaboration. At Andrews Elementary, only 56 percent of survey participants said they had a high level of collaboration. While Andrews Elementary reported an almost complete absence of school-wide collaboration, all three schools reported a high degree of team collaboration, which mostly occurred in grade-level data-teams and during team planning.

At Robertson Elementary collaboration revolved around the instructional practice of guided reading. The instructional coach and assistant principals shared responsibilities in leading professional development on the topic of guided reading, teachers worked together to analyze data and to identify student goals for guided reading, they shared students during guided reading, and educators and students monitored progress together. Leadership established a clear goal of increasing primary grade reading achievement. They also established a well-defined vehicle to reach that goal (guided reading instruction) and doing this promoted clear roles for collaboration.

At Thomas Elementary collaboration meant working congenially together in data teams, planning together, and in distributing coaching and evaluation amongst teachers and principals, but there was not an emphasis on collaborating specifically around instructional practices.

Teachers perceived the climate at Thomas Elementary as mostly positive with pockets of negativity. The climate at Andrews Elementary was clearly negative compared to the other two schools. There was turmoil from staff reductions, teachers expressed that they were not part of planning and decision-making, and evaluation by colleagues was not fully embraced. The climate at Robertson Elementary was positive. It appears that a clear instructional focus contributed to a positive climate. Teachers knew where they were going, they felt equipped to get there, and they were going there together.

### **Conclusion- Cross Case Analysis**

The purpose of this study was to identify specific leadership practices in similar schools that have varying reading outcomes in primary grades. While results from the analysis of each school reveal specific leadership and literacy practices that were present in each school, the cross-case analysis adds further detail by uncovering key differences which appear to contribute to difference in reading outcomes.

While there is variability in the degree to which the practices are emphasized, all schools had high expectations and all schools frequently monitored progress using data. The lowest-scoring and middle-scoring schools had implemented a distributed leadership model where teachers evaluated and coached, and the highest-scoring school had a more traditional leadership model where the formal administrators were the sole evaluators. The lowest and the highest scoring schools reported the highest levels of collaboration

both school-wide and on teams. The middle scoring school reported a lack of school-wide collaboration. The highest and lowest scoring schools had a positive climate compared to the lowest-scoring school. The middle scoring school had moderate focus on early literacy and the highest-scoring school had a strong focus on early literacy. The lowest performing school did not focus on early literacy or early intervention although there were intervention teachers at the school who saw students across all grade levels.

Since all of the schools in the study emphasized monitoring progress using data, and they all set high expectations for reading achievement, it appears that these practices in isolation did not contribute to increasing reading achievement. Since the highest-scoring school did not have a formal distributed leadership model where teachers coach and evaluate, it appears that the distributed leadership model is not enough in itself to positively influence reading achievement in primary grades. Since the highest and lowest scoring schools reported a high degree of collaboration it appears that these practices alone did not lead to increases in primary grade reading outcomes. Since the highest and lowest school both reported a positive climate (higher than the middle-scoring school), it seems that this element, in itself, does not increase reading achievement.

Most notable is that the school with the highest READ Act scores had a focus (Setting Direction, Professional Development, and Organizational Design) on a singular instructional approach to reading: guided reading instruction. It was the connection of the principles to a specific instructional strategy in reading that (like batteries connected to a motor) seemed to have led to propelling reading achievement in the highest-scoring school. In fact, leadership was not just connected to the instructional strategy, it was wholly devoted to it.

The school set the direction by purposing to increase primary grade reading outcomes (focus on early literacy) and selected the instructional strategy of guided reading instruction as the primary way to get the job done. To ensure guided reading was done well they followed the Guided Reading Plus model (Dorn & Soffos, 2012) in primary grades developed teachers through targeted professional development and coaching focused on guided reading. Using data (some of which was collected during guided reading), teachers collaborated to help each other adjust their guided reading to meet the needs of each student, and even to teach one another's students. The school also created an intervention system in which two full-time interventionists were assigned to first and second grade with the goal of increasing the quantity of guided reading instruction for all students below grade level.

The positive climate appeared to be a bi-product of the clear alignment of leadership to an instructional strategy. All of the players involved with primary grade reading instruction had a clear direction and roles without the distraction and potential stress of competing foci.

Neither the middle scoring or the lowest-scoring school had leadership practices which revolved around a specific instructional strategy for reading. Despite the lowest-scoring school appearing to have all of the right reading practices (in isolation), and despite middle scoring lacking these same leadership practices, the middle scoring school had higher outcomes. While guided reading instruction was present at the middle scoring and perhaps influenced outcomes, the practice was loosely implemented. A key difference between the lowest-scoring school and the middle-scoring school was the

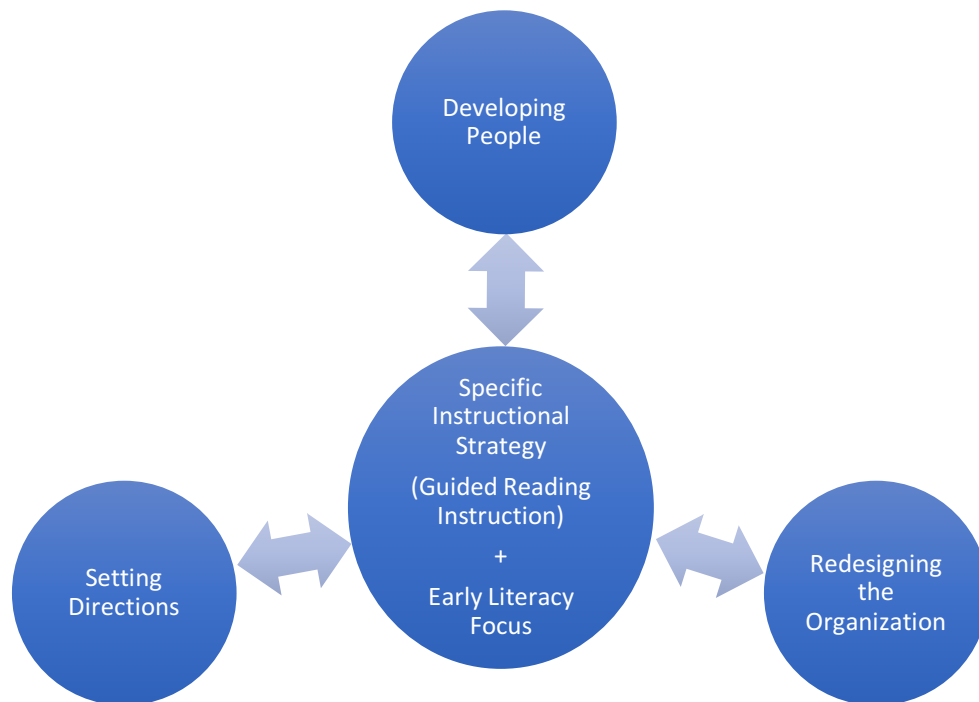
middle-scoring school had an emphasis on the reading assessment (Istation) and on progress monitoring. These findings are discussed in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The conceptual framework of this study generated the following hypothesis: All three schools in the study would set directions, develop people, and redesign the organization, but there would be differences in how schools enact these leadership practices in schools with different primary grade reading achievement outcomes. Literature about school leadership lacks detail about specific leadership practices that increase student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2010). This study contributes details to the literature concerning literacy leadership and sheds light on how the leadership practices in the conceptual framework worked together as a system with respect to increasing primary grade outcomes.

### **Adjusted Conceptual Framework**

Figure 3 below shows how the results of this study alter the conceptual framework for leadership in light of the school that had the highest primary grade reading outcomes. The adjusted model depicts the relationship between a specific strategy for reading instruction and the leadership functions of Setting Directions, Developing People, and Redesigning the Organization. Each of the components in the model contributed to the success of the highest-performing school.



*Figure 2.* Leadership system at the school with highest primary-grade reading outcomes

This model illustrates that in the highest-scoring school, the instructional strategy and focus on early literacy informed leadership and leadership informed the instructional strategy and focus. The focus on the instructional strategy (guided reading) and early literacy helped to define roles and provide a clear direction and boundaries for leadership; in turn, leadership ensured the quality and quantity of guided reading instruction. For increasing primary grade reading outcomes in high-risk schools, this study suggests that having positive leadership practices in place is not sufficient. For those practices to enhance reading achievement, they must be connected to a specific instructional practice for reading. This finding supports the importance of studying both high and low achieving schools (Bracey, 2008) since without a comparison between two schools which appeared to have positive leadership practices in place, this relationship between leadership and instruction may not have surfaced.



The lowest-scoring school, Thomas Elementary, illustrated that leadership without tight connections to a specific instructional strategy has limitations. It appeared that at Thomas Elementary “leadership float(ed) disconnected from the very processes it is designed to govern” (Stein & Nelson, 2003, p. 446). The school had many of the leadership practices that associated with high achievement (in isolation) to a high degree. They set high expectations (Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006), they monitored progress (Leithwood et al., 2004; Printy & Marks, 2006; 2004; Waters et al., 2003), they spared no cost in supporting teachers through external professional development (Hallinger, 2011, Robinson et al., 2008), they developed collaborative structures (Leithwood et al., 2004) and had a distributed leadership model (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Yet, they lacked a singular focus on an instructional strategy for reading.

Grade level teams collaborated in data teams but not with a dedicated emphasis on improving reading instruction (compared to the highest-scoring school) and not by sharing responsibilities centered on the reading strategy (as the highest-scoring school did when they shared students for guided reading and when the assistant principal and literacy facilitator delivered professional development on guided reading together). While the lowest-scoring school did have an instructional focus for reading (independent reading and conferencing) and provided coaching on these strategies, the tool the coaches used to evaluate their teachers and to provide feedback measured a myriad of items unrelated to reading instruction which may have diffused the focus required to improve their instructional practices for reading. This conclusion is supported by Matsumara et al., (2010) who stated that there needs to be alignment between the instructional vision and the vision for coaching. In addition, while teachers traveled to New York for professional

development, learning was not leveraged with regular on-site professional learning dedicated to the instructional foci.

The middle-scoring school demonstrates the importance of the leadership dimension in the relationship between reading instruction and leadership since the school used the same literacy instructional strategy as the highest-scoring school (guided reading) but the results were lower reading achievement outcomes. Instructional leaders will know more than what to do, they should have strategies that include “when, how, and why to do it” (Waters et al., 2003, p. 4). In the middle scoring school, leadership did not set directions effectively around the instructional strategy as indicated by a teacher who perceived a complete absence of a school-wide instructional strategy. Although a strategy (guided reading) was included in their Unified Improvement Plan, there were loose expectations and guidelines for the quantity and quality of instruction. A well-defined model for guided reading instruction in primary grades was absent. Teachers also reported a lack of support to increase reading outcomes and a lack of school-wide collaboration. In the absence of systems and structures (professional development, collaboration etc.) to support the specific instructional strategy, the school focused on events like progress monitoring and the monthly reading test. In fact, one teacher described these activities as the main strategies to increase reading achievement.

That middle-scoring school appeared to have the weakest leadership practices (Setting Directions, Developing People, and Redesigning the Organization); yet, had higher primary grade reading outcomes than the lowest scoring school. While the presence of guided reading may have contributed to higher outcomes, the reading outcomes of the middle school may also be explained by the school’s reported focus on

the reading assessment (Istation). Focusing on the assessment can lead to higher outcomes (Baker et al., 2013; Koretz, 2005).

### **Climate**

The relationship between leadership and a specific instructional strategy at each school appears to be associated with the climate of each school. It seems that the more leadership and instruction were in harmony, the more positive the climate was. Since climate measures the health of a school (MacNeil et al., 2009), this suggests that a tight knit relationship between leadership and instruction correlates with the health of the school. Collaboration at the highest scoring school was described as “naturally flowing” which added to the sense of a healthy relationship between leadership and instruction. Forcing collaboration on the other hand, can lead to a negative climate (Collie et al., 2012). At the lowest scoring school, the climate was fair. The fair climate suggests that leadership and instruction was not completely in sync which is supported by the report that not all teachers felt heard by administrators with respect to the school’s instructional direction. The climate at the lowest scoring school was poor and suggests misalignment between leadership and instruction. The climate reflected the absence of a school-wide instructional strategy for leadership to rally around.

### **Guided Reading Instruction**

The findings in this study do not promote guided reading instruction as the only effective instructional strategy to improve reading outcomes in primary grades. Hattie (2009) identified providing instructional feedback to students as a highly effective instructional practice. The small group structure of guided reading is conducive to

providing feedback to students, and this aspect of guided reading might occur with other strategies.

For a full classroom of high-risk students, there may be an efficiency to the practice of guided reading that whole group and one-on-one conferencing lacks. If time and money were not a factor, one-on-one instruction may be a superior strategy since it could further increase the opportunity for individual feedback. Conversely, if a teacher only instructs reading in a whole class (whole group) setting, students are less likely to receive individual feedback. Leadership can impact the degree of feedback expected through how the organization is designed and how people are developed.

In summary, for primary grade reading achievement to increase in schools which are at risk of failure, this study suggests that instructional practices and leadership actions that are integrated and work as a system create supportive structures for teacher and student learning. Focusing on early literacy and on a specific instructional strategy for reading provides coherence for the leadership practices of Setting Directions, Developing People, and Redesigning the Organization.

### **Implications**

There are many implications of this study including for policy, school leaders, principal preparation, school districts, teacher-leaders, and for the selection of instructional strategies.

#### **Implications for Policy**

The end goal of the Educator Effectiveness policy, Senate Bill 10-191 (2010), is to improve student achievement outcomes by improving educator effectiveness. When schools fail to increase reading achievement there is often an assumption that teachers

and leaders are ineffective. This study suggests that it may not be the teachers or the principals who are inherently ineffective at these schools, but rather the system that they are a part of.

Elementary schools that are considered for restructuring (turn-around) inevitably have very low reading outcomes (Duke et al., 2007). In these schools, it is critical that the relationship between leadership and reading instruction is assessed prior to concluding that the teachers or the principal are ineffective. This study suggests that a possible reason for the school's failure may be due to the misalignment of leadership practices and instructional practices. If this is the case, it is misguided and destructive to attribute the problem to ineffective teachers and/or ineffective leaders. Working with a failing school to increase leadership's focus (Setting Directions, Developing People, Redesigning the Organization) on early literacy and on an effective instructional practice could transform the school and the harmful perception that the teachers and the administrators of the school are ineffective.

In schools that need the most help, state, district, and school leadership must be knowledgeable about effective instructional practices to make sure that schools are focusing their efforts on the prevention of reading problems. All members of the system should collaborate, listen to those who are knowledgeable about primary grade reading instruction and early reading intervention, and view themselves as contributors to the success and failure of schools. When there is failure all participants at all levels of leadership must reflect on their role in the outcome.

## **Implications for School Leaders**

Leaders can appear to be doing the right things with respect to leadership functions, yet fail to increase primary grade reading outcomes. They can Set Directions direction by setting high expectations and creating a vision; they can Develop People by providing a high level of coaching and evaluation; and, they can Redesign the Organization by creating collaborative structures (Leithwood et. al, 2004). They can even appear to have a “clear focus” on reading (Murphy, 2004, p. 76). This study indicates that these practices alone do not produce significant increases in primary grade reading outcomes unless they are aligned with and revolve rightly around effective instructional practices. In the highest-scoring school in this study, leadership supported teachers and designed an organization that was wholly devoted to increasing the quality and quantity of the instructional practice, guided reading (Guided Reading Plus). Principals must be very careful to look at the integration of instructional strategies with vision, professional development, collaborative structures, evaluation, and coaching systems.

Leithwood et al. (2008) believe the principal would have to be “heroic” in order to have the depth of curriculum and content knowledge that they would need to be effective instructional leaders in addition to other skills a principal must have (p. 32). This is problematic since leaders who are less knowledgeable may be less involved in literacy instruction, and since principals who are less involved in literacy initiatives often mistakenly believe that their teachers already have the expertise to teach literacy (Burch & Spillane, 2003). In the highest-scoring school in this study, leaders sought knowledge from others in the school but also increased their own knowledge about reading instruction. While it may be unrealistic to have all elementary principals be instructional

experts in literacy, it is feasible to seek and prepare principals who value instructional expertise and know how to build coherent systems around instructional strategies.

It is important for principals to be aware of what they do not know and actively seek out those who are knowledgeable about early literacy instruction. Ultimately, flow of knowledge from those who have it to those who do not can only happen if there is knowledge in the system, and leaders have a responsibility to make sure this knowledge is present. To discover who has knowledge, leaders should listen to all voices, including experienced ones (veteran teachers).

Currently there is great hope invested in collaboration and professional learning communities as a means to spread instructional expertise. While collaboration is important, the positive effects of collaboration may be exaggerated if collaboration is not hinged to knowledge of reading instruction (Burch & Spillane, 2003). “Teaching reading is rocket science” (Moats, 1999, p. 8), and collaboration without knowledge of instructional practices is not supportive to teachers. However, collaborative networks of skilled teachers were seen to be effective.

The collaborative network in the highest performing school kept the communication lines open and quickened the flow of instructional knowledge. The other two schools in the study had a formal distributed-leadership model that was more focused on distributing functions like evaluation and feedback than on collaboration around reading instruction. In the lowest-scoring school, not all voices were heard regarding instruction, and in the middle scoring school, school-wide collaboration was reported to be lacking. Effective collaboration is an important aspect of leadership as it allows knowledge to flow through the system as it did in the highest-scoring school. In the

highest-scoring school the teachers were more experienced than the lowest-scoring school. The average number of years that teachers had taught in the highest-scoring school was 15 years, whereas in the lowest-scoring school it was 8, a difference of almost twice as many years. In a system where knowledge is critical, and where diversity enhances collaboration (Cohen et al., 2009), it is important to value experienced teachers.

### **Implications for Principal Preparation**

For the sake of principals who will work in high-risk schools where reading achievement must increase, principal preparation programs should help aspiring leaders understand the importance of high quality literacy instructional practices and how to build systems with instructional practice as the core. According to this study, the marriage of leadership and instruction is necessary to increase primary grade reading outcomes and principals need to be aware of the importance of the connection especially concerning reading outcomes in primary grades.

Principal preparation programs should also encourage new principals to value and hire experienced, knowledgeable teachers, encourage principals to listen to teachers, and to include instructional experts on their leadership teams.

### **Implications for School Districts**

The lowest-scoring school in this study emphasized coaching teachers in order to improve their effectiveness using the district's teacher evaluation framework. Teacher leaders and administrators ensured that every teacher in the building received coaching and feedback once a week using indicators from this general evaluation framework. The highest-scoring school in the study had not yet adopted this model at the time of the study, but would be required to do so the following year. At the highest-scoring school,



the administrators used the framework to evaluate teachers, as required; however, the instructional coach provided feedback and coaching specifically around reading instruction without the use of the teacher evaluation framework and without evaluation. Focusing on general standards for effective teaching could ultimately draw coaches and teachers' attention away from reading instruction. If student success depends on early literacy achievement (Torgesen, 1998; Reschly, 2010), then these details are critical.

**Time.** With respect to reading instruction, school districts may need to increase the time allotted for students to receive quality reading instruction for at-risk students who are below grade level in primary grades in order to ensure that they are on grade level by third grade. Instructional time can be increased for at-risk students specifically in primary grades by providing highly qualified reading interventionists who can deliver additional, supplemental reading instruction. If interventionists are not available, time-allocation guides for instruction may need to be adjusted so that students receive more reading instruction.

**Collaboration.** Having collaborative structures does not mean that there is genuine collaboration and forcing collaboration can lead to a negative climate (Collie et al., 2012). Before requiring schools to adopt district-defined collaborative structures (which may benefit some schools), districts should assess the state of collaboration which may already be happening at the school as well as the climate which can indicate the organization is healthy (MacNeil et al., 2009) and not in need of a prescription.

### **Implications for Teacher Leadership**

In an age of distributed leadership, teacher leaders must be knowledgeable about reading instruction in order to affect reading outcomes. It will be important for teacher

leaders in high-risk schools to be experts in teaching reading and to address both the quality and quantity of reading instruction to ensure that adequate attention is placed on improving instructional strategies for reading. Coaches and evaluators should attempt to align their work as closely as possible to effective reading strategies and be careful not to distract teachers from the task of improving reading instruction.

### **Implications for Instructional Strategies**

It is important to consider both the quality and quantity of reading instruction when selecting an instructional strategy to improve reading outcomes for high-risk students. In the case of the highest-scoring school, guided reading instruction occurred up to ten times a week for struggling students. Using the Guided Reading Plus model they had daily guided reading instruction (and writing instruction) with their teacher in addition to daily guided reading instruction with their intervention teacher. All students below grade level, regardless of how far below, received daily supplemental guided reading instruction with an interventionist.

At the lowest-scoring school, students received individualized feedback through one-on-one reading conferences. A teacher there stated that it was a challenge to meet with each student once a week. At this school, it was stated that students did not “need to be instructed all the time.” Teachers were “heavily coached” but students were not. In an era of teacher coaching and evaluation it is important that the emphasis on developing teachers does not distract teachers from developing students. Instructional practices should be selected which give students ample time and attention so that they learn to read well.

## **Future Research**

Future research should include studying more schools that are similar to schools in this study and that have varying reading outcomes to discover if there are similar findings across a wider sample. Studies should be conducted to discover other effective instructional reading strategies that leadership is hinged to. With respect to guided reading instruction, quantitative studies should be conducted to determine the quantity of guided reading instruction that is required for a significant effect on reading outcomes more broadly in at-risk schools. Concerning teacher evaluation, more studies should be done to discover which items on evaluation frameworks correlate with student achievement outcomes in reading.

## **Conclusion**

Leithwood & Jantzi (2006) stated that the effectiveness of leadership for increasing student achievement “hinges on specific classroom practices which leaders stimulate, encourage and promote” (p. 223). Leithwood and Jantzi’s statement rings true in this study of specific leadership practices in three schools with varying reading achievement outcomes in primary grades. This multiple-case study helped define what it means for leadership to be “hinged” to instruction in primary grades and provides specificity that is missing from the literature on school leadership. The details operationalize the leadership functions of setting directions, developing people, and redesigning the organization (Leithwood et al., 2004) when the goal is increasing primary grade reading achievement in schools with a high number of students who are at risk of reading below grade level.

In order to increase primary grade reading outcomes for high-risk students, results of this study indicate that leadership in all of its functions (Setting Directions, Developing People, and Redesigning the Organization) must be an undistracted, dedicated partner of a specific instructional strategy for reading. The highest and lowest-scoring schools both reported high degrees of collaboration, regular progress monitoring, and an abundance of support aimed at improving reading achievement, and yet had very different reading outcomes in primary grades. This was not simply a matter of having the right instructional practices at the school, since both the middle-scoring school and the highest-scoring school implemented guided reading instruction but achieved different results.

The critical difference was that at the highest-scoring school leadership practices were connected tightly to a specific model of literacy instruction that provided coherence for the leadership practices. They set directions by focusing on early literacy and selecting guided reading as the primary instructional strategy to increase reading outcomes for primary grade students. They developed teachers by providing targeted professional development around guided reading instruction in addition to providing non-evaluative coaching targeted to their guided reading practice. Teachers collaborated weekly around guided reading in professional learning communities and administration, teachers, and students monitored progress in reading achievement. In addition, they created an early intervention system devoted to increasing the quantity of guided reading instruction for all primary grade students who were below grade level regardless of how far they were below grade level.

The results of this study suggest that the “hinge” between leadership and instruction must be especially tight in order to positively affect reading achievement of students who struggle to read in primary grades. Leithwood et. al, (2010) report that academic achievement in elementary schools is more sensitive to leadership’s instructional actions than in secondary schools. This study suggests that leadership is to reading-instruction as parents/caretakers are to the development of a child. When young children struggle in life, they need their care-takers more, and when our youngest students are at risk of struggling to read, they need leadership to be more closely tied to instruction to ensure that students have the quality and quantity of instruction that they need. While results of this study contribute specificity to the literature, this study also sends a more universal message that aligning leadership practices with a specific

instructional strategy promotes a coherent system that enhances both leadership and instruction. If more at-risk schools have leadership working in concert with effective instructional strategies in primary grades, Dr. Seuss's famous words can be read by, and not just to, our youngest students with confidence: "The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn the more places you'll go."

## REFERENCES

- Allington, R. L. (2011). Reading intervention in the middle grades. *Voices From the Middle, 19*(2), 10–16.
- Anderson, A. B., & DeCesare, D. (Eds.). (2007). *Profiles of success: Eight Colorado schools that are closing the achievement gap*. Denver: Colorado Department of Education.
- Anderson, R.C., Hiebert, E.H., Scott, J.A., & Wilkinson, I.A.G. (1985). *Becoming a nation of readers: The report of the commission on reading*. Washington, D.C.: The National Institute of Education.
- Baker, E. L., Barton, P. E., Darling-Hammond, L., Haertel, E., Ladd, H. F., Linn, R. L., ... & Shepard, L. A. (2010). Problems with the Use of Student Test Scores to Evaluate Teachers. EPI Briefing Paper# 278. *Economic Policy Institute*.
- Bracey, G. W. (2008). Myths about high-achieving, high-poverty schools. *Principal Leadership, 8*(5), 59-61.
- Burch, P., & Spillane, J. (2003). Elementary school leadership strategies and subject matter: Reforming mathematics and literacy instruction. *Elementary School Journal, 103*(5), 519-535.
- Chenoweth, K. (2012). Piece by piece: How schools solved the achievement puzzle and soared. *American Educator, 15*-23.

- Clay, M. (1985) *The early detection of reading difficulties* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Coburn, C. E. (2005). Shaping teacher sensemaking: School leaders and the enactment of reading policy. *Educational Policy*, 19(3), 476-509.
- Cohen, J., McCabe, L., Michelli, N. M., & Pickeral, T. (2009). School climate: Research, policy, practice, and teacher education. *Teachers College Record*, 111(1), 180-213.
- Collie, R. J., Shapka, J. D., & Perry, N. E. (2012). School climate and social–emotional learning: Predicting teacher stress, job satisfaction, and teaching efficacy. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 104(4), 1189.
- Cotton, K. (2003). *Principals and student achievement: What the research says*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Dinham, S. (2005). Principal leadership for outstanding educational outcomes. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 43(4), 338-356.
- Dorn, L. J., & Soffos, C. (2012). *Interventions that work: A comprehensive intervention model for preventing reading failure in grades K-3*. Boston: Pearson Higher Ed.
- Duke, D. L., Tucker, P. D., Salmonowicz, M. J., & Levy, M. K. (2007). How comparable are the perceived challenges facing principals of low-performing schools. *International Studies in Educational Administration*, 35(1), 3-21.
- Dr. Seuss. (1978). *I can read with my eyes shut*. New York: Random House.
- Farkas, G., Hibell, J., Morgan, P. (2008). Matthew effects for whom? *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 31(4), 187-198.
- Fawson, P. C., & Reutzel, R. D. (2000). But I only have a basal: Implementing guided reading in the early grades. *The Reading Teacher*, 54(1), 84–97.



- Fisher, C., & Adler, M. A. (1999). *Early reading programs in high-poverty schools: Emerald Elementary beats the odds*. Ann Arbor, MI: Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement.
- Fletcher, J. (2011). Raising literacy achievement in reading: How principals of 10- to 12-year-old students are making this happen. *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 14*(1), 61-83.
- Foorman, B. R., & Torgeson, J. (2001). Critical elements of the classroom and small group instruction promotes reading success in all children. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 16*(4), 203-212.
- Fountas, I. C., & Pinnell, G. S. (2009). *Leveled literacy intervention*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Fuchs, L. S., & Fuchs, D. (2011). Using CBM for Progress Monitoring in Reading. *National Center on Student Progress Monitoring*.
- Fullan, M. (2006). *Turnaround leadership*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.
- Galloway, E. P., & Lesaux, N. K. (2014). Leader, teacher, diagnostician, colleague, and change agent. *The Reading Teacher, 67*(7), 517-526.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Hall, C., McKenna, Michael, Austin, Otilie, & Meyer, Patrick. (2013). *Understanding Policy Implementation: District-level Leaders' Perceptions of Reading Policy Implementation Efforts*. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.
- Hall, S. (2008). *Implementing response to intervention: A principal's guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

- Hallinger, P. (2011). Leadership for learning: Lessons from 40 years of empirical research. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 49(2), 125-142.
- Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. H. (1996). Reassessing the principal's role in school effectiveness: A review of empirical research, 1980-1995. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 32(1), 5-44.
- Hallinger, P., & Murphy, J. (1985). Assessing the instructional management behavior of principals. *The Elementary School Journal*, 86(2), 217-247
- Hattie, J. A. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Hernandez, D. (2012). *How third-grade reading skills and poverty influence high school graduation*. Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- Herridge, R. L. (2013). *A multiple case study of the literacy instructional leadership behaviors of elementary principals in North Carolina*. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1459435690).
- Holcombe, R., Jennings, J. L., & Koretz, D. (2013). The roots of score inflation: An examination of opportunities in two states' tests. In G. Sunderman (Ed.), *Charting reform, achieving equity in a diverse nation* (pp. 163-189). Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.
- Hoy, W. (2012). School characteristics that make a difference for the achievement of all students: A 40-year odyssey. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 50(1), 76-97.
- Iaquinta, A. (2006). Guided reading: A research-based response to the challenges of early reading instruction. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 33(6), 413-418.

- International Reading Association, Newark, DE. (2000). *Teaching All Children To Read The Roles of the Reading Specialist. A Position Statement of the International Reading Association*. Retrieved from ERIC Clearinghouse.
- Jones, R. E., Yssel, N. and Grant, C. (2012), Reading instruction in tier 1: Bridging the gaps by nesting evidence-based interventions within differentiated instruction. *Psychology in the Schools*, 49, 210–218. doi: 10.1002/pits.21591
- Juel, C. (1988). Learning to read and write: A longitudinal study of 54 children from first to fourth grades. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 80(4), 437-447.
- Koretz, D. (2005). Alignment, high stakes, and the inflation of test scores. *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, 104(2), 99-118.
- Kral, C. C. (2012). *Principal support for literacy coaching*. Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse. Retrieved from <http://www.literacycoachingonline.org/briefs/principalsupportfinal3-22-07.pdf>
- Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2008). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership. *School Leadership and Management*, 28(1), 27-42.
- Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (2006). Transformational school leadership for large-scale reform: Effects on students, teachers, and their classroom practices. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 17(2), 201-227.
- Leithwood, K., Patten, S., & Jantzi, D. (2010). Testing a conception of how school leadership influences student learning. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 46(5), 671-706.
- Leithwood, K., Seashore Louis, K., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *Executive summary - How leadership influences student learning*. Retrieved from

<http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/pages/executive-summary-how-leadership-influences-student-learning.aspx>

Leithwood, K., Louis, K. S., Wahlstrom, K., Anderson, S., Mascall, B., & Gordon, M. (2009). How successful leadership influences student learning: The second installment of a longer story. In *Second international handbook of educational change* (pp. 611-629). Dordrecht: Springer.

Lesnick, J., Goerge, R., Smithgall, C., & Gwynne J. (2010). *Reading on grade level in third grade: How is it related to high school performance and college enrollment?* Chicago: Chapin Hall.

Louis, K. S., Leithwood, K., Wahlstrom, K. L., Anderson, S. E., Michlin, M., & Mascall, B. (2010). *Learning from leadership: Investigating the links to improved student learning*. Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement/University of Minnesota. Retrieved from <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/pages/investigating-the-links-to-improved-student-learning.aspx>.

Lovett, M.W., Lacerenza, L., Borden, S.L., Frijters, J.C., Seteinbach, K.A., & DePalma, M. (2000). Components of effective remediation for developmental reading disabilities: combining phonological and strategy-based instruction to improve outcomes. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 92(2), 263-283.

MacNeil, A. J., Prater, D. L., & Busch, S. (2009). The effects of school culture and climate on student achievement. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 12(1), 73-84.

- Marks, H. M., & Printy, S. M. (2003). Principal leadership and school performance: An integration of transformational and instructional leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 39(3), 370-397.
- Matsumura, L. C., Garnier, H. E., & Resnick, L. B. (2010). Implementing literacy coaching: The role of school social resources. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 32(2), 249-272.
- Matsumura, L. C., Sartoris, M., Bickel, D. D., & Garnier, H. E. (2009). Leadership for literacy coaching: The principal's role in launching a new coaching program. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 45(5), 655-693.
- Merriam, S. (2009) *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco: Wiley & Sons.
- Moats, L. C. (1999). *Teaching reading is rocket science: what expert teachers of reading should know and be able to do*. Washington, DC: American Federation of Teachers.
- Mooney, K., & Teale, William H. (2009). *Responses to Struggling, K-2 Readers and Writers: Early Literacy Intervention in Three Urban Schools*. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.
- Murphy, J. (2004) Leadership for literacy: A framework for policy and practice. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 15(1), 65-96.
- National Assessment of Education Progress. (2015). *NAEP Reading Report Card: National Achievement Level Results*. Retrieved from [https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading\\_2017/#/nation/achievement?grade=4](https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_2017/#/nation/achievement?grade=4).

- National Assessment of Education Progress. (2017). *NAEP Reading Report Card: National Achievement Level Results*. Retrieved from [https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading\\_2017/#/nation/achievement?grade=4](https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_2017/#/nation/achievement?grade=4).
- National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. (2009). *Reading first's impact. NCEE evaluation brief 2009-4054*. Retrieved from <http://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.du.idm.oclc.org/docview/61854959?accountid=14608>
- National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (2000). *Report of the National Reading Panel. Teaching children to read: an evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction: Reports of the subgroups*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Overholt, R., & Szabocsik, S. (2013). Leadership content knowledge for literacy: Connecting literacy teachers and their principals. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 86(2), 53-58.
- Pinnell, G. S., & Fountas, I. C. (2009). *When readers struggle: Teaching that works*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Portin, B. S., Knapp, M. S., Dareff, S., Feldman, S., Russell, F. A., Samuelson, C., & Yeh, T. L. (2009). Leadership for learning improvement in urban schools. *Seattle, WA: Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, University of Washington*.
- Printy, S. M., & Marks, H. M. (2006). Shared leadership for teacher and student learning. *Theory into Practice*, 45(2), 125-132.

- Ransford-Kaldon, C., Flynt, E. S., & Ross, C. (2011). A Randomized Controlled Trial of a Response-to-Intervention (RTI) Tier 2 Literacy Program: Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI). *Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness*.
- Reschly, A. L. (2010). Reading and school completion: Critical connections and Matthew effects. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 26(1), 67-90.  
doi:10.1080/10573560903397023
- Robinson, V. M., Lloyd, C. A., & Rowe, K. J. (2008). The impact of leadership on student outcomes: An analysis of the differential effects of leadership types. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 44(5), 635-674.
- Ross, J. A. (1992). Teacher efficacy and the effects of coaching on student achievement. *Canadian Journal of Education/Revue canadienne de l'éducation*, 17(1), 51-65.
- Seashore Louis, K., Dretzke, B., & Wahlstrom, K. (2010). How does leadership affect student achievement? Results from a national US survey. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 21(3), 315-336.
- Schneider, Jenifer Jasinski, (2016). The Reading Wars. In J. Schnieder, *The inside, outside, and upside downs of children's literature: From poets and pop-ups to princesses and porridge* (pp. 159-198). St. Petersburg, FL: University of South Florida.
- Shanahan, T. (2005). The National Reading Panel Report. Practical Advice for Teachers. *Learning Point Associates/North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL)*.
- Snow, C., Burns, S., & Griffin, P. (Eds.) (1998). *Preventing reading difficulties in young children*. Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press.

- Stein, M. K., & Nelson, B. S. (2003). Leadership content knowledge. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 25(4), 423-448.
- Stover, K., Kissel, B., Haag, K., & Shoniker, R. (2011). Differentiated coaching: Fostering reflection with teachers. *The Reading Teacher*, 64(7), 498-509.
- Supovitz, J., Sirinides, P., & May, H. (2010). How principals and peers influence teaching and learning. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 46(1), 31–56.
- Taylor, B. M., Pearson, P. D., Clark, K. F., & Walpole, S. (1999). *Beating the odds in teaching all children to read*. Retrieved from <http://www.ciera.org/library/reports/inquiry-2/2-006/2-006.html>
- Torgesen, J. K. (1998). Catch them before they fall. *American educator*, 22, 32-41.
- Torgesen, J.K., Alexander, A.W., Wagner, R.K., Rashotte, C.A., Voeller, K.K.S., & Conway, T. (2001). Intensive remedial instruction for children with severe reading disabilities: Immediate and long-term outcomes from two instructional approaches. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 34(1), 33-58.
- Waits, M. J., Campbell, H. E., Gau, R., Jacobs, E., Rex, T., & Hess, R. K. (2006). Why some schools with Latino children beat the odds...and others don't. Arizona State University: Morrison Institute for Public Policy. Retrieved from <https://morrisoninstitute.asu.edu/products/why-some-schools-latino-children-beat-odds-and-others-dont>.
- Waters, T., Marzano, R. J., & McNulty, B. (2003). *Balanced leadership: What 30 years of research tells us about the effect of leadership on student achievement*. Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning.



APPENDIX A

**University of Denver**

**Consent Form for Participation in Research**

**Title of Research Study:** The Role of Leadership in Supporting Reading Achievement in Primary Grades

**Researcher(s):** Jacqueline Cuthill, PhD candidate, University of Denver, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

**Study Site:** \_\_\_\_\_ Elementary School

**Purpose**

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of this research is to learn more about the role of leadership in supporting reading achievement in primary grades.

**Procedures**

If you participate in this research study, you will be invited to complete a survey and/or interview/ and or be observed.

**Time Requirement**

The survey will take 20 minutes. The interviews and observations will last 40 minutes at the most.

**Voluntary Participation**

Participating in this research study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You may choose not to answer any survey question, or continue with the interview or the observation for any reason without penalty or other benefits to which you are entitled.

### **Risks or Discomforts**

Potential risks and/or discomforts of participation may include any normal discomfort that is associated with interviews and observations. If any participants are concerned that their employment may be affected by participating in the study, please be assured that the study is confidential and that the researcher is not in an evaluative position or any position that has influence over employment.

### **Benefits**

Possible benefits of participation include gaining knowledge about the role leadership has in supporting reading achievement.

### **Incentives to participate**

You will receive a \$10 gift card for completing the survey and a \$10 gift card for participating in an interview.

### **Confidentiality**

The researcher will keep survey results confidential and will provide pseudonyms for schools, interview participants, and for observation participants. Your individual identity will not be disclosed when information is presented or published about this study.

Data will be stored in a computer that is password protected. Documents and flash-drives will be stored in a locked briefcase. E-mails will be sent through a secure server. Audio recordings will enable the researcher to transcribe the interviews for analysis.

Professional transcribers will have access to recordings. Recordings will be destroyed upon completion of the study. However, should any information contained in this study be the subject of a court order or lawful subpoena, the University of Denver might not be able to avoid compliance with the order or subpoena. The research information may be shared with federal agencies or local committees who are responsible for protecting research participants.

### **Questions**

If you have any questions about this project or your participation, please feel free to ask questions now or contact Jacqueline Cuthill at 303-949-2453 any time.

If you have any questions or concerns about your research participation or rights as a participant, you may contact the DU Human Research Protections Program by emailing [IRBAdmin@du.edu](mailto:IRBAdmin@du.edu) or calling (303) 871-2121 to speak to someone other than the researchers.

### **Options for Participation**

Please initial your choice for the options below:

The researchers may audio/video record or photograph me during this study.

The researchers may NOT audio/video record or photograph me during this study.

**Please take all the time you need to read through this document and decide whether you would like to participate in this research study.**

If you agree to participate in this research study, please sign below. You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Participant Signature**

**Date**

**Please take all the time you need to read through this document and decide whether you would like to participate in this research study.**

If you decide to participate, your completion of the research procedures indicates your consent. Please keep this form for your records.

## APPENDIX B

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

#### **Questions to determine how leadership enacts “Setting direction”:**

What is your school’s vision and/or mission statement?

What is your school’s strategy for increasing reading achievement?

Possible probes: How was this strategy created? Has the strategy changed over the past 3 years?

What are your school’s expectations for student achievement in reading?

Possible probes: How were these expectations determined? Have these expectations changed over the past 3 years?

How is reading progress monitored?

Possible probes: Who monitors it? Has the way reading achievement is monitored changed over the past 3 years?

How is progress in reading communicated?

Possible probes: With whom is progress communicated? Has the way progress is communicated changed over the past 3 years?

If you could change anything about any of the things we have discussed (vision, strategy for increasing reading achievement, monitoring progress, or sharing progress) what would you change?

#### **Questions to determine how leadership “develops people”:**

How are teachers supported to improve reading instruction?

Possible probes: Who supports them? Over the past three years, have there been any changes in how teachers are supported to improve reading instruction?

What professional development opportunities centered on reading instruction have been offered at your school this year?

Possible probes: Who provides the professional development? How have professional development activities changed over the past three years? What professional development activities do teachers still need to improve reading instruction?

What opportunities do teachers have to observe model reading instruction?

Possible probes: How often? Who models it? Who determines that it is model reading instruction? Have the opportunities to observe model reading instruction changed over the past three years?

If you could change anything with respect to how you are supported to improve reading instruction what would that be?

#### **Questions to determine how leadership “redesigns the organization”:**

What does collaboration look like at your school?

Possible probes: How were these means of collaboration developed at your school? Have the means of collaboration changed over the past three years?

What does collaboration around reading instruction look like at your school?

Possible probes: How were these means of collaborating around reading instruction developed? Have the means of collaboration around reading instruction changed over the past three years?

Describe the atmosphere/climate of your school.

Possible probes: To what do you do you attribute this atmosphere/climate? How has the atmosphere changed over the past three years?

If you could change anything about the way collaboration happens at your school, or the climate of your school what would you change?

## APPENDIX C

### **SURVEY:**

Select the items which describe your role at your school (you may choose more than one).

- Classroom Teacher-Primary
- Classroom Teacher-Intermediate
- Leader/Teacher Leader
- Specialist/Support (Literacy Specialist, Facilitator, Interventionist, Special Educator, Specialist)
- Paraprofessional
- Other

How many years have you been in your current position?

How many years have you been working as a certified educator (all positions including at other schools)?

Please list any certifications or educational licenses that you have besides a teacher's or principal's license.

In your own words, describe your school's vision/mission.

Describe your school's strategy for increasing reading achievement.

What are your school's goals or expectations for reading achievement?

If you teach reading, how would you rate the level of support you have to be able to increase reading achievement? (If you do not teach reading, select NA.)

I have the support I need. Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree N/A

If you responded agree/strongly agree to having support you need to increase reading achievement, please provide specific examples of the support you received to improve reading achievement. (If you selected disagree/strongly disagree, proceed to the next question.)

If you responded disagree/strongly disagree to having support to increasing reading achievement, please provide specific examples of how your school does not provide support to improve reading achievement.

How would you rate the level of collaboration at your school?

Our school has a collaborative culture. Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

If you responded agree/strongly agree to having a collaborative culture, please provide specific examples of collaboration at your school. (If you selected disagree/strongly disagree proceed to the next question.)

If you responded disagree/strongly disagree to having a collaborative culture, please provide specific examples of how your school does not support a culture of collaboration. How would you rate the climate at your school?

My school has a positive climate. Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree

Rank the following possible factors that contribute to your school's reading achievement in PRIMARY grades (K-3). (Click and drag the item to place them in rank order.)

- teacher skill
- school leadership
- professional development
- socio-economic status (SES)
- family culture and background
- language
- other

If you have other comments about leadership and reading achievement at your school, please add them here.

I will be contacting primary grade teachers and interventionists about participating in an interview. Interview participants will receive a \$10 gift card.



APPENDIX D

Survey Results

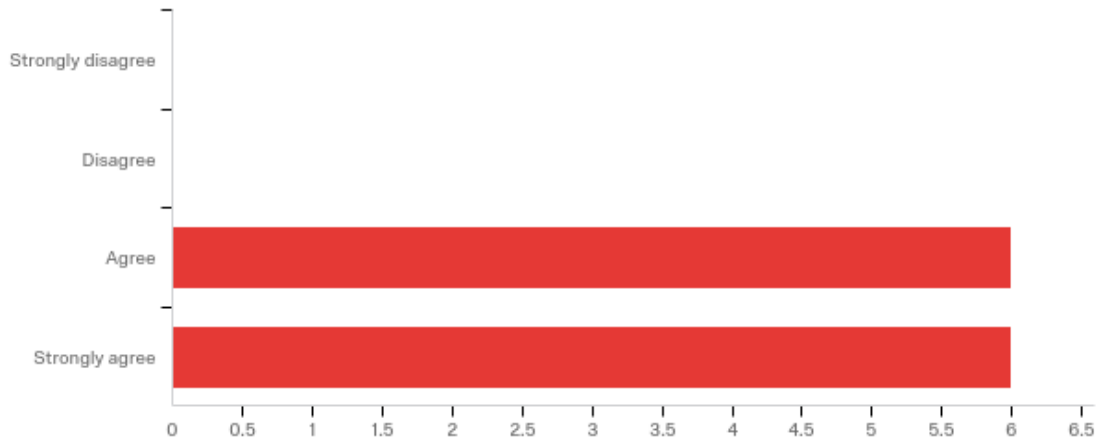
Thomas Elementary

Q4 - Please list any certifications or educational licenses that you have besides a teacher's or principal's license.

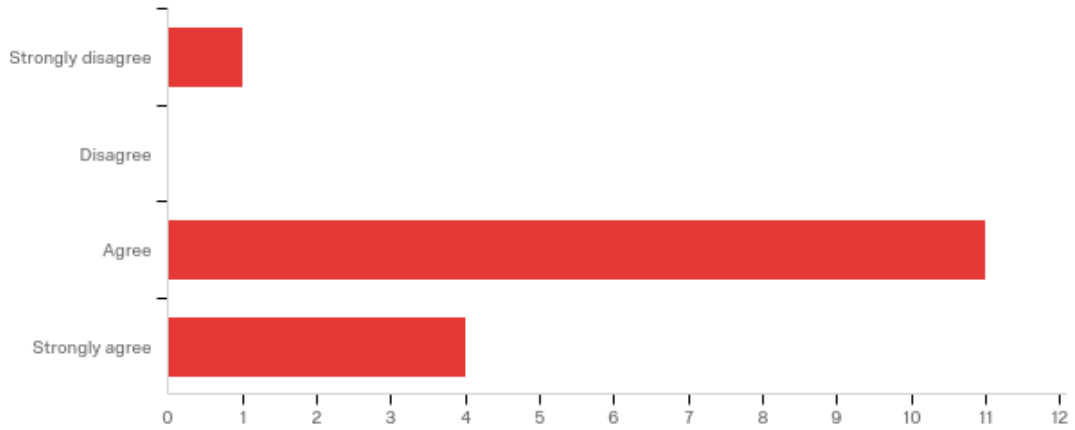
Please list any certifications or educational licenses that you have besides a teacher's or principal's license.

- 0
- 0
- colorado department of human services Mandated Reporter Training for Colorado Educators certificate.
- MA of Curriculum and Instruction, BA in Spanish
- Master in Bilingual Education
- master's degree
- Master's in curriculum and instruction, BA in Spanish
- n/a- currently pursuing National Board certification
- NBCT
- none

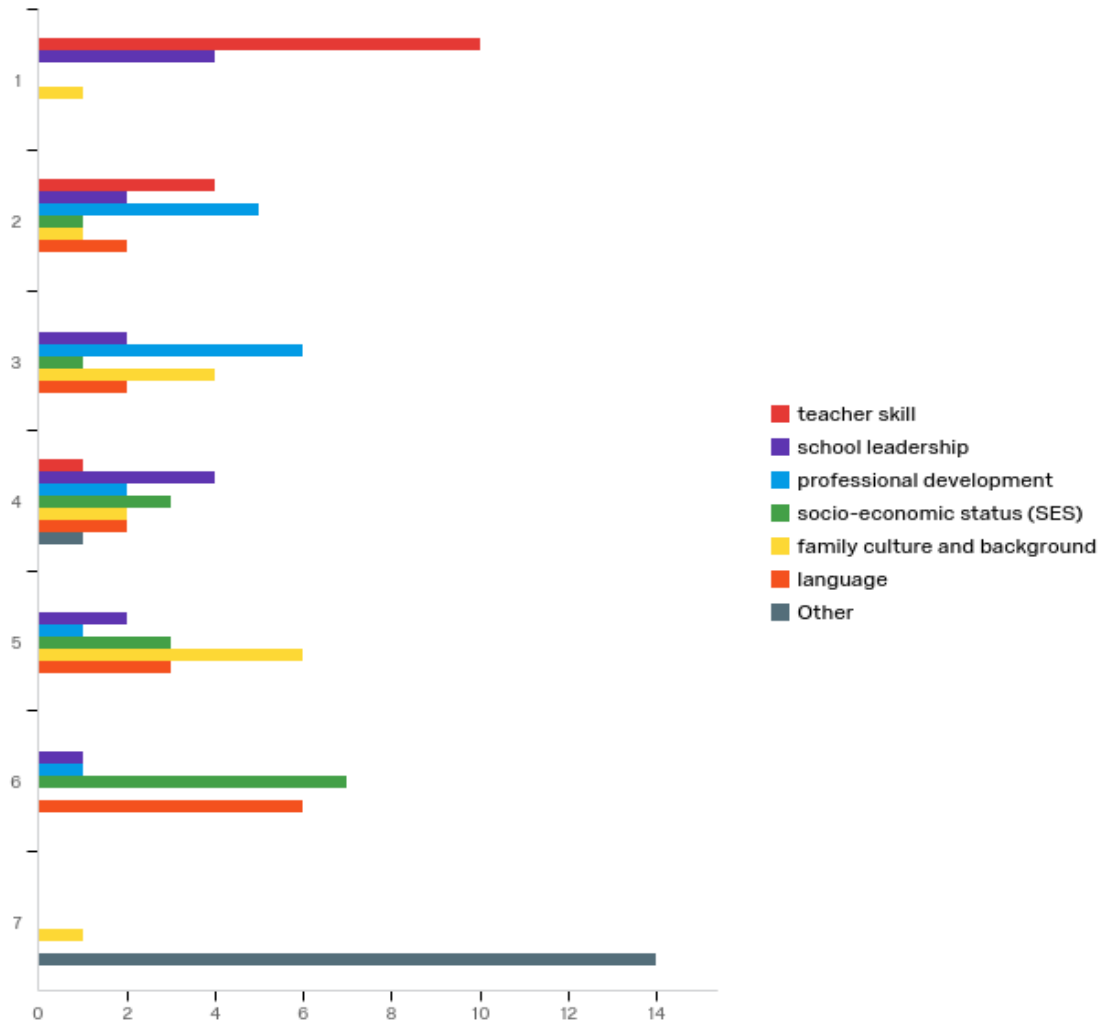
Q8 - If you teach reading, how would you rate the level of support you have to be able to increase reading achievement? (If you do not teach reading, select NA.)



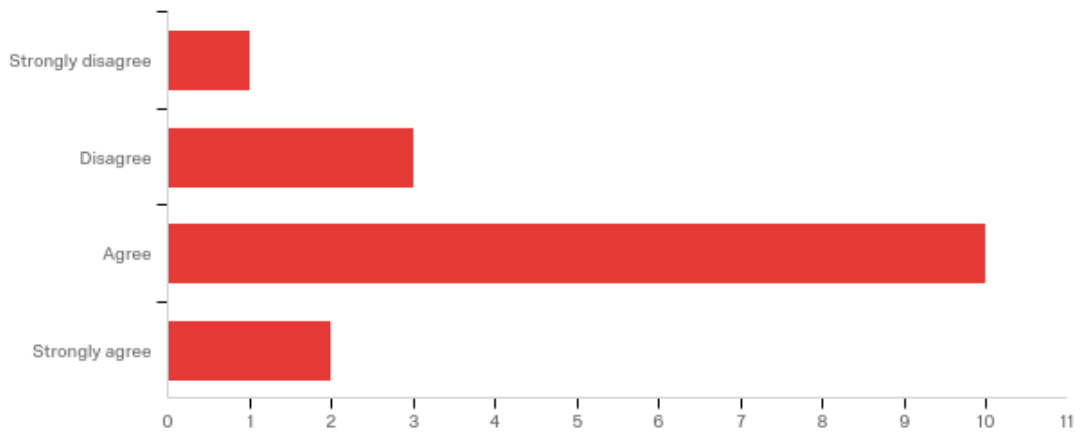
Q11 - How would you rate the level of collaboration at your school?



Q14 - Rank the following possible factors that contribute to your school's reading achievement in PRIMARY grades (K-3). (Click and drag the item to place them in rank order.)



Q19 - How would you rate the climate at your school?



## Andrews Elementary

Q4 - Please list any certifications or educational licenses that you have besides a teacher's or principal's license.

Please list any certifications or educational licenses that you have beside...

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse license

Education Specialist

ELL Endorsement

Linguistically Diverse Certification

Linguistically Diverse Education

MA, Bachelor's ART,

Masters degree in the field of Information Technologies and Library Science

Masters in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in Linguistically Diverse Education

Masters in Elementary Education

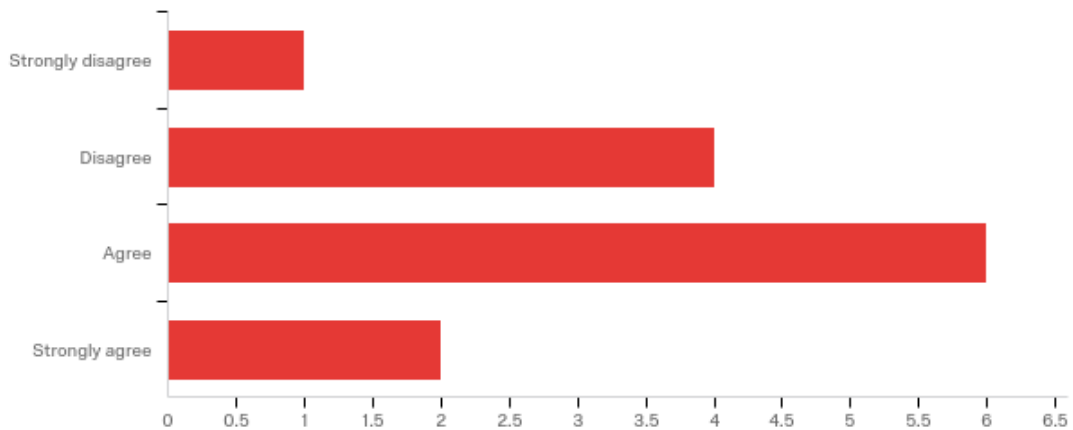
Masters in Multicultural and Multilingual Education

None

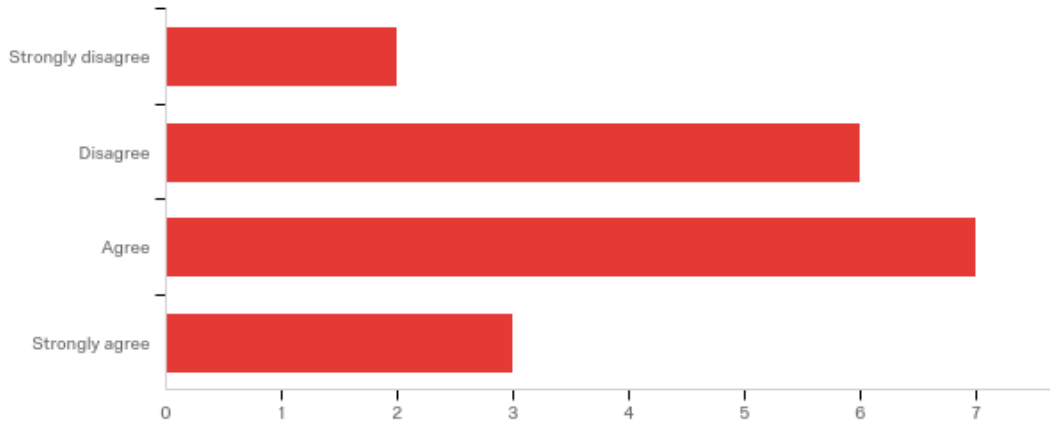
Orff Schulwerk certification

Visual Arts pre-k-12

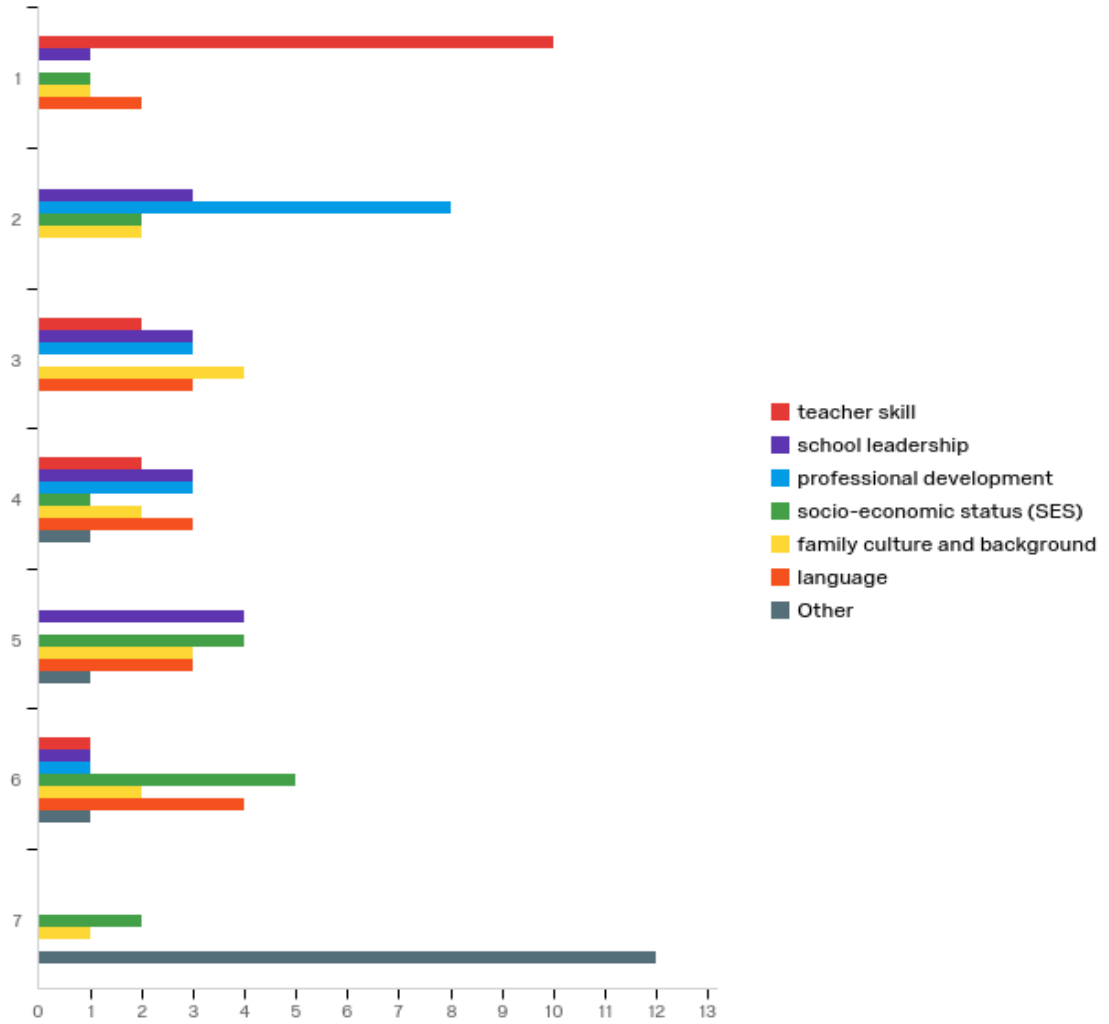
Q8 - If you teach reading, how would you rate the level of support you have to be able to increase reading achievement? (If you do not teach reading, select NA.)



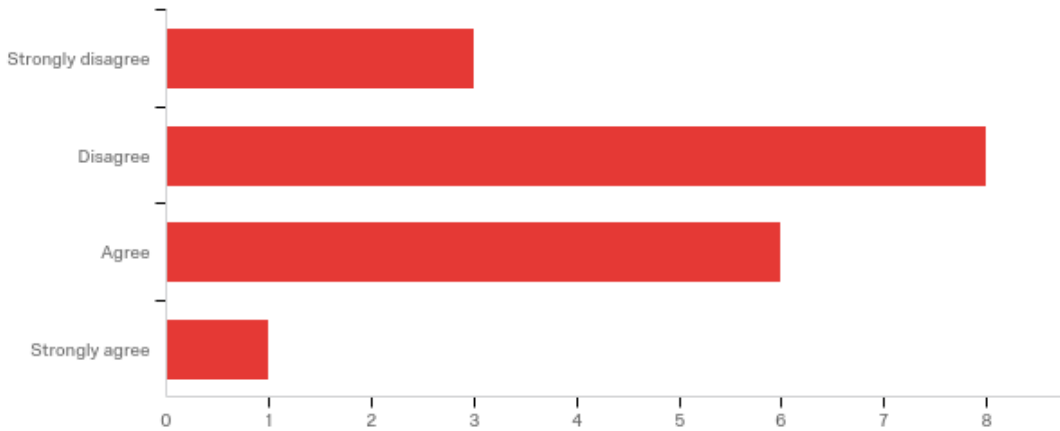
Q11 - How would you rate the level of collaboration at your school?



Q14 - Rank the following possible factors that contribute to your school's reading achievement in PRIMARY grades (K-3). (Click and drag the item to place them in rank order.)



Q19 - How would you rate the climate at your school?



**Robertson Elementary**

Q4 - Please list any certifications or educational licenses that you have besides a teacher's or principal's license.

Please list any certifications or educational licenses that you have beside...

---

Bilingual Certificate

---

Bilingual/ESL Endorsement

---

Early childhood endorsement, Linguistically diverse education endorsement, Certificate in early literacy (GRP)

---

Early Childhood Reading Certification, SPED Certification, TESOL Certification

---

ELA-E; Professional Teachers License

---

Gifted and talented endorsement

---

Gifted and Talented certified

---

Licensed psychologist

---

M.B.A.

---

Masters in linguistically diverse education, ELA qualified

---

Math, Secondary

---

N/A

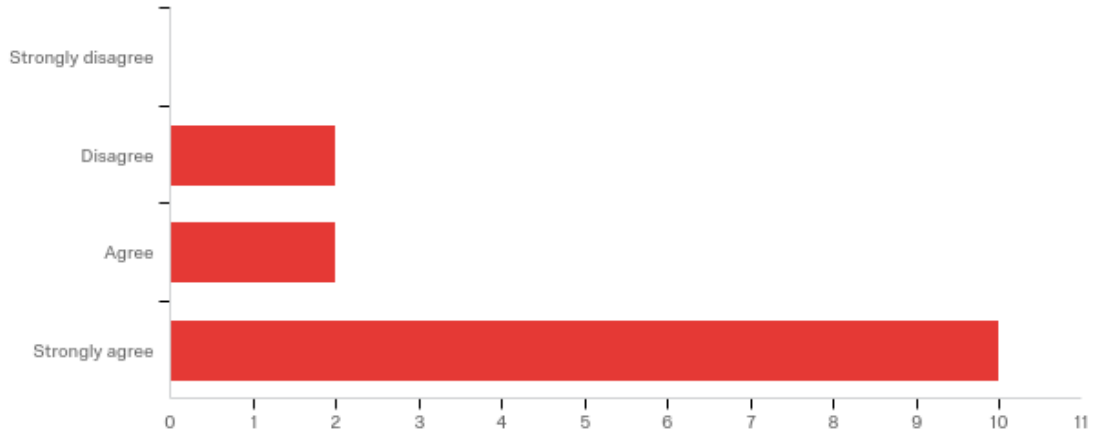
---

School Counselor

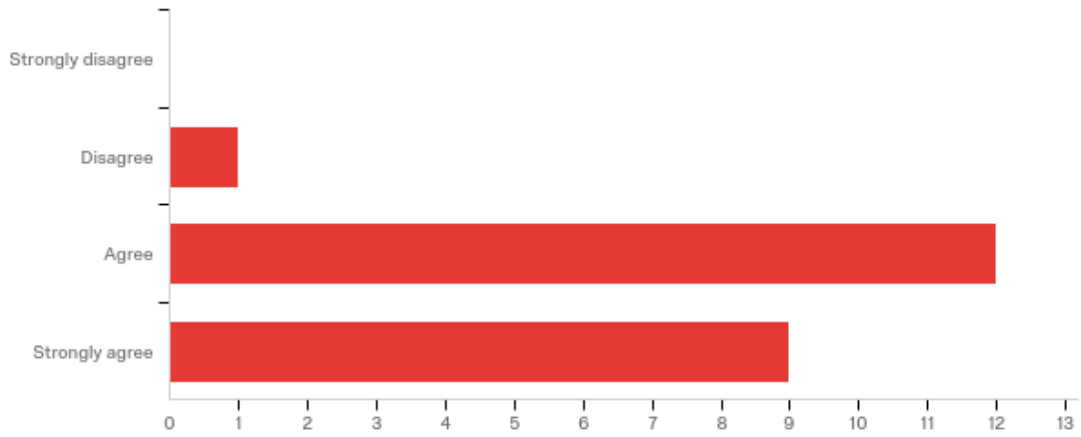
---

Social work

Q8 - If you teach reading, how would you rate the level of support you have to be able to increase reading achievement? (If you do not teach reading, select NA.)

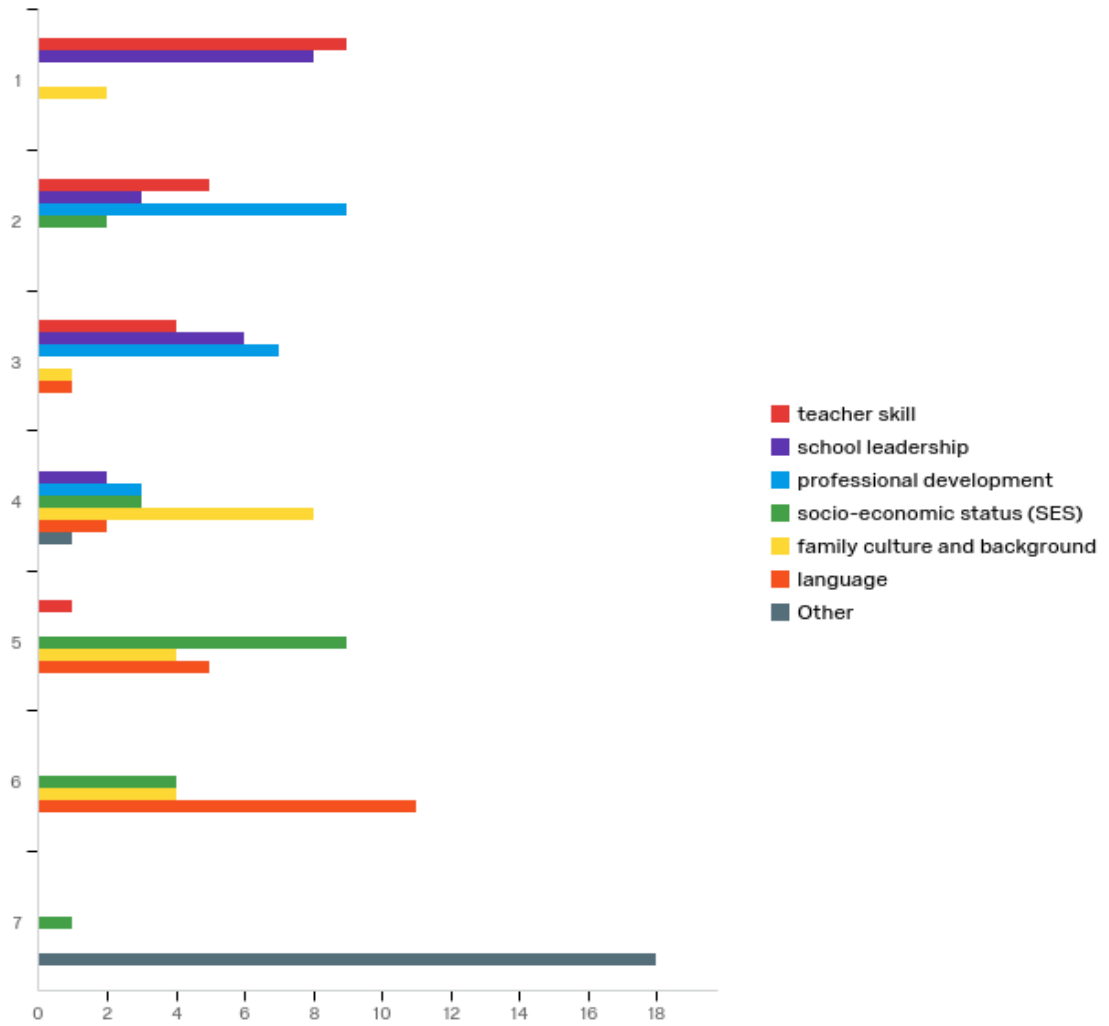


Q11 - How would you rate the level of collaboration at your school?



Q14 - Rank the following possible factors that contribute to your school's reading achievement in PRIMARY grades (K-3). (Click and drag the item to place them in rank order.)





Q19 - How would you rate the climate at your school

