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A Case Study Of The Perceived Effects Of Change In Principal Leadership In An Upper Midwest Middle School

Theresa Ann Meyers

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A CASE STUDY OF THE PERCEIVED EFFECTS OF CHANGE IN PRINCIPAL
LEADERSHIP IN AN UPPER MIDWEST MIDDLE SCHOOL

by

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A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the
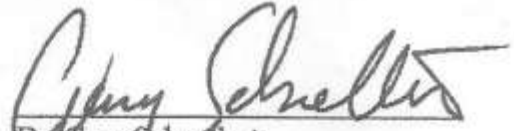
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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

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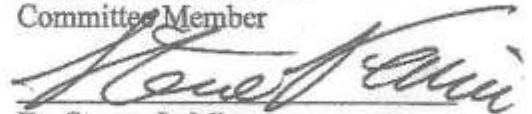
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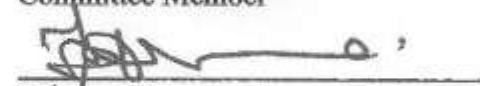
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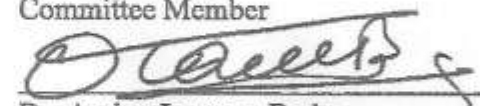
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the inspirational leaders with whom I have worked throughout my lifetime. From my parents, teachers who taught me when I was a small child until well into adulthood, outstanding professionals with whom I have had the privilege to work in various positions, to the faculty at the University of North Dakota, I have learned much from each of you. Many of you taught me the lessons that are the basis of my life's values for which I am thankful.

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I am especially grateful to my husband, Scott, who has taught me that life is too short for work to be the primary focus and that his unconditional love will help me get over any mountain in which we will climb together. You are truly the love of my life and I will be eternally grateful for all of the support you have given me.

This work is dedicated to my husband Scott, my son Michael, and all of the students and educators with whom I have inspired and will continue to inspire throughout my lifetime.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to describe the perceived problems that precipitated principal leadership change at the end of the 2008-2009 school year at an upper Midwest middle school and to describe the effects from the perspective of system participants. Using a case study approach, the research focused on the perceived effects of principal leadership change and its' impact on the perception of the school's culture and student success.

Three sources of data were triangulated and used to answer the research questions: pre-existing data from focus groups facilitated by an external consultant, open-ended interviews with eight participants from within the system, and historical AYP data. All interview participants were permitted to direct their confidential interview in a manner that provided meaning to them and obtained the most valid research results. The use of qualitative research techniques and the constant comparative methodology were utilized to facilitate thorough analysis of data and recommendations for practice based upon study results.

Although it did not develop nor expand current theory, this in-depth case study confirms principal leadership best practices and provides valuable insight in regard to the change process and the impact of principal leadership on that process. Change was initiated at the time of the retirement of a principal leadership team with a very traditional style when school accountability was being highlighted due to NCLB. This middle school went on a dysfunctional journey resulting in a second change in principal leadership after

only one year. Now, just three years later, the school has done a complete turnaround and has become a model for others to follow. This work will be of particular interest to district and principal leaders needing to facilitate change in their schools or those struggling amidst the change process to gain a better understanding of how principal leadership can impact change on school culture and student success.

Keywords: principal leadership, change, school culture, student achievement, student success, school turnaround

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

With the era of accountability, our nation's schools and teachers are being

microscopically examined as measured by tests with high expectations for student

achievement and public shaming when standards are not met. The No Child Left Behind

Act (NCLB) was passed in 2001 and set the goal that all students will be proficient in

reading and mathematics by the 2013-2014 school year. This landmark legislation

focused on accountability, judging schools in regard to student outcomes for all students

as well as various student subgroups, providing for parental choice in underperforming

schools, requiring stronger teacher qualifications, and basing improvement efforts on

research-based practices (Stecher, Yernez, & Steinberg, 2010).

NCLB was quite complex and included a variety of programs and accountability

standards with these specific features:

1. All states chose their own tests, adopted three performance levels, and defined criteria for proficiency.
2. All public schools that received federal funding were required to test all students in grades three through eight annually and once in high school in reading and mathematics and to disaggregate scores to ensure that every group's progress would be monitored and not hidden in overall averages.
3. All states were required to establish timelines showing how 100% proficiency would be reached in reading and mathematics by 2013-2014.
4. All schools and school districts were expected to make AYP for every subgroup toward the goal of 100% proficiency by 2013-2014.
5. Any school that did not make AYP for every subgroup was labeled a school in need of improvement and faced a series of increasing sanctions:
   a. In the first year of failing to make AYP, the school was put on notice.

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b. In the second year of failing to make AYP, the school was required to offer all its students the right to transfer to a successful school with transportation paid from the district's allotment of federal funds.

c. In the third year of failing to make AYP, the school was required to offer free tutoring to low-income students, paid from the district's federal funds.

d. In the fourth year of failing to make AYP, the school was required to undertake "corrective action," which may include curriculum changes, staff changes, or longer student contact times.

e. In the fifth year of failing to make AYP, the school was required to "restructure."

6. Schools that were required to restructure had five options:
   a. Convert to a charter school.
   b. Replace the principal and staff.
   c. Relinquish control to private management.
   d. Turn over control of the school to the state.
   e. Any other major restructuring of the school's governance.

7. NCLB required all states to participate in the federal National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) which did not provide for consequences for schools, but rather, served as an external audit to monitor the progress of states in meeting their goals. (Ravich, 2010, pp. 97-98)

Three recent studies were conducted by RAND Corporation and the United States Department of Education. Data for the National Longitudinal Study of No Child Left Behind (2004-2005), the Study of State Implementation of Accountability and Teacher Quality under No Child Left Behind (2006-2007), and the study of NCLB Implementation in Three States (2003-2006) all indicate that NCLB has succeeded in its intent to establish a nationwide school and teacher accountability infrastructure that focuses on student outcomes and emphasizes improvement of the lowest performing schools. Unfortunate results of the flexibility allowed in the legislation is there are now 52 different accountability systems with unique standards, various levels of student proficiency required from each of the 52 systems, and uncommon teacher licensure requirements throughout the nation. Results also indicate that the focus on two academic areas has narrowed school curricula in most schools, resulting in many teachers teaching to the test and discouraging the development of 21st century skills in the nation's

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students. Finally, mandates for 100% of the nation's students being proficient in reading and math disregard the fact that a small portion of our nation's students have severe developmental or learning disabilities that result in their inability to obtain proficiency. With unrealistic legislative mandates in NCLB, the goal of 100% of the nation's students being proficient in reading and mathematics by 2013-2014 will not be met (Stecher et al., 2010).

Although it is apparent that some expectations of NCLB were unrealistic and will not be met, reauthorization of this federal legislation has stalled in Congress. As a result, the Obama administration continues to push ahead with changes to the accountability system and the U.S. Department of Education has granted conditional waivers of mandates to 26 states with nine additional states waiting for response to their waiver requests (Klein, 2012). Although accountability expectations have changed for many states, and consequently local school districts, waiver approvals have been granted only with the assurances of adopted college and career readiness standards, teacher effectiveness measures based in part on student outcomes, and alternate goals for student achievement. The era of educational accountability has not disappeared.

In an attempt to meet the expectations of NCLB and recent waiver assurances, schools throughout the nation have been forced to evaluate practices and implement improvement strategies. A multitude of interventions were executed from the business model initiated in New York City where Mayor Michael Bloomberg took control of the 1.1 million public school student system (Ravich, 2010) as opposed to the improvement strategies initiated at Nobelsville Schools in Nobelsville, Indiana where accreditation through AdvancED guided their improvement efforts to meet NCLB requirements

(AdvancED, 2010). Interventions have been broad, based upon researched best practices, and have addressed concerns in regard to issues such as school leadership, teacher quality and professional development, instructional strategies, and school climate in attempts to positively impact student achievement and prevent school failure to make AYP.

As a result of NCLB's publicized accountability, schools throughout the nation have been labeled "failing schools," a term utilized frequently, but whose definition is both vague and interchangeable. According to Murphy and Meyers (2008), the term "failing school" has surfaced recently with the accountability movement and is used interchangeably with terms such as schools in need of improvement, underperforming, low-performing, ineffective schools, troubled schools, and corrective action schools. In this era of accountability initiated by NCLB, public school performance based upon student achievement has highlighted the need for improvement in many schools identified as failing and has prompted the necessity for turnaround in order to improve student achievement and to avoid negative public scrutiny.

<center>Statement of the Problem</center>

Upper Midwest Middle School (UMMS) was among the estimated 28% of the nation's schools failing to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) during the 2006-2007 school year (Center on Education Policy, 2011; Minnesota Department of Education, 2011a). Impacted by principal leadership that had recently changed and was struggling, staff mistrust, a deteriorating school climate, and its third, consecutive year of failing to make AYP, the superintendent determined it was necessary to intervene during the last quarter of the 2008-2009 school year. Many stakeholders agreed and believed UMMS was a failing school in need of turnaround.

The superintendent implemented a comprehensive plan to address concerns. He initiated an investigation in order to obtain a clear understanding of both actual and perceived problems, hired a consultant to facilitate healing sessions to repair relationships among the staff, and replaced the building leadership team. Three years later, Upper Midwest Middle School has made a tremendous turnaround! They have celebrated their third, consecutive year of making AYP, have regained trust among the staff, and were recently validated for their total commitment to excellence by the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association as one of only seven schools endorsed in the 2012-2013 Minnesota Schools of Excellence Program (Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association, 2012).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe the perceived problems that precipitated principal leadership change at the end of the 2008-2009 school year at Upper Midwest Middle School and to describe the effects from the perspective of system participants. Using a case study approach, the research focused on the perceived effects of principal leadership change and its' impact on the perception of the school's culture and student success.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide the study:

1. What were the perceived problems at Upper Midwest Middle School that precipitated principal leadership change at the end of the 2008-2009 school year?

2. To what extent has the change in principal leadership at Upper Midwest Middle School impacted the perception of the school's culture since the 2009-2010 school year?

3. To what extent has the change in principal leadership at Upper Midwest Middle School impacted student achievement as well as the perception of student success since the 2009-2010 school year?

<center>Importance of the Study</center>

Continuous improvement and change have been and will continue to be paramount during the 21st century in American education. The No Child Left Behind Act passed in 2001 set the stage for increased accountability and public scrutiny within the nation's schools. The current political climate, combined with ever decreasing funds to support public education, are demanding change within educational systems as traditional ways of doing things can no longer be funded, nor are they permitted due to changing state and federal mandates.

This in-depth case study of Upper Midwest Middle School provides valuable insight in regard to the change process and the impact of principal leadership on that process. Change was initiated at the time of the retirement of a principal leadership team with a traditional style when school accountability was being highlighted due to NCLB. This middle school went on a dysfunctional journey resulting in a second change in principal leadership after only one year. Now, just three years later, UMMS has done a complete turnaround and has become a model for others to follow. This work will be of particular interest to district and principal leaders needing to facilitate change in their

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schools or those struggling amidst the change process to gain a better understanding of how principal leadership can impact change on school culture and student success.

<div style="text-align: center;">Outline of Procedures</div>

This qualitative study was designed to describe the perceived problems that precipitated principal leadership change at the end of the 2008-2009 school year at Upper Midwest Middle School and to describe the effects from the perspective of system participants. Using a case study approach, the research focused on the perceived effects of principal leadership change and its' impact on the perception of the school's culture and student success.

Initial meetings with the school and district administrators occurred during the fall 2011, facilitating the planning of research and interview schedules. Project approval was received from the University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board (IRB-201202-274) on March 22, 2012. Interviews were conducted privately at the convenience of participants between March 23, 2012 and May 15, 2012.

The study was planned to resemble the constant comparative method where research is designed so that analytical induction includes simultaneous data collection, data analysis, and the likelihood of theory development. Transcription, open coding of interview data, and open coding of pre-existing focus group data were initiated during the same timeframe as participant interviews with conceptual frameworks being developed in order to better understand the results. As the study continued and methods evolved, it became apparent to the researcher that a gap in data existed. Consequently, historical AYP data for UMMS was collected and analyzed to further validate participant responses and perceptions.

Three sources of data were utilized in the study:

1. Pre-existing data from focus groups led by a district consultant who was hired to facilitate healing among the school staff during the spring 2009.

2. Semi-structured, qualitative interviews with eight participants from within the system to include the superintendent, current principal, current assistant principal, and five teachers and/or support staff who have been employed in the school throughout the change process.

3. Historical AYP data from UMMS.

Basic Assumption

This research is based upon the assumption that system participants responded in an honest and accurate manner to reveal their perceptions of the change process and the effects of principal leadership on the school culture and student success at UMMS.

Delimitations of the Study

The study was delimited by the following factors:

1. The study was conducted in a single school in an upper Midwest state.

2. The pre-existing focus group data were collected during the spring 2009 during a time of significant turmoil and emotional stress at UMMS.

3. The open-ended interviews were collected between March 23 and May 15, 2012.

4. Interviews were conducted with the district superintendent, current principal, current assistant principal, and five teachers and/or support staff who were employed in the school throughout the change process.

5. The five components of learning organizations (Senge, 2006) were used as a comparison theoretical framework for this investigation to define change.

Researcher's Role

The primary researcher in this study was hired as a teacher in the case study school at the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year, two years after the identification of problems which resulted in the change in principal leadership within the school. This research study was not only focused on historical events that occurred prior to the researcher's employment in this school, but it was also focused on the perceptions of participants in the system of events that occurred prior to the researcher's employment. Although there was a possibility of bias, the researcher made full attempt to keep the information as unbiased as possible.

In an attempt to increase validity in the data collected, the researcher paid particular attention to strategies designed to avoid potential retribution to subordinate participants who may express negative perceptions about building and/or district administration during open-ended interviews. First, none of the principals studied prior to or during the 2008-2009 school year are currently employed within the district, thus eliminating concerns in regard to the district power structure and its' impact on subordinate participants. Second, the identities of subordinate participants were kept confidential from the district superintendent and current principals with all participant interviews scheduled and held in private locations that were not revealed to the district superintendent and current principals. Finally, all interview transcripts were kept confidential with all subordinate participant comments remaining anonymous in the study's data summaries and appendices.

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Definition of Terms

Adequate yearly progress (AYP). An individual state's measure of progress toward the goal of 100% of students achieving to state minimum level of academic standards and proficiency in reading and math.

AdvancED. The parent organization for the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE), the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI) which accredits worldwide schools through a systems approach to continuous improvement.

Axial coding. Analysis of data whereby the researcher develops themes to explain patterns which emerge in the data. The purposes of axial coding are to sort, synthesize, and organize large amounts of data and reassemble them in new ways after open coding.

Case study. A method of qualitative research whereby the focus of the research is on a single individual or organization.

Change. A process whereby the educational leader analyzes the organization's need for change, isolates and eliminates structures and routines that work against change, creates a shared vision and sense of urgency, implements plans and structures that enable change, fosters open communication, and challenges the status quo.

Content analysis. A qualitative data analysis technique where detailed review of textual content leads to themes.

Culture or climate. Attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs associated with a particular organization or group.

Empower. To invest with or share power or official authority with others.

Field methods. The procedures used to collect and analyze data in a qualitative research study.

First order or incremental change. Change that fine-tunes systems through a series of small steps that do not depart radically from the past.

Focus group interviewing. A data collection technique that relies upon group interaction and discussion.

Grounded theory. A qualitative research approach from which theories may emerge. It emphasizes theoretical sampling and uses open, axial, and theoretical coding.

High-needs school. Schools in which 50% or more of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

High-performing schools. Schools in which students scored well above state averages on annual tests to determine Adequate Yearly Progress.

Leadership. A process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.

Low-performing schools. Schools in which students scored well below state averages on annual tests to determine Adequate Yearly Progress.

Objectivist grounded theory. A grounded theory approach in which the researcher takes the role of dispassionate, neutral observer who remains separate from the research participants, analyzes their world as an outside expert, and treats research relationships and representation of participants as unproblematic.

Open coding. The first step in data analysis where the text is sorted and organized into separate categories.

Participant. An individual who provides information relative to the research.

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Power. The ability or official capacity to exercise control or authority of others.

Qualitative interviews. A technique of data collection that includes semi-structured interviews as seen as a conversation in which a participant and a researcher interact so that the participant's thoughts are revealed and interpreted by the researcher.

Relationships. An awareness and maintenance of positive, personal connectedness or association with others within the organization.

School connectedness. The belief by students that adults in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals.

Second-order or deep change. Change that alters the system in fundamental ways, offering a dramatic shift in direction and requiring new ways of thinking and acting.

Service learning. A method of experiential education where students apply classroom knowledge to real world situations through the performance of needed community service.

Small learning community. Any separately defined, individualized, learning unit within a larger school setting. Students and teachers are scheduled together and frequently have a common area within the school in which to hold all or most of their classes.

Student achievement. A level of academic success whereby students meet or exceed proficiency standards determined by the state board of education.

Student discipline. Character and patterns of acceptable behavior expected of students.

Student success. A combined attainment of both academic achievement and acceptable behavioral standards for students.

Theoretical coding. Analysis of data whereby the researcher constructs theory to describe the central or core themes in the data and an analysis of the findings is completed.

Toxic school culture. The culture of a school where the staff are extremely fragmented, the purpose of serving students has been lost to the goal of serving adults, and where negative values and hopelessness reign.

Transcript. A written translation of a digitally recorded interview.

Turnaround school. A school where 20% or more of their students fail to meet state proficiency standards in mathematics or reading as defined under NCLB during two or more consecutive years followed by demonstrated substantial student achievement gains during a brief time of three years or less.

Vision. Established goals in regard to where an organization is headed that is kept in the forefront of the organization's attention.

Acronyms

AYP	Adequate Yearly Progress
IRB	Institutional Review Board
McREL	Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning
MESPA	Minnesota Elementary School Principals Association
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NASSP	National Association of Secondary School Principals
NCAA	National Collegiate Athletic Association
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
TQM	Total Quality Management

UMMS   Upper Midwest Middle School

UND   University of North Dakota

Organization of the Study

   Chapter II contains an overview of current and historical literature relating to the topics of this study. It begins with an introduction to organizational change and leading change. It is followed by a summary of leadership theories that apply to schools and other business organizations. Chapter II continues with an overview of current literature related to organizational culture followed by a summary of principal leadership and its effects on both school culture and student achievement. Finally, Chapter II concludes with an overview of turnaround schools to include a summary of strategies that have been effective in facilitating their success.

   A description of the methods utilized in this study is included in Chapter III. It begins with the purpose of the study and is followed by a description of the theoretical framework of Senge's learning organizations theory, an overview of the case study and justification for the utilization of the methodology in this study, and the constant comparative method. The chapter continues with a summary of information and demographics about the participants as well as the data collection methods and analysis that was utilized. Chapter III concludes with a summary of the researcher's role and possible validity threats that were considered in the research study.

   Coded results of focus group data and open-ended interviews from study participants along with a summary of historical AYP data are described in Chapter IV. Evidence was drawn from focus group comments, interview transcripts, coded data, and descriptive statistics to answer the three research questions used to guide the study.

The study concludes in Chapter V. It includes a summary of the themes and issues from study results, discussion and conclusions, concluding thoughts, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Organizational Change Theories

Changed behavior is the result of commitment to new belief systems. In order to facilitate any organizational change, individuals working within the organization must not only change what they believe, but also the way in which they behave. To make organizational change even more challenging, the belief and behavioral change of multiple employees must coincide with one another. Various organizational change theories have been developed to explain ways to facilitate long-term, strategic change where both employee beliefs and behaviors are altered to support the vision and long-term success of the organization.

Deming's Total Quality Management Theory

One of the original founding fathers of the continuous improvement movement was W. Edwards Deming, an American statistian who earned his fame through the development of his Total Quality Management (TQM) theory first utilized by Japanese manufacturing companies post World War II. Prior to Deming's involvement, Japanese products were synonymous worldwide with junk. After the Japanese manufacturers made a commitment in the 1950s to consistent implementation of Deming's TQM that was based upon statistical methods, quality production, teamwork, and continuous improvement, their manufacturing systems became revolutionized and famous for quality

and productivity. This was predominantly evident in the automotive industry where Deming was especially influential.

According to Deming (2000), there is a chain reaction when continuous quality improvement becomes the focus of change in an organization. Costs decrease due to the need for less rework, fewer errors, fewer delays, and better use of time and materials. Productivity then increases and the organization is able to capture the market with better quality and lower price. This results in the organization staying in business, earning more profits, and ultimately retaining more jobs for workers.

Deming (2000) highlighted the importance of a continuous improvement process and explains that the status quo will not do. He indicated that it is a mistake to assume that efficient production and service can keep an organization solvent and ahead of its' competition. Deming indicated it is relatively easy for an organization to decline and end in bankruptcy as a result of making the wrong product or offering the wrong type of service, even though everyone in the organization performs with dedication, employing statistical methods, and working efficiently.

Total Quality Management utilizes statistical tools as well as a change in culture in order to facilitate continuous success. Deming (2000) identified 14 points in his theory of TQM that provide a framework for management to implement change:

1. Develop the organization's goals and philosophy.
2. Understand the philosophy of continuous improvement.
3. Replace mass inspection with continuous improvement.
4. Change the philosophy of purchasing.
5. Improve the system through continuous improvement.
6. Institute modern training methods.
7. Institute leadership and supervise continuous improvement.
8. Drive out fear.
9. Break down organizational barriers.
10. Replace numerical goals, posters, and slogans with continuous improvement.

11. Replace quotas with continuous improvement.
12. Promote pride of workmanship.
13. Educate and retrain everyone.
14. Structure for continuous improvement. (p. 23)

Deming (1993) believes that competition, judgment of people, and numerical

goals without change in methods will result in failure of our American education system

and economy. According to Deming (1993):

> There is a deep concern in the United States today about education. No notable improvement will come until our schools:
> 1. Abolish grades (A, B, C, D) in school, from toddlers on up through the university. When graded, pupils put emphasis on the grade, not on learning. Cooperation on a project in school may be considered cheating. The greatest evil from grades is forced ranking-only 20 percent of pupils may receive A. Ridiculous. There is no shortage of good pupils.
> 2. Abolish merit ratings for teachers.
> 3. Abolish comparison of schools on the basis of scores.
> 4. Abolish gold stars for athletics or for best costume.
>
> Indeed, if our future lies in specialty products and services, as mass production moves to automation and to other countries, then improvement in education in this country is even more vital than hitherto supposed. Our schools must preserve and nurture the yearning for learning that everyone is born with. Joy in learning comes not so much from what is learned, but from learning. (p. 148)

Deming (1993) believes strongly that without a transformation of traditional

methods, organizations including schools, will fail. He stresses that the job of an

organizational leader is to accomplish the transformation of the organization and the way

in which that could be done is through the creation of a vision, the leader being

compelled to accomplish the transformation, and the leader being practical by developing

and implementing a step-by-step plan. According to Deming, this transformation cannot

be completed independently by the leader, but the leader must convince and change

enough people in power to make it happen. In order to accomplish this, the leader must

understand people and possess persuasive power to facilitate buy-in and commitment to

the change initiative.

Lewin's Change Management Theory

Recognized as the "founder of social psychology", Kurt Lewin emigrated from

Germany to the United States during the 1930's. His interest in social groups led to his

research in regard to factors that influence people to change their behaviors and resulted

in his development of a three step theory of change called the Change Management

Theory or Unfreeze, Change, Freeze which was first presented in 1947 (Change

Management Coach, nd).

Viewing behavior as a complex balance of forces working in opposite directions,

Lewin believed that driving forces facilitate change because they guide employees in the

desired direction while restraining forces hinder change because they push employees in

the opposite direction. According to Lewin, the opposing forces must be analyzed and the

implementation of his three step model can facilitate the balances of forces in the

direction of the planned change.

According to Lewin, stage 1 Unfreeze, is extremely important. It is at this stage

that the preparation to change takes place. It includes developing a clear understanding of

the need for change and preparing to leave the comfort zone of present practices. It

includes not only preparing the leaders to facilitate change, but also preparing employees

to not only commit to the change, but to also understand the need and urgency for the

change. The process of unfreezing includes analyzing the proposed change initiative to

determine the "pros" and "cons". This activity is what Lewin called the Force Field

Analysis.

The second stage in Lewin's change theory is that of Change. Recognizing that

change is not an event, but rather a process, Lewin indicated that stage 2 is oftentimes the

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most difficult for people to do. It is important that leaders provide their employees a great deal of knowledge and support at this time so that they are able to understand and work within the parameters of the change. Mistakes will be part of this stage and it is important that leaders are supportive. The utilization of role models and encouraging individuals to solve problems individually or collectively in small groups can be very beneficial to obtaining employee buy-in to the change. It is also important at this stage to highlight effective communication among everyone so that the desired change and benefits are apparent.

The final stage of Lewin's change theory is that of Freezing. It is at this stage that stability is established after the process of change is complete, accepted, and becomes the new norm. This step in the process can take a great deal of time before everyone involved has permanently changed both their beliefs and behaviors.

Fullan's Six Secrets of Change Theory

In a more modern theory, Michael Fullan, worldwide authority and consultant, developed his theory about organizational change that he refers to as "The Six Secrets of Change" (2008). The theory identifies key factors that enable organizations to facilitate and maintain meaningful change under complex conditions. Fullan's change theory, based upon his work in understanding and bringing about large-scale educational and business reform, was tested in relation to formal business studies.

Fullan's (2008) first secret of change is "love your employees" (p. 11). His research found that investing in employees is a strategy that can result in customer appreciation and profitability. Fullan recommended that leaders enable employees to

continuously learn, find meaning in their work, find meaning in their relationship to coworkers, and find meaning in the company as a whole.

The second secret of change is "connect peers with purpose." According to Fullan (2008), leaders must implement strategies that foster continuous and purposeful peer interactions. The leaders' job is to provide good direction through purposeful peer interaction and learning in relation to desired organizational goals.

Fullan's (2008) third secret, "capacity building prevails," involves leaders investing in the development of individual and collaborative efficacy of the group or system to accomplish significant improvements. Specifically, capacity consists of building new competencies, new resources of time, ideas, and expertise, as well as new employee motivation.

"Learning is the work" is Fullan's (2008) fourth secret of change. He indicated that in many organizations there are too many workshops, too many short courses, and too much learning taking place outside of the organization when learning while doing the work is oftentimes more effective. According to Fullan, external learning can be useful; however, a balance of both external and internal learning is necessary in order to make the learning meaningful and useful.

Fullan's (2008) fifth secret that enables organizations to facilitate and maintain meaningful change is "transparency rules." He stressed the importance of utilizing transparent data for the purpose of clear and continuous organizational improvement. Fullan believes that when transparency is obvious within an organization on a continuous basis, it creates an aura of positive pressure that is perceived as fair and reasonable, actionable and solution-focused, and ultimately is inescapable.

Fullan's (2008) sixth and final secret of meaningful change is "systems learn." He explained that systems can learn on a continuous basis and the result of implementing the five previous secrets simultaneously is a system that learns from itself. He explained that there are two change forces that are cultivated through the five secrets: knowledge and commitment. He believes that as people continuously learn new things, their sense of meaning and motivation are stimulated and deepened.

Based upon his extensive research and experiences, Fullan (2008) recommended the implementation of his "Six Secrets of Change" for organizational leaders to facilitate and maintain meaningful change in the 21st century. According to Fullan, implementation of these strategies will enable the best leaders to help their organizations to both survive and thrive during these tumultuous times.

Senge's Learning Organizations Theory

The organizational change theory upon which this research study will be further compared and contrasted was developed by American scientist, lecturer, and respected authority in organizational development, Peter Senge. Developed in 1990, Senge's Learning Organizations Theory provides a theoretical framework for learning organizations that includes five components in which learning organizations can facilitate change. The interdependent components are personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning, and systems thinking.

The first component, personal mastery, is where organizational leaders support the personal development and fulfillment of all employees. According to Senge (2006), this component is developed when a personal vision is clearly developed for individuals and it becomes a roadmap to guide employees to reach their ideal state within their

current reality. At this stage, individuals become committed to seeking the truth where

biases, assumptions, and perceptions are critically explored. In order for leaders to

facilitate the first component among their employees, cultures must be created that value

honesty, challenging the status quo, and continuously compare the vision with the current

reality. Senge, indicates that organizations cannot require their employees to engage in

this component; however, role modeling these behaviors, the use of evaluations to

identify long-term employee goals, and the use of data to promote a clear picture of the

current reality help to create a culture ripe for individuals to engage.

The second component of Senge's theory of Learning Organizations, mental

models, is the assumptions and beliefs that individuals hold about concepts or events that

impact behavior and shape the organizational perception of reality (Senge, 2006). Mental

models that conflict with organizational goals or are inconsistent with reality become

barriers to organizational success. Leaders can develop processes that encourage the

challenging of mental models, resulting in critical analysis and exploration of new ways

of thinking and new ways of doing things.

Developing a shared vision is the third component of Senge's theory of Learning

Organizations which is critical for effective change to occur. According to Senge (2006),

an organization having a shared vision acts as a positive force for change whereby

employees who participate in its creation are able to buy-in to the vision and increase

their commitment to it. Organizational leaders are able to gain momentum in regard to

employee commitment to the vision by recognizing those staff members who are

committed to the vision and appointing them to key positions of shared leadership while

also developing key strategies to communicate and reinforce the vision with those staff members who may be demonstrating apathy or resistance.

Team learning, the fourth component of Senge's theory, is the process of groups of employees working together to create the desired results. According to Senge (2006), most decisions made by organizations are made by teams, thus groups that are able to effectively function, align their efforts toward the shared vision, and capitalize on the strengths of each member producing positive, systematic change within the organization. Three conditions can be utilized to promote team learning: setting up opportunities for teams to think critically about complex organizational issues, coordinating opportunities for team members to rely upon one another, and integrating teams within an organization.

The foundation upon which all other components operate, systems thinking, is the final component of Senge's theory of change in Learning Organizations. Senge explains (2006) that as conditions in the world continue to become more complex, systems thinking from a holistic perspective is very important. It is in an environment such as this that organizational members are enabled to make decisions in a manner whereby the consequences of decisions and their impact upon on the rest of the system are considered. The use of interdisciplinary teams help to facilitate systems thinking as different perspectives become part of team decision making.

<div align="center">Leading Change</div>

Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) recognized that one of the constants in public education is change. They identified first-order or incremental change as change that refines systems through a series of small steps that do not significantly depart from the past and second-order or deep change as change that drastically alters the system

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resulting in a dramatic shift in direction and requiring new ways of thinking and acting.

Although it is a common response to want to resolve problems with incremental change

processes, Marzano et al. recognized that first-order change best addresses problems

associated with the daily management of a school, while second-order or deep change is

required for systematic changes that are needed to meet the expectations of No Child Left

Behind.

When addressing second-order change, Marzano et al. (2005) stressed the

importance of leaders focusing on seven leadership skills in order to maximize success:

1. Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
2. Optimize the school processes to make them as effective as possible.
3. Intellectually stimulate both students and staff.
4. Facilitate effective and efficient change.
5. Monitor and evaluate.
6. Demonstrate flexibility.
7. Demonstrate ideals and beliefs. (p. 70)

These responsibilities are listed in rank order according to their impact on second-order

change and should assist leaders in prioritizing skills when a second-order change

initiative is necessary.

Another modern researcher recognizing the difficulty in facilitating second order

change is Anthony Muhammad. An educational consultant and 21st century educational

leader, Muhammad identifies that effectively changing a school culture is significantly

more difficult than making technical changes within a school system. According to

Muhammad (2009):

> Cultural change requires something more profound. It requires leaders adept at
> gaining cooperation and skilled in the arts of diplomacy, salesmanship, patience,
> endurance, and encouragement. It takes knowledge of where a school has been
> and agreement about where the school should go. It requires an ability to deal
> with beliefs, policies, and institutions that have been established to buffer

educators from change and accountability. It is a tightrope act of major proportion. (p. 16)

Through his extensive research about school culture and change Muhammad identified four different types of teachers and their responses to culture change. The four teacher types are Believers, Fundamentalists, Tweeners, and Survivors.

According to Muhammad (2009), Believers are those teachers who have been within the school for two or more years and are committed to student success. Believers operate under the assumption that their efforts will positively impact student learners and they are generally supportive of cultural change if they believe it will result in student success.

Muhammad (2009) found a noticeable set of characteristics in the "Believers". They typically demonstrated high levels of intrinsic motivation, had a personal connection to the school and community, demonstrated high levels of flexibility with students, applied positive student pressure, were willing to confront opposing viewpoints, and demonstrated varied levels of pedagogical skills. Muhammad also found that "Believers" had a strong presence on school improvement teams and various other committees and they embraced any change they believe would improve student performance. According to Muhammad, "If schools are to transform their cultures into fertile ground for positive experimentation and student nurturing, they must increase their population of Believers, and their Believers must become more vocal members of the school community" (p. 42).

In contrast to the "Believers", the second type of teacher identified by Muhammad (2009) is "Fundamentalists". They are committed to preserve the status quo and can be as influential and important to the school culture as the "Believers".

"Fundamentalists" experienced success in the traditional culture, resent any attempts to change the culture, and are strongly committed to keeping things the same. They are not only opposed to change, but organize to resist and thwart any change initiative.

Muhammad (2009) explained that school leaders with a desire for a healthy school culture must understand "Fundamentalists" and how they operate as they pose the biggest threat to change and improvement in school systems. According to Muhammad:

> If our schools are going to improve student learning, they must embrace strategies that are radically different from those we have embraced in the past. An organization that does not change and evolve does not improve. An organization that does not improve is doomed to fail. Fundamentalists do not intend to destroy or ruin schools. Quite the contrary: They believe their paradigm is correct, that standing up for what they believe in is pure and fundamental, and that they will indeed save the institution. (p. 61)

Similar to the advice given by Muhammad (2009), Spiro (2009) supported the concepts of the leader understanding the perspective of the audience and believes that leaders can take steps to minimize resistance to change by thinking like the intended audience. Spiro indicated that successful change leaders probe, listen actively, and paraphrase so as to gain the perspective of those opposed to change, thus providing the leader the necessary information to reduce barriers to change.

According to Muhammad (2009), "Fundamentalists" display a wide range of professional skills and are not ineffective teachers by virtue of political stance. Although some are very effective with students, their political views prevent them from grasping 21st century concepts such as collaboration with others, professional learning communities, the use of technology, or other techniques or strategies that could allow them to be more effective. The resistance of "Fundamentalists" combined with their strategy of being very verbal and keeping the philosophical argument focused on

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emotion, presents a danger to the entire school culture and organization. Muhammad explained that "Fundamentalists" are significantly more active and vocal than all other groups. They are very active both formally and informally within the organization to gain political power to support their belief system. The level of commitment of "Fundamentalists" to achieve their end is significantly much more intense than that of the "Believers".

In order to effectively confront the strategies and arguments of the "Fundamentalists", Muhammad (2009) recommended three strategies. First, clearly state the reason for the change proposal. Second, connect the change proposal to the foundational purpose of the school and the identified improvement goals with the use of objective data to support the case. The third strategy to confront the arguments of Fundamentalists is to support the proposal with empirical and anecdotal evidence of effectiveness from several sources. According to Muhammad, the use of this three-step approach erodes the "Fundamentalists'" argument as it reasserts the fact that schools are built for the education of children and places students at the center of the argument, thus making it difficult for "Fundamentalists" to publicly advocate for a stance that hurts children.

The third type of teachers identified by Muhammad (2009) is "Tweeners". They are typically new to a school and are attempting to learn and practice its culture. "Tweeners" have a loose connection with the school and community that can result in an easy break in the employment relationship. This group is easily influenced by members of other groups, especially the "Fundamentalists" and "Believers". The National Commission on Teaching and Learning (2010) indicates that after five years, 30% of

beginning teachers have left the profession. In order to address potential turnover concerns with "Tweeners", Muhammad stresses that the personal interests of "Tweeners" can be a powerful link to retain them and intentionally placing them in key positions that are positively influenced by the "Believers" within the school and connect their personal interests to the organization can create strong bonds to retention and the development of a positive school culture.

The fourth type of teachers identified by Muhammad (2009) is "Survivors". They are overwhelmed and have a primary goal of making it through each day, week, and year. This is a relatively small group of "burned out" teachers and there is a general consensus from all groups that "Survivors" should not be professional educators as they provide poor and ineffective instruction that can completely undermine the fundamental mission of the school.

According to Muhammad (2009), school administration generally utilizes a variety of methods to address the concerns raised by "Survivors". One strategy is to reassign the teacher to a less challenging teaching assignment. This provides the "Survivor" with opportunity for success as expectations are reduced. Another method is to work with district officials to transfer the teacher to another school within the district in hope that a change in environment might invigorate the teacher. Counseling the teacher into retirement is another strategy used when it is available. Ignoring the core problem and responding harshly to disruptive students in an attempt to coerce them into cooperating with the ineffective teacher is sometimes utilized by administration to address the concerns of "Survivors". Another strategy to address "Survivor" behaviors is to respond harshly to the teacher through a series of punitive measures for

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nonperformance. And finally, Muhammad indicated that administration also seeks the teacher's removal through termination or some form of medical leave. Although some methods are more effective than others, administration utilizes various strategies to address concerns that arise as a result of the ineffectiveness of "Survivors".

Muhammad (2009) recognized that school improvement and change are imperative for schools in the 21st century in order to meet the requirements of No Child Left Behind and, most importantly, to maximize student success. When implementing change, Muhammad believes schools must consider two key questions:

1. What is the right change for us to embrace?
2. How do we get all of our staff members to embrace this change and actively apply the right methods once we have identified them? (p. 83)

Muhammad indicated that if schools are to produce better and more prepared students, school culture must become aligned in purpose and focus on student achievement as anything less than a united effort will continue the trend of undermining student success.

In contrast to some of Muhammad's (2009) less direct strategies, McEwan (2005) highlighted the importance of dealing positively with difficult teachers so as to minimize their influence and strengthen the positive culture of the school. In doing so, McEwan identified seven habits of attitude and action for principals.

First, the principal must be an assertive administrator. He or she must be mature and self-defined, unwilling to take personal responsibility for the difficulties of dysfunctional teachers, and not readily distracted from the school's mission by teachers' inappropriate behaviors (McEwan, 2005).

Second, McEwan (2005) indicates the principal must be a character builder. This can be done by role modeling those values, words, and behaviors that demonstrate trustworthiness, integrity, authenticity, respect, generosity, and humility.

The third habit of attitude and action for principals is to be an effective communicator. This is demonstrated through genuine and open listening, empathizing, interacting, and connecting with teachers in productive ways. It also includes effective written communication (McEwan, 2005).

McEwan (2005) indicates principals must also nurture a positive school culture. In order to do this, they must deal directly and fairly with all staff members using a set of expectations and standards for professional behavior. All individuals must be consistently held accountable to meet high expectations.

The fifth principal attitude and action is that of contributor by being a servant leader. According to McEwan (2005), principals must encourage, support, and enable those whose utmost priority is making a contribution to the success of others.

The sixth habit of attitude and action for principals is to conduct assertive interventions when teacher behaviors present barriers to the school-wide mission. This includes confronting teacher behaviors such as ineffective teaching skills and unprofessional attitudes (McEwan, 2005).

The final principal habit of attitude and action indicated effective by McEwan's research (2005) is addressing concerns in a timely manner. Waiting to confront concerns in hopes that the behaviors will stop is ineffective and negatively impacts multiple factors within a school and almost always impacts the success of students. According to McEwan, dealing positively with difficult teachers using these seven strategies will

minimize the negative influence of these teachers and strengthen the positive culture of the school.

Similar to the recommendations of McEwan (2009), Deal and Peterson (1999) recognized that transforming toxic school cultures can be extremely difficult tasks. In order to make a successful transition, they recommended a series of interventions. First, they believe the negativity should be confronted head on and people should be given a chance to vent their frustrations. Deal and Peterson also believe that positive culture and staff should be shielded and supported while administration should focus their energy on recruitment, selection, and retention of staff that will make a positive impact on the culture. In order to build the new culture, Deal and Peterson believe administration should consciously and directly focus on eradicating the negative and develop new stories of success, renewal, and accomplishment. Finally, Deal and Peterson believe that administration should help those who may succeed and thrive in a new district to make the move in as positive a manner as possible. Utilization of these strategies will assist administrators in implementing the difficult tasks of transforming toxic school cultures.

Jody Spiro, professional development consultant and educator, recognized that facilitating and maintaining effective change is a key role for today's leaders where change is a constant and continuous improvement is a necessity to remain viable in the 21st century. According to Spiro (2009):

> An effective change leader can maximize the opportunities of change while minimizing the risks . . . Leading change; therefore, requires continuous analysis of the situation and mid-course corrections. It includes the ability to think several steps ahead and then plan the present with the future in mind, put plans quickly into action and continuously monitor and revise the work to take advantage of, or mitigate unintended consequences as they arise. (p. 1)

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Spiro (2009) recognized that leading effective change within any organization requires specific strategies where leaders must translate concepts into action, continuous improvement, and sustainable results. In order to accomplish this complex task, Spiro recommended leaders utilize the following action steps as described in *Leading Change Handbook: Concepts and Tools* (p. 2):

Be clear and specific:
- What is the desired change?
- What are the underlying concepts guiding the development of strategy?
- How will you know if you have succeeded?
- What are the benchmarks along the way?

Start from where you are
- Assess and improve the readiness of participants
- Analyze stakeholders

Build an "early win"
Plan for achieving and documenting results that are evident within the first month or two that are:
- Tangible
- Symbolic of a desired commonly-held value
- Achievable

Anticipate resistance
- Match the process to the readiness of the group
- Engage key stakeholder groups
- Identify as many barriers to success as possible and eliminate them

Use collaborative planning
- Utilize people with diverse backgrounds and perspectives
- Develops a buy-in for change

Plan for scale and sustainability and implement the plan
Although this is listed near the end-plan for this from the beginning

Build in on-going monitoring/course corrections
- Evaluate for continuous improvement and mid-course corrections
- Revisit readiness; it should improve and therefore strategies might change

Figure 1. Leading Change Action Steps.

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Leadership Theories

Leithwood and Riehl (2003) believe there are two functions at the core of most leadership definitions: providing direction and exercising influence. As leaders work with others to achieve shared goals, Leithwood and Riehl believe this definition has important implications. First, leaders cannot simply impose goals on followers, but rather, must work with others to create shared purpose and direction. In public education, the end goals must focus on student achievement. Second, leaders must primarily work through and with others by establishing the conditions that facilitate the effectiveness of others. Therefore, leadership effects on school goals are both direct and indirect. Finally, Leithwood and Riehl believe that leadership is a function more than a role. Although leadership is oftentimes expected of individuals in positions of formal authority, leadership includes a set of functions that are performed by multiple individuals in different roles throughout a school.

According to John Maxwell (1998), an internationally respected leadership expert, speaker, and author, there are 21 laws of leadership that can be applied in any situation. These include:

1. The law of the lid: leadership ability determines a person's level of effectiveness.
2. The law of influence: the true measure of leadership.
3. The law of process: leadership develops daily, not in a day.
4. The law of navigation: anyone can steer the ship, but it takes a leader to chart the course.
5. The law of E. F. Hutton: when the real leader speaks, people listen.
6. The law of solid ground: trust is the foundation of leadership.
7. The law of respect: people naturally follow leaders stronger than themselves.
8. The law of intuition: leaders evaluate everything with a leadership bias.
9. The law of magnetism: who you are is who you attract.
10. The law of connection: leaders touch a heart before they ask for a hand.
11. The law of the inner circle: a leader's potential is determined by those closest to him.

12. The law of empowerment: only secure leaders give power to others.
13. The law of reproduction: it takes a leader to raise up a leader.
14. The law of buy-in: people buy into the leader, then the vision.
15. The law of victory: leaders find a way for the team to win.
16. The law of the big mo: momentum is a leader's best friend.
17. The law of priorities: leaders understand that activity is not necessarily accomplishment.
18. The law of sacrifice: a leader must give up and go up.
19. The law of timing: when to lead is as important as what to do and where to go.
20. The law of explosive growth: to add growth, lead followers-to multiply, lead leaders.
21. The law of legacy: a leader's lasting value is measured by succession.
   (p. ix-xiii)

Maxwell (1998) further explained that these 21 laws can be learned and the skills acquired by potential leaders can be utilized in a multitude of situations. Although each of the laws can stand alone, they all complement one another and global use of them will provide more effective results. Maxwell cautioned; however, that violation or disregard for the laws will result in an ineffective leader of whom others will not follow. These 21 laws are the foundation of leadership and must be learned, practiced, and applied throughout the leader's life.

Maxwell's evolved leadership theory (2011) identified five levels of leadership that every effective leader achieves. In the first level, position, people follow the leader because they have to follow based upon the leader's role. At the second level, permission, people follow because they want to follow. Once a leader rises to the third level, production, people follow because of what the leader has done for the organization. During the fourth level, people development, people follow the leader because of what he or she has done for them personally. Finally, at the fifth level, pinnacle, people follow the leader because of who he or she is and for what he or she represents. According to Maxwell, effective leaders must master the skills to invest and inspire people, build a

team that produces and achieves results, help people to develop their own leadership skills, and ultimately, extend their influence beyond their immediate reach and time for the benefit of others. It is through experience, attitudes, and actions that individuals can progress through these levels to become a more influential, respected, and successful leader.

The phenomenon of leadership has been conceptualized in various theories with many of them influencing school leaders. The most noteworthy impacting schools are Transactional and Transformational Leadership, Servant Leadership, Situational Leadership, and Instructional Leadership.

Transactional and Transformational Leadership

Political sociologist James MacGregor Burns is recognized for his work in linking the roles of leader and follower. Burns (1978) believes leaders are individuals who tap the motivation of followers in order to better achieve their goals and the goals of those who follow them.

Burns (1978) distinguished leadership as being different than power and being the opposite of brute power. He identified two basic types of leadership: transactional and transforming. According to Burns (1978):

> The relations of most leaders and followers are transactional. Leaders approach followers with an eye to exchanging one thing for another: jobs for votes or subsidies for campaign contributions. Such transactions comprise the bulk of relationships among leaders and followers, especially in groups, legislatures, and parties. Transforming leadership, while more complex, is more potent. The transforming leader recognizes and exploits an existing need or demand of a potential follower. But, beyond that, the transforming leader looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower. The result of transforming leadership is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents. (p. 4)

Burns' (1978) work stressed the importance of moral values and the possibility of both the leader and followers developing a stronger set of values. As a result, Burns would not recognize leaders such as Adolf Hitler and Saddam Hussein as being transformational leaders as their transformations were in negative ways, rather than the development of a stronger moral value. (Northouse, 2007)

The behaviors and attitudes of school leaders who utilize a transformational approach can have a positive impact on their schools. According to Valentine and Prater (2011), transformational principal leaders are not considered the primary expert in most matters, but utilize the expertise and leadership of their teachers. This approach gives the teachers the sense that they are an integral part of the success of the school. Principals utilizing a transformational approach believe that collective decision making with their teaching and leadership staff produces a stronger response to solving larger, strategic problems, while the use of managerial leadership skills solve routine problems. Transformational leaders spend a significant amount of time working collaboratively with their staff, invest significantly in the development of individuals, and building leadership capacity throughout the school. They develop a culture of collaborative problem solving, support, encouragement, respect, and expectations for success.

Servant Leadership

In contrast to the Transformational and Transactional Leadership Theories, Greenleaf (2002) developed a theory of leadership he identified as Servant Leadership. A servant leader is one who is first a servant to others and then makes a conscious choice to aspire to lead. Significantly different from an individual who chooses to lead first, the servant leader makes sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served and

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the leader is concerned about the effect on the least privileged in society receiving benefits rather than being further deprived.

According to Greenleaf (2002), "Servant leaders are functionally superior because they are closer to the ground. They hear things, see things, know things, and their intuitive insight is exceptional. Because of this, they are dependable and trusted" (Chapter 1, Section 21, para. 5).

As described in his foreword to Greenleaf's (2002) *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*, Steven Covey described four dimensions of moral authority which he believes are at the core of servant leadership. First, the essence of moral authority or conscience is sacrificed where the individual subordinates himself to the higher purpose, cause, or principle. Second, the individual's conscience inspires him to become part of a cause worthy of his commitment where he asks himself, "What is wanted of me?". Third, the individual's conscience teaches that ends and means are inseparable and that if an admirable end is reached through the wrong means, the end means nothing. Finally, Covey believes the conscience introduces the individual into the world of relationships by moving him from an independent to an interdependent state. According to Covey, "When people strive to live by their conscience, it produces integrity and peace of mind. People who do not live by their conscience will not experience this internal integrity and peace of mind" (cited in Greenleaf, 2002, Foreword, Section 6, para. 18).

Covey further explained in Greenleaf's (2002) foreword that he believes that moral authority comes through sacrifice in the four basic elements of an individual's nature:

Physical and economic sacrifice is temperance and giving back; emotional and social sacrifice is surrendering self to the value and difference of another, to apologize, and to forgive; mental sacrifice is placing learning above pleasure and realizing that true freedom comes from discipline; and spiritual sacrifice is living life humbly and courageously, living and serving wisely. (cited in Greenleaf, 2002, Foreword, Section 6, para. 1)

In an expansion of Greenleaf's (2002) theory, Blanchard (2010) stressed the point that one of the roles of a servant leader is to assist their followers in achieving their goals. Instead of having subordinates please their boss, servant leaders make a difference in the lives of their people, and in the process, positively impact their organization. According to Blanchard, servant leaders realize that leadership is not about them, it is about who they are serving. They understand both the vision and the customer.

Strategic and operational leadership were examined in a 2006 leadership study completed by Ken Blanchard Companies (Blanchard, 2010) and found that servant leadership attitudes and behaviors are imperative for organizational vitality and success. Strategic leadership includes activities such as establishing a clear vision, maintaining a culture that aligns with the values of the vision, and developing initiatives and strategic imperatives to accomplish. Operational leadership includes everything else that a leader does and includes the policies, procedures, systems, and behaviors the leader demonstrates and facilitates from upper management to frontline employees. The study concluded that the leadership part of servant leadership (strategic) is important because the vision and direction initiate things, but the real action is with the servant aspect of the operational leadership where leaders demonstrate the vision in a compelling and motivating manner that inspires employees and customers.

According to Marzano et al. (2005), the central phenomena of servant leadership is nurturing individuals within the organization. As a result, they believe the critical skills of servant leadership include:

- Understanding the personal needs of those within the organization
- Healing wounds caused by conflict within the organization
- Being a steward of the resources of the organization
- Developing the skills of those within the organization
- Being an effective listener. (p. 17)

In contrast to Greenleaf's comprehensive theory of servant leadership (2002), Marzano et al. indicated that servant leadership is typically not embraced as an inclusive leadership theory, but it is one of many components of leadership in many organizations to include schools.

Situational Leadership

Kenneth Blanchard and Paul Hersey are associated with the theory of situational leadership where the basic underlying principle is that the leader adapts his leadership behavior to followers' "maturity" based on their willingness and ability to perform a specific task. According to Blanchard (2010), situational leadership is based on the beliefs that people can and want to develop and there is no best leadership style to encourage that development. Leaders should tailor their style to the situation.

According to Blanchard (2010), there are four basic leadership styles: directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating. Leadership style corresponds to the four basic developmental levels of the employee: enthusiastic beginner who has low competence and high commitment, the disillusioned learner who has low to some competence and low commitment, the capable but cautious performer who has moderate to high

competence and varied commitment, and the self-reliant achiever who has high competence and high commitment.

Blanchard (2010) recommended different leadership styles are utilized with the corresponding employee development levels. For enthusiastic beginners, a directing leadership style is most effective. Disillusioned learners require a coaching style. A supporting leadership style is effective for performers who are capable, but cautious. Finally, self-reliant achievers perform best with a delegating leadership style (Blanchard, 2010). Regardless of the individual, Blanchard stressed that an employee's developmental level varies from goal-to-goal and task-to-task. Consequently, the leader will need to adapt his or her leadership style to not only the individual, but also to the goal or task at hand.

Blanchard (2010) believes that strong situational leaders are effective in all four styles and know not only the ability level of followers, but also their willingness to perform specific tasks. In contrast to leaders who utilize other leadership theories in their work, situational leaders believe that no one leadership style is appropriate for all followers and all situations, and they are able to accurately discern which styles are appropriate for which followers in which situations.

Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership is a theory of principal leadership whose focus started during the effective schools movement of the 1970s and 1980s and has recently regained emphasis due to the era of accountability of NCLB. In the traditional instructional leadership theory the principal possesses knowledge and skills in quality instruction and seizes regular opportunities to observe and provide meaningful feedback to teachers in

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regard to instructional practices. Effective instructional leadership results in improved

and effective instruction as well as increased student achievement.

DuFour and Eaker (1992) indicated effective instructional leaders demonstrate the

following types of behaviors:

- Understand the school's vision and establish unity and a focus on the vision among the staff
- Portray learning as the most important reason for being in school
- Demonstrate the belief that all students can learn and that the school makes the difference between success and failure
- Establish standards and guidelines that are used to monitor the effect of the curriculum
- Protect learning time from disruption and emphasize the priority of efficient use of classroom time
- Maintain a safe and orderly school climate
- Monitor student progress through formative and summative assessments and share that information with teachers who are trained in the interpretation and application of data results
- Establish incentives and rewards to encourage excellence in student and teacher performance
- Allocate resources according to instructional priorities
- Establish procedures to guide parent involvement and maintain a two-way communication system with parents
- Demonstrate the expectation of continuous improvement over the instructional program
- Involve teachers and other stakeholders in planning implementation strategies
- Know, legitimize, and apply research on effective instruction
- Celebrate the accomplishments of students, staff, and the school
- Make frequent classroom visits to observe instruction
- Focus teacher supervision on instructional improvement. (pp. 60-61)

Simply being appointed as principal does not indicate one is an instructional

leader. DuFour (1991) explained that leadership is oftentimes confused with power and

position and that some principals assume they are instructional leaders simply because of

the position for which they have been hired. However, simply because a principal is

higher on the organizational chart than a teacher insures only that the principal has

subordinates, not necessarily followers. In addition, just because an individual completes

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tasks associated with the role of principal such as scheduling, providing an orderly climate, and allocating program resources, does not mean that person is an instructional leader. DuFour indicated that managers and leaders are distinctly different: managers are people who do things right and leaders are people who do the right things.

According to Knapp, Copland, and Talbert (2003), effective instructional leaders focus on learning in the context of three learning agendas: student learning, professional learning, and system learning. The three interacting agendas complement one another and when implemented appropriately, result in positive impacts on student achievement, teacher effectiveness, and the overall success of the educational environment and its stakeholders.

Student learning focuses on the interactions of the learners, teachers, and content which is dependent upon how teachers implement the curriculum, design academic tasks, and engage students. All students are able to develop deep subject matter knowledge and skills when instruction is both powerful and equitable for all students (Knapp et al., 2003).

In order to facilitate effective student learning, Knapp et al. (2003) believe teachers must have opportunities to develop corresponding knowledge and skills through their own professional learning. These opportunities include those that are enhanced through interacting with other professionals who offer ideas, critique, inspire, and provide moral support through professional learning communities. Similar professional development opportunities for principals enable them to learn to establish and support teachers' and students' learning.

Instructional leaders facilitate system learning through inquiry and assessment in regard to how the school functions and performs. It includes learning opportunities through strategic planning, evaluations of policies and procedures, as well as continuous improvement activities.

Traditional instructional leadership advocates describe "successful instructional leaders as hands-on leaders, engaged with curriculum and instruction issues, unafraid to work directly with teachers, and often present in classrooms," (Horng & Loeb, 2010). The prototype of the ideal instructional leader is one who is an outstanding teacher who leads by mentoring teaching staff through observation, pointed feedback, and modeling instruction when necessary.

Unfortunately, in the realities of today's complex school environments, time simply does not permit the level of classroom contact required of principals in traditional instructional leadership models. A more recent view of instructional leadership is expanding to emphasize on the organizational management skills of principals rather than on day-to-day teaching and learning tasks. According to Horng and Loeb (2010), school leaders positively influence student learning through the teachers they hire, the assignment of teachers to classrooms, strategies to retain outstanding teachers, and through the creation of opportunities for teachers to improve their skills. Effective instructional leaders in the 21st century manage schools through staffing them with high-quality teachers and providing the teachers with the necessary resources and supports to be highly successful in the classroom.

According to research completed by Horng and Loeb (2010), schools that demonstrate academic improvement are more likely to have effective organizational

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managers and when principals spend more time on organizational management activities, school outcomes are better. These outcomes include student test score gains as well as positive teacher and parent assessments of the school's instructional climate. They also concluded that when principal time was spent on day-to-day classroom observations, student performance was marginally or not impacted, thus supporting the practice of educational leaders mastering organizational management skills rather than focusing efforts mentoring teachers.

Horng and Loeb (2010) also found that management of personnel is one of the most important tasks of instructional leaders who have strong organizational management skills. Leaders with these skills were better able to hire the best candidates, support and retain good teachers, and either develop or remove ineffective teachers.

<center>Organizational Culture</center>

Although oftentimes difficult to describe, prominent business consultant Ken Blanchard (2010) indicated an organization's culture is recognized as "its values, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and practices of the organizational members . . . organizational culture is how things are done around here" (pp. 240-241). Bolman and Deal (2003) describe culture as both a product, embodying the accumulated wisdom from those who came before, and a process that is constantly renewed and recreated as newcomers learn the old ways, assimilate them, and become the examples of the culture themselves.

According to Blanchard (2010), organizational culture not only defines what the organization does, but also determines its readiness for change. This is especially

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noticeable in those organizations seeking greatness as they recognize deficits in their own

culture that necessitate change to occur in order to achieve goals.

In *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap . . . and Others Don't*,

Jim Collins (2001) describes how this cultural phenomenon prohibits some organizations

from achieving greatness:

> Good is the enemy of great. And that is one of the key reasons why we have so little that becomes great. We don't have great schools, principally because we have good schools. We don't have great government, principally because we have good government. Few people attain great lives, in large part because it is just so easy to settle for a good life. The vast majority of companies never become great, precisely because the vast majority become quite good-and that is their main problem. (p. 1)

Blanchard (2010) explained that many leaders are unable to identify a sick

culture. Problems are blamed upon poor performance, lacking management skills,

ineffective teams, or external influences beyond the control of the organization when in

fact, the core of the problem is an organizational culture that requires attention. As

organizations grow, they generally become more complex and barriers to their own

success arise. Collins (2001) described this problematic situation by explaining that too

many new people, new customers, new orders, and new products make a ball of

disorganized stuff from what was once great fun. Reaction to this disorganization results

in errors in planning, accounting, systems, and hiring with problems surfacing

exponentially. Mediocrity or even failure within the organization oftentimes becomes the

new norm.

Collins (2001) explained that many growing organizations incorrectly respond to

these problems by building bureaucratic barriers that stifle the entrepreneurial culture that

facilitated the initial growth. Requirements for completion of written documentation, new

processes and procedures, and wasted time spent in meetings become the norm. Chains of command appear as does the "we" versus "they" separation between management and employees. According to Collins (2001):

> Most companies develop bureaucratic rules to manage the small percentage of wrong people on the bus, which in turn drives away the right people on the bus, which then increases the percentage of wrong people on the bus, which increases the need for more bureaucracy to compensate for incompetence and lack of discipline, which further drives the right people away, and so forth. (p. 121)

Collins (2001) explained that an effective way to prevent this "entrepreneurial death spiral" is to create a culture of discipline with an ethic of entrepreneurship which results in an expectation of superior performance and sustained results. There are five components that Collins believes are necessary to develop a culture of discipline. First, a culture must be built around the idea of freedom and responsibility. Next, that culture must then be filled with self-disciplined individuals who are willing to go to extreme lengths to fulfill their responsibilities. The third component is that the culture of discipline cannot be led by a tyrannical disciplinarian, but rather filled with individuals who are self-motivated and self-disciplined. The fourth component necessary to develop a culture of discipline is that of the Hedgehog Concept where the organization exercises an almost religious focus on the intersection of the three circles. These circles require the organization to reflect upon what they are deeply passionate about, what they can be best in the world at, and what drives their economic engine. Finally, Collins believes the organization must create a "stop doing list" and systematically unplug anything extraneous in order to create their culture of discipline resulting in superior performance and sustained results.

When facilitating culture change or maintaining a healthy culture, there are several concepts that must be focused upon in order to attain and maintain the desired results. Blanchard (2010) believes that a strong, focused organizational culture starts with a persuasive vision that tells everyone who you are, where you're going, and what will guide you to your destination. An organization's values have the most impact on a high performing organization as they guide the decisions and behaviors on a daily basis. Blanchard explained that if the actual values of an organization are not aligned with the perceived values of the organization, desired behaviors are not demonstrated.

The fall 2011 Penn State sex scandal highlights the complexities of an organization's perceived culture being in conflict with its' actual culture. With 409 career victories, 46 years as head football coach, and 62 seasons as one of the program's coaches, Joe Paterno was the face of Penn State Football and was the cultural foundation of its reputation as an organization committed to classroom performance, athletic success, and integrity. The perceived culture of Penn State's football program was proclaimed through its' motto, "Success with Honor". That cultural perception seemed to be accurate for decades under Paterno's leadership. There had not been one NCAA sanction against the Nittany Lions and the program boasted an 87% graduate rate (Wieberg & Carey, 2011).

Not only was Paterno's reputation destroyed by the scandal that former defensive coordinator Jerry Sandusky sexually assaulted at least ten boys over a 15-year period, but the entire culture of Penn State University and Penn State Football have been severely blemished. As investigations conclude, it appears there has been a years-long cover up by university officials, failure by many influential men to pursue reports of misconduct by a

once respected member of their organization, and a lack of honor among many. The actual culture of Penn State Football now appears to be significantly different than that which had been perceived for decades. With the ramifications of this horrendous scandal, the firing of Joe Paterno by the Board of Trustees, the conviction of Jerry Sandusky of these horrific acts, and the subsequent findings of the Freeh Report indicating Paterno actively participated in covering up the sexual abuse, Penn State faces a significant challenge in the upcoming months to realign its' actual culture so that it matches the once perceived culture of "Success with Honor".

The process of changing a culture must begin with senior organizational leaders who are the champions of culture change. Blanchard (2010) stressed the importance of these leaders utilizing their power to define the desired culture and the need for them to "walk the talk" so as to model the behavioral expectations for the entire organization. Blanchard indicated that even with consistent, focused efforts, a successful transformation of an organization's culture will likely take two to five years, as by nature, people resist change and senior leaders will need to consistently communicate the need for change, celebrate successes, and reinforce desired behaviors.

<center>Principal Leadership and School Culture</center>

As schools strive to improve, an important aspect that cannot be overlooked is that of the culture or climate. The National School Climate Council (2007) defined school climate as:

> the quality and character of school life. It is based upon patterns of school life experiences and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning, and leadership practices and organizational structures.

> A sustainable positive school climate fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributing, and satisfying life in a democratic

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society. This climate includes norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, and physically safe. People are engaged and respected. Students, families, and educators work together to develop, live, and contribute to a shared school vision. Educators model and nurture attitudes that emphasize the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning. Each person contributes to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment. (p. 5)

Peterson and Deal (1998) describe some school cultures as being unproductive and "toxic". In schools where a toxic culture evolves, the staffs are extremely fragmented and serving the students becomes secondary to serving adults within the system. These cultures are plagued with negative values, disgruntled staff, and hopelessness, especially in regard to the ability of their students to succeed. Peterson and Deal explain that even good schools often harbor toxic subcultures where a negative group is able to spread a sense of negativity which dominates conversations and interactions which reinforces a toxic culture.

Deal and Peterson (1999) indicated the results of multiple studies conclude that where culture or a positive school climate did not support and encourage school reform, improvement did not occur. Additionally, where positive professional cultures had norms, values, and beliefs that reinforced a strong educational mission, improvement efforts were likely. Deal and Peterson concluded that culture was a key factor in determining whether school improvement was possible.

Griffith (1999) studied the relationship between principal leadership and the school climate. Results indicated that in the 122 elementary schools studied that schools having principal changes under negative circumstances had more students new to the school and district and also had more economically disadvantaged and higher proportions of minority students than their comparison schools having no principal changes.

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Additionally, in the schools with principal changes under negative circumstances, parents and students reported lower perceptions of the school environment, lower levels of participation in school activities, and less order and discipline within the school.

Brookover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer, and Wisenbaker (1977) examined school climate and determined that the greatest indicators of student achievement were social composition, the social structure of the school, and the overall school climate. Further examination of the effects of school culture by the Center for Social and Emotional Education (2010) found that the systematic study of school climate continued to grow from research completed about school effectiveness with conclusions that virtually all researchers suggest that there are four essential areas of focus within school climate that include safety, relationships, teaching and learning, and the institutional environment.

Safety

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2009), approximately 28% of students ages 12 through 18 reported they were bullied at school during the 2008-2009 school year. Nineteen percent of them were made fun of, insulted, or the subject of rumors; 5.7% of the students were threatened with harm; 9% were pushed, shoved, tripped, or spit upon; 3.6% of them were bullied in a manner to make them try to do something they did not want to do; 4.7% were purposefully excluded from activities; and 3.3% of them had their property purposefully destroyed.

Nansen et al. (2001) studied the prevalence of bullying behavior among American youth and concluded there is a substantial amount of bullying among our nation's youth. They indicated this issue merits serious attention for further research as well as a tremendous need to identify preventive interventions.

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Research completed by Goldstein, Young, and Boyd (2008) and Brookmeyer, Fanti, and Henrich (2006) indicated that aggression and violence are both reduced in situations where there is a positive school climate. Additionally, Yoneyama and Rigby (2006) concluded that bullying behavior was also reduced with a positive school climate.

Relationships

Reports of recent research from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2009) indicated children and adolescents positively benefit from the enhancement of protective factors that buffer them from the potentially harmful effects of negative situations and events. School connectedness, "the belief by students that adults in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals" (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009, p. 3) is a particularly promising protective factor.

Resnick et al. (1997) assessed the impact of protective factors on adolescent health of more than 36,000 high school students and found that school connectedness was the strongest protective factor for boys and girls in regard to decreasing substance use, school absenteeism, early sexual encounters, violence, and high risk activities such as drinking and driving and failure to use seat belts. Additionally, the same study found that school connectedness was second in importance to family connectedness as a protective factor against eating disorders, emotional distress, and suicidal ideation and attempts.

Research also suggested that positive school relationships and student connectedness positively impact students in other ways. Academic outcomes are strongly predicted by school relationships (McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002; Resnick et al., 1997; Ruus et al., 2007; Whitlock, 2006). School connectedness is also found to have a profound impact on student self-esteem (Hoge, Smit, & Hanson, 1990; Kuperminic,

Leadbeater, & Blatt, 2001; Kuperminic, Leadbeater, Emmons, & Blatt, 1997). The Center

for Social and Emotional Education (2010) concluded that "safe, caring, participatory,

and responsive school climates tend to foster a greater attachment to school and provide

the optimal foundation for social, emotional, and academic learning for middle and high

school students" (p. 3). This conclusion is supported by research completed by

Goodenow and Grady (1993), Lee, Smith, Perry, and Smylie (1999), and Osterman

(2000).

Teaching and Learning

According to research compiled by the Center for Social and Emotional

Education (2010), one of the most important dimensions of school climate is the aspect of

teaching and learning. Researchers have concluded the learning environment is directly

improved when there is a positive school climate, promoting cooperative learning, group

cohesion, respect, and mutual trust (Finnan, Schnepel, & Anderson, 2003; Ghaith, 2003).

Additionally, a strong correlation has been found between the school climate and the

academic achievement of students (Brookover et al., 1977; Good & Weinstein, 1986;

Griffith, 1995; MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009).

Skinner and Belmont (1993) found that "children's engagement in learning

activities is influenced by both their perceptions of teachers and directly by teachers'

actual behaviors" (p. 578). Their research indicated that when the experience of children

is that their teacher is warm and affectionate, the children are happier, more engaged in

class, and more likely to behave appropriately.

Research also indicated that evidence-based character education programs lead to

higher student achievement in both elementary and middle school students (Benninga,

Berkowitz, Kuehn, & Smith, 2006; Bradshaw, Koth, Thornton, & Leaf, 2009; Elias & Haynes, 2008). These results supported the continued utilization of character education programs in schools even during this time when financial resources are scarce throughout the nation's schools.

Another teaching and learning component found to positively impact school climate is service learning projects. Morgan and Streb (2001) defined service learning as a method of experiential education where students apply classroom knowledge to real world situations through the performance of needed community service. These experiences promote civic education, citizenship, a sense of community, collaboration, leadership, and student voice. According to Morgan and Streb, "when students have real responsibilities, challenging tasks, helped to plan the project, and made important decisions, involvement in service learning projects had significant and substantive impacts on students' increases in self-concept, political engagement, and attitudes toward out-groups" (p. 13). These attitude and behavioral changes in students help to support a positive school climate.

Institutional Environment

In analyzing the results of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, McNeely et al. (2002) studied 75,515 students in 127 schools and concluded that among all structural characteristics studied, small school size was the only structural characteristic positively associated to student connectedness. They found that as school size increased, student connectedness with their school decreased; although they found no correlation between class size and school connectedness. Lee and Smith (1997) determined the optimum high school size for academic achievement ranges from 600 to

900 students as students in smaller schools learn less and those in larger schools, especially more than 2,100 students, learn considerably less.

Reducing school size is not generally a feasible option in many school districts. According to Cotton (2001), the use of small learning communities where individualized learning units are designed within the larger school setting, can also be effective. Small learning units declare that a major reason their environments are safer and more successful than large schools without small units is that staff members are more likely to have healthy relationships with and to know their students well. When this occurs, students are motivated to work hard and to make school a successful experience. Additionally, teachers become more knowledgeable about students' learning strengths and needs which enable them to respond more appropriately than that which is typical in a large school.

Roney, Coleman, and Schlichting (2007) studied the relationship between the organizational health or school climate of five middle schools and student reading achievement. Three specific factors were identified as being key in the climate of those schools: teacher affiliation, academic emphasis, and collegial leadership. Healthy schools were recognized by positive behaviors among teachers and students, a focus on academic goals and student achievement, as well as principal leadership that is guided by supportive, transparent, and fair practices. The researchers found that when these three elements were present in middle schools, it had a positive correlation with student academic success.

Principal Leadership and Student Achievement

Since the implementation of No Child Left Behind and the accountability that

comes with it, the nation's educational leaders and legislators have begun to recognize

the importance of principal leadership in relation to school improvement. Race to the Top

competitive grants that were initiated by the Obama administration have been recognized

for revolutionizing the federal role in education and providing the groundwork for states

to initiate school reform. One of Race to the Top's four primary aims is the development

of both great teachers and great principals.

Leithwood and Riehl (2003) indicated the renewed emphasis on principal

leadership is the result of two factors. First, in the era of accountability since NCLB,

student outcomes are crucial. Second, the educational environment is much more

complex than it had once been:

> Educational leaders must guide their schools through the challenges posed by an
> increasingly complex environment. Curriculum standards, achievement
> benchmarks, programmatic requirements, and other policy directives from many
> sources generate complicated and unpredictable requirements for schools.
> Principals must respond to increasing diversity in student characteristics,
> including cultural background and immigration status, income disparities,
> physical and mental disabilities, and variation in learning capacities. They must
> manage new collaborations with other social agencies that serve children. Rapid
> developments in technologies for teaching and communication require
> adjustments in the internal workings of schools. These are just a few of the
> conditions that make schooling more challenging and leadership more essential.
> (p. 1)

As a result of the recent focus on principal leadership and student achievement,

research has begun to focus on the impact of school leadership. Cotton (2003) completed

a review of 81 research studies in regard to principals in high performing schools. As a

result of this review she identified 25 principal behaviors that research indicated

contribute to student achievement in high performing schools:

1. Safe and orderly environment.
2. Vision and goals focused on high levels of student learning.
3. High expectations for student learning.
4. Self-confidence, responsibility, and perseverance.
5. Visibility and accessibility.
6. Positive and supportive climate.
7. Communication and interaction.
8. Emotional and interpersonal support.
9. Parent and community outreach and involvement.
10. Rituals, ceremonies, and other symbolic actions.
11. Shared leadership, decision making, and staff empowerment.
12. Collaboration.
13. Instructional leadership.
14. Ongoing pursuit of high levels of student learning.
15. Norm of continuous improvement.
16. Discussion of instructional issues.
17. Classroom observation and feedback to teachers.
18. Support of teachers' autonomy.
19. Support of risk taking.
20. Professional development opportunities and resources.
21. Protecting instructional time.
22. Monitoring student progress and sharing findings.
23. Use of student progress for program improvement.
24. Recognition of student and staff achievement.
25. Role modeling. (pp. 8-41)

Cotton (2003) emphasized the fact that these behaviors do not exist separately in effective principals, but rather, interact with one another. Cotton explained that extraordinary principals who are focused in these studies demonstrate all or nearly all of these traits and actions.

Additionally, Cotton (2003) emphasized the importance of the behaviors that effective principals do not demonstrate. Close administrative control over teaching has been found to negatively impact student achievement while average principals were found to spend most of their time on organizational maintenance and student discipline issues.

Marzano et al. (2005) completed a meta-analysis of research in educational

leadership in order to form statistically based generalizations regarding the research.

Results, which are similar to those of Cotton (2003), identified 21 principal

responsibilities that statistically correlate with student academic achievement:

1. Affirmation which recognizes and celebrates accomplishments and acknowledges failures.
2. Change agent who is willing to challenge and actively challenge the status quo.
3. Contingent rewards which recognizes and rewards individual accomplishments.
4. Communication which establishes strong lines of communication with and among teachers and students.
5. Culture which fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation.
6. Discipline which protects teachers from issues and influences that would detract from their teaching time or focus.
7. Flexibility which adapts his or her leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and is comfortable with dissent.
8. Focus where clear goals are established and kept in the forefront of the school's attention.
9. Ideals and beliefs are communicated and the principal operates from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling.
10. Input which involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies.
11. Intellectual stimulation which ensures faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices and makes the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school's culture.
12. Involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment whereby the principal is directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices.
13. Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment where the principal is knowledgeable about current practices.
14. Monitoring and evaluating whereby the principal monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning.
15. Optimizer who inspires and leads new and challenging innovations.
16. Order is established with a set of standard operating procedures and routines.
17. Outreach whereby the principal is an advocate and spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders.
18. Relationships whereby the principal demonstrates an awareness of the personal aspects of teachers and staff.
19. Resources such as materials and professional development are provided to teachers necessary for the successful execution of their jobs.

20. Situational awareness whereby the principal is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses this information to address current and potential problems

21. Visibility where the principal has quality contact and interactions with teachers and students. (pp. 42-43)

Based upon the results of their meta-analysis, Marzano et al. (2005) recognized that they better understand school leadership; however, this understanding alone does not accomplish the goal of enhancing student achievement. In order to apply results, the authors recommend a three-step plan that will assist school leaders to articulate and implement their vision for student achievement. First, a strong school leadership team must be developed and then various responsibilities should be distributed throughout the team. The next step is to identify the right work, followed by the implementation of the work according to the order of magnitude. Finally, the management style should be matched to the order of magnitude of the change initiative.

Leithwood and Riehl (2003) summarized the major findings from research in regard to school leadership. First, they concluded that leadership has significant effects on student learning, second only to the effects of quality curriculum and teachers' instruction. They also indicated that although currently administrators and teachers provide most of the leadership in schools, other potential sources of leadership exist and should be tapped.

Through their review of research, Leithwood and Riehl (2003) identified a core set of practices for the basics of successful leadership that are valuable in almost all educational contexts. The first practice, setting directions, includes identifying and articulating a vision, creating shared meanings, creating high performance expectations, fostering acceptance of group goals, monitoring organizational performance, and

communicating. The second practice, developing people, consists of offering intellectual stimulation, providing individualized support, and providing an appropriate model. The final leadership practice that has been found to be valuable in almost all educational contexts is developing the organization. This practice includes strengthening the school culture, modifying the organizational structure, building collaborative processes, and managing the environment.

Additionally, through their summary of research completed about school leadership, Leithwood and Riehl (2003) concluded that successful school leaders respond productively to both challenges and opportunities created by the accountability-oriented policy context in which they work. These leaders also responded productively to the opportunities and challenges of educating diverse groups of students.

Similar to results found by Cotton (2003) and Marzano et al. (2005), Louis, Dretzke, and Wahlstrom (2010) found that principal leadership is positively related to student learning when studying the relationship between principal leadership and student achievement through the use of surveys with teachers from the United States. Results also suggested that shared leadership and instructionally focused leadership styles are important for school improvement efforts to be effective.

Leithwood, Patten, and Jantzi (2010) focused their research on how school leadership influences student learning. Results indicate that the variables of academic press, rooted in the knowledge and skills of teachers in regard to curriculum, teaching and learning, as well as the student disciplinary climate had the most significant impact on student achievement. Recognizing that principal influence has an indirect impact on student achievement while teacher influence directly impacts achievement (Leithwood &

Riehl, 2003), Leithwood et al. (2010) stress the importance of effective principals recognizing the variables most likely to impact student achievement and implementing improvement strategies to maximize those influences.

More recent research in regard to the impact of principal leadership on student achievement was completed by Valentine and Prater (2011) and studied the relationship between principal leadership and student achievement in 131 high schools in Missouri where the principal had served as head principal for three or more years. Nine effective principal leadership variables were identified as being significant to student achievement and include: instructional improvement, curricular improvement, developing a vision, modeling, fostering group goals, providing stimulation, high expectations, and implementing interactive processes. Results of their study indicate four significant findings.

The first factor studied by Valentine and Prater (2011) was whether or not the education level of the principal increases the perceived effectiveness of the principal. Results indicated principals with the greater levels of formal preparation focusing on secondary principal skills were perceived by their teachers as more capable leaders for each of the nine leadership variables identified.

Valentine and Prater (2011) also found that schools whose principals demonstrated the highest levels of competence, as indicated by demonstrating each of the nine effective leadership variables, were schools that demonstrated the highest level of student achievement. Likewise, those schools led by principals who demonstrated the lowest competence levels had students with significantly lower achievement.

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The third factor studied by Valentine and Prater (2011) was the relationship of school and principal demographics to student achievement. Results reinforced the hypothesis that a variety of school factors such as school socio-economic status, principal gender, and principal education impact student achievement.

Leadership behavior was the final factor studied by Valentine and Prater (2011). Three transformational leadership behaviors were found most significant to positively affect student achievement: fostering group goals, identifying a vision, and providing a model. "In the high schools in this study, when the principal modified leadership behaviors, established a collaborative direction, and generated support to move forward in new directions, student achievement was higher" (Valentine & Prater, 2011, p. 20).

Leithwood and Mascall (2008) studied the impact of collective or shared leadership on student achievement. Defined as a shift away from conventional, hierarchical patterns of leadership, collective or shared leadership is exemplified through the collaboration and decision-making of both teachers and administrative staff to coordinate work and resolve barriers. Results indicate that higher-achieving schools demonstrated a higher level of collective leadership than lower-achieving schools. Additionally, principals had the highest levels of influence in schools at all levels of achievement.

In a review of research in regard to successful school leadership, Leithwood and Riehl (2003) found that "leadership has significant effects on student learning, second only to the effects of the quality of the curriculum and teachers' instruction" (p. 2). They indicated that case studies of schools that succeed beyond expectations have school

leaders that influence learning by focusing efforts around ambitious goals and by establishing supports for teachers that facilitate student success.

Branch, Hanushek, and Rivkin (2009) completed research in regard to the impact of principals on student achievement in Texas. Results indicated there were some small, but significant effects of the tenure of a principal in a school. Specifically, the impact of principal tenure is more significant based upon whether the curricular and personnel decisions of the current principal are superior to those of the prior principal.

According to Branch et al. (2009), the most significant impact of principal leadership on student achievement is based upon principal effectiveness. The variation tends to be largest in high poverty schools and supports the hypothesis that principal skill is most important in schools serving the most disadvantaged students. Additionally, they also found that principals who remain in the same school tend to be more effective than those who are more transient.

The Wallace Foundation (2010) has completed significant work and research to improve public education and ensure principals are effective. They identified four issues that can strengthen and support school leadership. First, they indicated state and district education leadership policies must work in harmony. They also advocated that district leaders need to support strong principal leadership. The Wallace Foundation also stressed that top-notch principals are a necessity for school improvement efforts to be successful. Finally, they indicate that better training results in better principals. According to the Wallace Foundation, states and districts that effectively address these issues will facilitate improved principal skills and positively effect student achievement.

Augustine et al. (2009) expanded the study of principal effectiveness to the state and district levels. Results of their study indicated it is possible to build cohesive leadership systems between state and districts that support principal leadership and empowers principals to engage in improving instruction. In an analysis of states where cohesive systems were developed, Augustine et al. identified eight strategies that are most effective in promoting cohesiveness: building trust, creating formal and informal networks, fostering communications, exerting pressure and influence, promoting improved quality leadership policies and initiatives, building capacity for the work, identifying strong individuals with political and social capital to lead the work, and connecting to other reform efforts. This research found that it is possible to develop cohesive leadership systems between states and districts that improve school leadership. It also affirms the link between principals' conditions and the time they spent on instructional leadership practices, resulting in increased student achievement.

<div align="center">Turnaround Schools</div>

Public education in the United States has demonstrated various segments of struggling systems for decades. However; with the focus of high-stakes testing and public chastise of those schools failing to achieve rising standards, more schools are being identified as failing and turnaround is much more prevalent.

Literature in regard to turnaround schools suggests that there is a wide range of attributes that characterize effective schools and suggest that turning a failing school into an effective one is a complicated task. Additionally, according to the United States Department of Education (2001):

> Research on the process of turning a low-performing school into an effective school is much less plentiful and more difficult to interpret. It is also clear that

even if low-performing schools are aware of what they should be doing to improve performance, they do not always have the capacity to carry out improvements. (p. 21)

Student achievement as measured by state-mandated tests required by NCLB is the primary criteria to determine failing schools. Other factors considered may include dropout rates, suspensions, expulsions, special education placements, graduation rates, teacher absenteeism, poverty, diversity, or the availability of appropriate financial management.

The causes of failing schools are varied. According to the United States Department of Education (2001):

In some schools, expectations of students are low, teachers and parents are frustrated, and academic performance is poor. Many problems, including poverty, limited resources, unqualified teachers, and unsafe learning environments contribute to frustration, disillusionment, and discouragingly low levels of student achievement in such schools. (p. 7)

In a closer examination of the causes of failing schools, Murphy and Meyers (2008) found the most prominent external causes contributing to school failure are urban setting, minority student populations, and low socioeconomic status. The most prominent internal causes contributing to school failure include poor teacher quality, ineffective leadership, inadequate resources, and low morale which results in a poor school climate. Other internal causes found in failing schools include low expectations for student achievement, a lack of a cohesive school vision, an unfocused curriculum, and staff working in isolation rather than as colleagues in professional learning communities.

Murphy and Meyers (2008) indicated a variety of responses to school failure has been attempted to turnaround schools. These include school improvement planning,

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expert assistance, provision of choice, provision of supplemental services, adoption of a reform model, reconstitution, and other miscellaneous turnaround proposals.

Although a core component of accreditation requirements for schools accredited by external agencies, school improvement plans are oftentimes a mandate for probationary schools found to be persistently low performing through NCLB. Most require schools to complete a self-study process and to develop a comprehensive and detailed plan identifying strategies to address deficiencies. NCLB requires improvement plans for all Title I schools failing to make AYP for two consecutive years.

The use of expert advice for failing schools is another strategy utilized in turnaround attempts. Some states such as West Virginia, Kentucky, and Oregon provide experts for struggling schools while other states require schools to access expert support independently. Expert advice includes activities such as counseling, professional development, and intensive direct work with school principals and school improvement teams.

The provision of school choice to another school in the district not in school improvement is a requirement of NCLB for Title I schools identified as in need of improvement. In the event of a Title I school failing to make AYP for two consecutive years, its students are to be provided choice of alternative public, to include charter schools, that are making AYP. The philosophy behind this sanction is to provide students a school environment where their academic success is more likely while also giving failing schools incentive to improve through the dual threat of budget and enrollment reductions.

The provision of supplemental services is another mandated intervention from NCLB. Anytime a school fails to make AYP for three consecutive years, the district is to provide children with the opportunity to enroll in supplemental educational services which typically include approximately 30 hours of after-school tutoring offered free of charge. Literature suggests that very few students are taking advantage of this opportunity when it is offered even though the number of schools required to offer this opportunity continues to increase.

The implementation of comprehensive school reform models is another strategy utilized by some failing schools to facilitate turnaround. These external programs are designed to change key curricular, planning, communication, and other school processes in a coordinated method. They typically include elements of school-based planning, targeted professional development, increased parent involvement, and other improvement strategies.

According to Murphy and Meyers (2008), reconstitution is another turnaround strategy used in some failing schools. In this intervention, a school's incumbent administration and a significant portion of its teachers are replaced. Reconstitution is often utilized as a last resort due to its severity and controversial nature and generally involves the following four components. The first component is identifying failing schools according to state or district set measures. Next, staff and administrative positions are vacated. The third component is to appoint a new principal. The final component is establishing a new school team with some rehires and some new teachers.

Adcock and Winkler (1999) advocated for the use of reconstitution and explain, "Educators and researchers know that the placement of better teachers in schools is one

of the most influential determinants to student achievement that is under the control of school officials" (p. 2).

Murphy and Meyers (2008) identified other effective turnaround strategies that have been implemented:

- Forming partnerships and fostering communication with parents and teachers
- Add instructional time
- Financial assistance
- Staff-led school reorganization
- Replacement of principal leadership
- Site-based reform
- Creation of small schools
- Curriculum changes
- Bring experienced teachers out of retirement
- Outsourcing of some of the school's operations
- Contracting out management of and/or running of the school in the form of education management organizations
- Switching to charter school status
- School closure. (pp. 279-282)

According to Herman et al. (2008), successful turnaround schools meet two criteria. First, 20% or more of their students fail to meet state proficiency standards in mathematics or reading as defined under NCLB during two or more consecutive years. The second criteria are the school demonstrated substantial student achievement gains during a brief time of three years or less. Examples of substantial student achievement gains are reducing by at least 10 percentage points the proportions of students failing to meet state proficiency standards, showing large improvements in other performance standards such as lowering the dropout rate by 10 percentage points or more, or increasing overall student performance on standardized test by at least 10 percentage points or more.

Middle-to-upper income and white students have historically experienced greater academic success in public schools than their poor and minority counterparts. While the majority of the nation's worst performing schools are high-poverty schools, there are enough exceptions to prove that student body demographics do not determine student achievement results (Kannapel & Clements, 2005).

Research completed for the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence (Kannapel & Clements, 2005) compared eight high-performing, high-poverty schools to eight low-performing, high-poverty schools in Kentucky. Audits were completed and results indicated the high-performing schools scored significantly higher on the review and alignment of curriculum, individual student assessment and instruction tailored to individual student needs, demonstrating a caring and nurturing environment of high student expectations, ongoing professional development for staff connected to student achievement data, and efficient use of resources and instructional time. Additionally, the eight high-performing schools shared a variety of characteristics to include:

- High expectations communicated from the principal to faculty and staff as well as from everyone toward students that there was a strong belief that students could academically succeed
- Caring, nurturing and respectful relationships between adults and students
- A strong focus on academics, instruction, and student learning
- Formative assessments utilized to change instruction as necessary to meet students' needs
- Collaborative, decision-making leadership
- Strong faculty work ethic and morale where the staff worked collaboratively to meet student needs both inside and outside of school, as well as working with enthusiasm and dedication with no reports of overload or teacher burnout
- Careful and intentional manner in which teachers were recruited, hired, and assigned. (Kannapel & Clements, 2005, p. 3)

Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) (2005) completed research in regard to the differences between high-performing, high-needs elementary

schools and low-performing, high-needs elementary schools. Seventy-six high-needs

schools from 10 different states were studied. Results indicated there was no difference

in the organization of two types of schools and that reorganizations of low-performing

schools were disruptive and ineffective in turning them around. McREL found the

greatest distinction in the magnitude of teacher perceptions between the two types of

schools in the areas of school environment, instruction, and leadership. Leadership was

found to be especially important in shaping or supporting the professional community

among teachers, influencing the school climate and culture, as well as supporting teachers

in monitoring student progress and holding high standards for all students.

As part of its own continuous improvement efforts and to provide guidance to its

accredited schools to quickly facilitate improvement in student achievement, AdvancED

(2010) completed a study about its own accreditation standards. The study identified

specific indicators within its standards that, based on a review of current literature, would

have the most impact on teaching, learning and student achievement. The following

indicators, identified as leverage points by AdvancED, have been found to facilitate the

most positive impact on student achievement:

- The degree to which stakeholders have ongoing opportunities to develop an emergent vision
- The degree to which the vision has implications for the behaviors and action of system stakeholders
- How well the board and its leadership have managed the governance-to-administrator interface in general and how the special case of teaching and learning is handled
- How shared leadership is evidenced, supported, expected, and evaluated
- Develops, articulates, and coordinates curriculum based on clearly-defined expectations for student learning, including essential knowledge and skills
- Supports instruction that is research-based and reflective of best practices
- The creation and use of shared, common assessments to allow consistent measurement of achievement across classrooms and schools

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- The extent to which the district collects, analyzes, and uses organizational effectiveness data as a basis for system accountability
- Specific financial, human, and time resource management strategies contributing to equity and/or strategic alignment
- The extent to which professional development has been re-imagined to embody adult learning principles and to ensure that students learn
- Formal, two-way systems to communicate with stakeholders where stakeholders are regularly involved
- Development of a formal plan, a framework, and a structure for improvement
- A system is in place for monitoring the improvement plan and evaluating its effectiveness in producing the achievement results it is seeking. (pp. 14-72)

Summary

Within the era of accountability required since the passing of NCLB in 2001, public schools throughout the nation have been forced to examine practices and improve student achievement. Avoiding the challenges at hand or simply failing to succeed are no longer options for schools. These turbulent times, which are magnified even further in the increasingly complex environments of public schools, have resulted in a paradigm shift throughout our education system that necessitates a significantly different culture than that required during stable times. Change has been necessary and facilitating second order or deep change in such complex systems is challenging; however, the turnaround of struggling and failing schools is essential in the 21st century. Senge's Learning Organizations Theory (2006) is one change theory that looks to be especially promising for school leaders to utilize in facilitating change during these turbulent times.

Building and sustaining success for all students not only requires a significantly different culture in schools, but also requires leaders with distinct attitudes, behaviors, and skills. Principal behaviors such as the development of a culture of collaborative problem solving, support, encouragement, respect, and expectations for success found in transformational leadership models (Valentine & Prater, 2011) indicate positive impact

on student success. Additionally, the implementation of a more recent view of instructional leadership that has expanded and puts emphasis on the organizational management skills of principals rather than on day-to-day teaching and learning tasks shows promise. According to Horng and Loeb (2010), school leaders positively influence student learning through the teachers they hire, the assignment of teachers to classrooms, strategies to retain outstanding teachers, and through the creation of opportunities for teachers to improve their skills.

According to Leithwood and Riehl (2003), the core set of leadership practices for the "basics" of successful principal leadership include setting directions, developing people, and developing organizations. Setting directions includes tasks such as identifying and articulating a vision, creating shared meanings, creating high performance expectations, fostering the acceptance of group goals, monitoring organizational performance, and communicating. Developing people includes activities such as offering intellectual stimulation, providing individualized support, and providing an appropriate model. Finally, developing organizations includes tasks that strengthen the school culture, modifying organizational structure, building collaborative processes, and managing the environment. Principal leaders who demonstrate these practices have been found to positively impact student achievement and the culture within their schools.

Effective principal leadership is a key component for every school in order to facilitate necessary change which results in sustained student achievement. According to United States Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan:

> And if at the end of the day, our 95,000 schools each had a great principal, this thing would take care of itself. Great principals attract great talent. They nurture that great talent and they develop that great talent. Bad principals are the reverse: bad principals don't attract good talent, they run off good talent. They don't find

ways to improve those that are trying to get better. They don't engage the community.

Our principals today, I think are absolutely CEOs. They have to manage people. They have to be first and foremost instructional leaders. They have to manage multi-million dollar budgets. They have to manage facilities. They have to work with the community. The demands and the stresses on principals have never been greater . . . .

We want to be part of the solution. We want to change our behavior…If we can get this piece right, we'll change our students' lives forever. If we don't get this piece right, we can do all of the other big picture things that we want, but if it's not happening in real schools, in real classrooms, we're kidding ourselves. Great principals make it happen, make it a reality day-to-day. (cited in Wallace Foundation, 2010, pp. 21-22)

Description of the Next Chapters

A description of the methods utilized in this study is included in Chapter III. It begins with the purpose of the study and is followed by a description of the theoretical framework of Senge's learning organizations theory, an overview of the case study and justification for the utilization of the methodology in this study, and the constant comparative method. The chapter continues with a summary of information and demographics about the participants as well as the data collection methods and analysis that was utilized. Chapter III concludes with a summary of the researcher's role and possible validity threats that were considered in the research study.

Coded results of focus group data and open-ended interviews from study participants along with a summary of historical AYP data are described in Chapter IV. Evidence was drawn from focus group comments, interview transcripts, coded data, and descriptive statistics to answer the three research questions used to guide the study.

The study concludes in Chapter V. It includes a summary of the themes and issues from study results, discussion and conclusions, concluding thoughts, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe the perceived problems that precipitated

principal leadership change at the end of the 2008-2009 school year at Upper Midwest

Middle School and to describe the effects from the perspective of system participants.

Using a case study approach, the research focused on the perceived effects of principal

leadership change and its' impact on the perception of the school's culture and student

success.

The following research questions were used to guide the study:

1. What were the perceived problems at Upper Midwest Middle School that

   precipitated principal leadership change at the end of the 2008-2009 school

   year?

2. To what extent has the change in principal leadership at Upper Midwest

   Middle School impacted the perception of the school's culture since the 2009-

   2010 school year?

3. To what extent has the change in principal leadership at Upper Midwest

   Middle School impacted student achievement as well as the perception of

   student success since the 2009-2010 school year?

Theoretical Framework

Senge's Learning Organizations Theory

One basic belief shared by W. Edwards Deming and of Peter Senge (2006) is that the prevailing system of management used in businesses, schools, and various organizations is dedicated to mediocrity. Systems force people to work harder to compensate for the failure to tap the spirit and collective intelligence that is characterized when individuals work together. As a result of this belief and years of research and working within systems, Senge developed a theory of organizational change and systems thinking that he refers to as learning organizations. People working in learning organizations continually expand their capacity to create desired results, are nurtured with new patterns of thinking, are able to collectively set aspirations free, and continually learn how to learn together. This theoretical framework for learning organizations includes five components in which learning organizations can facilitate change. The interdependent components are personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning, and systems thinking.

This researcher chose to compare and contrast observations in regard to change identified in this study with Senge's change theory of learning organizations (2006) that focuses on systems thinking as the significant, second order change that has occurred at UMMS in such a short period of time is only possible through the use of a systems approach. This theory was chosen as it appears that many of the methods utilized to facilitate change under the current principal leadership at UMMS obtained some level of success as a result of calculated efforts from the principal leadership and shared

leadership teams utilizing a systems approach to correct identified barriers within the school.

Case Study

A case study is an approach to qualitative research whereby a specific entity or situation is studied. Cases can be limited to a characteristic, trait, behavior, or specific situation. According to Lichtman (2010), there are three types of cases that can be considered for study:

1. The typical case where the researcher identifies criteria to use in the study and identifies one or more cases to consider for research.
2. The exemplary or model case where the researcher identifies or describes the norm and identifies one or more cases that exceed the norm.
3. The unusual or unique case where the researcher identifies a case to study that is considered unusual, unique or special in some way. (p. 82)

The case studied in this research was a unique case where the researcher identified a single case to study in a natural setting and included a collection of qualitative data from the perspective of the participants. This study sought to understand through description and conceptualization the complexities of the change process as experienced by the participants and their perception of principal leadership within their school and its' impact on the school climate and student success. Three methods of data collection were utilized:

1. Document summarization and content analysis of teacher statements from focus groups that were completed by an external consultant conducted in May 2009 that describes the school's climate prior to the change.

2. Semi-structured, qualitative interviews with participants in the system: the district superintendent, current building principal, current assistant principal,

and five teachers and/or support staff members who had been employed in the
school prior to and since the change process.

3. Historical AYP data was collected and analyzed to verify participant
responses.

Constant Comparative Method

This research design was based upon the works of Barney Glaser's view of
grounded theory that looks at a particular situation and attempts to make meaning from it
that is grounded in or emerges from the field. An objectivist approach was taken where
the researcher was a neutral observer who remained separate from the research
participants and analyzed their perceptions as an outside expert.

The constant comparative method of grounded theory described by Charmaz
(2006) was utilized by the researcher who collected data through qualitative interviews,
compared data from multiple interviews, and analyzed historical data to understand the
change process that occurred as well as the effects of principal leadership and its' impact
on the school's culture and student success at Upper Midwest Middle School (Table 1).

Table 1. Constant Comparative Method.

Steps: Charmaz (2006)	Steps: Meyers (2011-2012)
1. Simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis.	Collect pre-existing and historical data. Conduct interviews. Transcribe interview data. Conduct validity checks with participants.
2. Construct analytical codes and categories from data, not from pre-conceived logically deduced hypotheses.	Complete open coding and identify themes for pre-existing and historical data. Complete open coding and identify themes for interview data.
3. Use the constant comparative method to make comparisons during each analysis stage.	Identify and describe data patterns.
4. Advance theory development during each step of data collection and analysis.	Complete axial coding and begin to explain emerging patterns from the data.
5. Memo-writing to elaborate categories, specify their properties, define relation-ships between categories, and identify gaps.	Write memos to elaborate on themes, identify properties, relationships, and gaps.
6. Theory construction.	Theoretical coding, conceptual framework development, and analysis of findings.

Based upon the components of grounded theory practice described by Charmaz (2006), three systematic processes of coding of data was undertaken by the researcher through the use of the constant comparative method to make comparisons during each stage of analysis. First, open coding was completed whereby the researcher constructed analytical codes and categories from the data. Second, axial coding was completed where the researcher developed themes to explain patterns that emerged in the data. Finally,

theoretical coding was completed whereby the researcher constructed conceptual

frameworks to describe the central or core themes in the data and an analysis of the

findings was completed.

<center>Participants in the Study</center>

<center>*Gaining Access to the School*</center>

The researcher met with the principal and assistant principal of Upper Midwest

Middle School on September 30, 2011 to discuss possible research topics the researcher

could study that may result in beneficial information to the district. After discussion

about various topics, the turmoil that occurred in Upper Midwest Middle School during

the 2008-2009 school year was mentioned. Further description of the school climate,

resulting changes, and current culture of the school occurred. Potential data sources were

identified as were district resources where information might be obtained. As a result, the

researcher met with the district's curriculum director on October 11, 2011 and further

defined available sources of data and potential methods to be undertaken in the study.

The researcher refined the prospective study and identified that a qualitative case

study of the unique change process as well as principal leadership and its impact on the

school climate and student success was most appropriate. The researcher met with the

district superintendent on October 27, 2011 and reviewed the proposed research. Verbal

approval was provided from the superintendent to pursue the study with the agreement

that pseudonyms would be utilized for the school and district names and no personally

identifying information would be published in order to protect anonymity and

confidentiality. In order to minimize potential risks to participants in regard to those who

may provide critical opinions of a principal and/or the superintendent, the researcher

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would keep confidential the names and roles of subordinate study participants so that school and district administrators would not know the identity of teacher and support staff participants. The opportunity for participant compromise in terms of employment, promotion, etcetera was thus minimized. Additionally, all participation was voluntary, transcribed interviews were proofread and critiqued by the participant of that interview only, and the superintendent and principals were provided the opportunity to review and critique a draft of the study results. The superintendent, principal, and assistant principal agreed to participate in the research as outlined. Project approval was received from the University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board (IRB-201202-274) on March 22, 2012.

Selection of Study Participants

The interview from the superintendent provided information from the district leadership perspective while the principal interviews provided information from the current principal and assistant principal in regard to their experiences in the change process and how their perceived leadership impacted the school climate and student success. The selection of participants for interviews from teachers and/or support staff was determined through consultation with the district's director of human resources who provided a list of all district employees meeting participant criteria which included employment within UMMS prior to and since the change in principal leadership occurred in the fall of 2009. Only the researcher knew the identity of the actual teachers and/or support staff members who participated in the study so as to protect the identity of subordinate participants. The opportunity for participant compromise in terms of employment, promotion, etcetera was minimized. Care was taken to include individuals

who represented the voice of their peers within the school. Five teachers and/or staff members were selected to participate in the study. Table 2 summarizes the interview participant profile.

Table 2. Interview Participant Profile.

Participant	Yrs. Exp. in Current Profession	Years at UMMS
Superintendent	7	0
Principal	6	3
Assistant Principal	8	3
Teacher/Support Staff	9	4
Teacher/Support Staff	27	25
Teacher/Support Staff	27	8
Teacher/Support Staff	13	12
Teacher/Support Staff	18	5

School Demographics

Located in an upper Midwest rural community, Upper Midwest Middle School has a student population of slightly fewer than 1000 students enrolled in Grades 5 thru 8 with approximately 90% of its' students being white and approximately one-third of the students being eligible for free and reduced lunches. The school has a 95% attendance rate and is considered neither a high nor a low poverty school (Minnesota Department of Education, 2011b).

Upper Midwest Middle School is led by a principal and assistant principal and has slightly fewer than 50 teachers who are recognized as meeting the federal requirements to be "Highly Qualified". The staff is closely divided with approximately half of the teachers being prepared at the bachelor's degree level and half being prepared at the master's degree level. Most of the teachers have more than 10 years of experience. Neither the current principal nor current assistant principal worked at Upper Midwest

Middle School prior to their appointment in 2009. Each has earned a master's degree with a 6th year administrative license and they average seven years of administrative experience. One hundred percent of the staff at Upper Midwest Middle School is white (Minnesota Department of Education, 2011c).

Data Collection Methods

Review and Analysis of Pre-existing Data

As a result of the turmoil at Upper Midwest Middle School during the 2008-2009 school year, the district superintendent hired an external consultant to facilitate healing sessions to repair relationships among the staff. Focus groups were facilitated by the consultant and anonymous statements were documented. This pre-existing data was summarized and the content analyzed through coding where the text was sorted and organized to identify recurring themes to describe the school's climate prior to the change.

Three meetings were held with Upper Midwest Middle School teaching and support staff during the spring 2009. Within the context of those meetings, the external consultant asked the following questions to participants:

1. What do you value most about Upper Midwest Middle School?
2. What do you value most about your work/role at Upper Midwest Middle School?
3. What should Upper Midwest Middle School be sure it takes with it as it moves into the future?
4. What are the key factors hindering the healing process at Upper Midwest Middle School?
5. What are the key factors that are helping the "healing" process at Upper Midwest Middle School?
6. What needs to be done to have a successful "healing" process?
7. What are you willing to do to help the "healing" process?

Semi-structured Interviews

A semi-structured, qualitative interview process was utilized by the researcher in order to focus the interviews on the research questions as well as to enable the researcher to compare data between subjects. Study participants were permitted latitude in their response to interview questions, resulting in the opportunity for each of them to share their own experiences, observations, and opinions while the researcher added questions as each situation demanded. Each interview was digitally recorded, transcribed by the researcher, a written copy provided to and reviewed for accuracy by each study participant about his or her own interview, returned to the researcher to complete any necessary revisions, and then the paper copy was shredded and the digital copy erased. Transcriptions of each interview have been maintained on the researcher's personal computer which is password protected and stored in a secure location. The interviews were open-ended and focused on the following general questions:

Interview Schedule Superintendent:

1. What is your educational history to include college degrees, professional certifications, trainings, as well as your teaching and administrative experiences?
2. Please tell me about your history of service in Midwest Public School District and your current role in the district.
3. What concerns did you observe or were brought to your attention in regard to Upper Midwest Middle School during the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 school years?
4. What actions did you take in order to investigate concerns you observed as well as those brought to your attention at Upper Midwest Middle School during the 2008-2009 school year?
5. What were the conclusions of the investigation into concerns at Upper Midwest Middle School during the 2008-2009 school year?
6. What correction plans did you implement to address concerns that were identified through the investigation?
7. What factors or concerns were you specifically targeting for improvement in your correction plan?

8. What skills, experience, and characteristics were you targeting for the new principal leadership team at Upper Midwest Middle School for the 2009-2010 school year? Did you achieve these targets? How do you evaluate this?
9. What impact do you believe the principal leadership team has made on the school climate at Upper Midwest Middle School since the 2009-2010 school year? What do you use to evaluate the impact of the change in principal leadership on school climate?
10. What impact do you believe the principal leadership team has made on student achievement and success at Upper Midwest Middle School since the 2009-2010 school year? What do you use to evaluate the impact of the change in principal leadership on student achievement and success?
11. Is there anything else you believe I should know about your experiences or observations about the impact of the change in principal leadership on school climate and student success at Upper Midwest Middle School?

Interview Schedule Principals:

1. What is your role at Upper Midwest Middle School?
2. What is your educational history to include college degrees, professional certifications, trainings, as well as your teaching and administrative experiences?
3. What is your primary leadership style and what actions or behaviors do you demonstrate when implementing that style?
4. What were your top 3 priorities when you became a principal at Upper Midwest Middle School? How did you demonstrate importance for these priorities?
5. What strategies have you used to facilitate change at Upper Midwest Middle School?
6. What strategies have you used to address resistance to change from teaching and support staff members?
7. What strategies have you used to effectively work with other building leadership?
8. In what ways to you believe your leadership has impacted the school climate at Upper Midwest Middle School? How do you evaluate this impact?
9. In what ways do you believe your leadership has impacted student achievement at Upper Midwest Middle School? How do you evaluate this impact?
10. In what ways do you believe your leadership has impacted overall student success at Upper Midwest Middle School? How do you evaluate this impact
11. Is there anything else you think I should know about your experiences as a principal at Upper Midwest Middle School, change that has occurred during your tenure here, the school's climate, student achievement and/or student success here?

Interview Schedule Teachers and Support Staff:

1. What is your role at Upper Midwest Middle School?
2. What is your educational history to include college degrees, professional certifications, trainings, as well as your teaching or other professional experiences?
3. Please describe your perception of strengths and concerns that were evident at Upper Midwest Middle School during the final years of the previous principal leadership team that left at the end of the 2008-2009 school year.
4. Please describe your perception of the school climate at Upper Midwest Middle School during the final years of the previous principal leadership team that left at the end of the 2008-2009 school year.
5. Please describe your perception of student achievement and student success and/or challenges at Upper Midwest Middle School during the final years of the previous principal leadership team that left at the end of the 2008-2009 school year.
6. Please describe your perception of the changes that have taken place at Upper Midwest Middle School since the current principal leadership team was hired during the summer of 2009.
7. What strategies have you observed the current principals use to facilitate change at Upper Midwest Middle School? How effective/ineffective do you believe these strategies have been? How do you evaluate this?
8. How do you perceive the current principal leadership has impacted the school climate at Upper Midwest Middle School? How do you evaluate this?
9. How do you perceive the current principal leadership has impacted student achievement and overall student success at Upper Midwest Middle School? How do you evaluate this?
10. Is there anything else you think I should know about your perception of things under the leadership of the previous principals, change that has occurred under the leadership of the current principals, and/or the impact of the current principal leadership on the school's climate, student achievement and/or student success at Upper Midwest Middle School?

Each interview was structured through the use of the question schedules

appropriate to the participant's professional position; however, considerable latitude was

provided to each participant to provide information and perceptions each felt was

pertinent to the studied phenomena. The use of semi-structured, qualitative interviews

allowed data to be compared between participants and aided in answering the research

questions.

With permission from each participant, all interviews were recorded on a digital voice recorder. The use of this technology enabled the researcher to record each interview in its entirety while focusing on the responses of each participant and enabling additional probing questions to be asked for clarification or expansion of responses. Interviews were transcribed in full to facilitate data analysis and each transcript was returned to the individual participant to review for content validity.

Instrument Validity and Reliability

The collection of pre-existing data that was completed by an external consultant in May 2009 was analyzed by the single researcher. All interview data collection was transcribed and analyzed by the same researcher, an experienced teacher and administrator.

The interview questions were developed to answer the questions raised in the current study. The schedules, interview process, and recording practices were piloted first with the administrators and then with the teachers and/or support staff. Participants were permitted to direct the interview in a manner that provided meaning to them and obtained the most valid research results. Participant responses from various roles within the system were compared to ensure both validity and reliability of results.

In order to ensure validity in the data collected, the researcher paid particular attention to strategies designed to avoid potential retribution to subordinate participants who may express negative perceptions about building and/or district administration during open-ended interviews. First, none of the principals studied prior to or during the 2008-2009 school year are currently employed within the district, thus eliminating concerns in regard to the district power structure and its' impact on subordinate

participants. Second, the identities of subordinate participants were kept confidential

from the district superintendent and current principals with all participant interviews

scheduled and held in private locations that were not revealed to the district

superintendent and current principals. Finally, all interview transcripts were kept

confidential with all subordinate participant comments remaining anonymous in the

study's data summaries and appendices.

Additionally, as a result of information provided to the researcher in regard to

student achievement at Upper Midwest Middle School, the researcher determined there

was a gap in data. As a result, the researcher obtained and analyzed historical AYP data

to further validate participant responses.

Data Analysis

Analysis and Treatment of Pre-existing and Interview Data

The constant comparative methodology of data analysis was utilized in this study

whereby the researcher analyzed data through the use of coding strategies while the data

collection was in process. Pre-existing data from focus group responses provided by an

external consultant were summarized and coded separately from interview data.

Recorded interviews were transcribed in an Excel spreadsheet and sent to participants for

validation within two weeks of each interview. Initial analysis was completed at the time

of interview transcription whereby the researcher began to develop tentative codes and

themes. Standard forms were developed and utilized to summarize data, indicate the need

for further data collection, and to identify and/or develop codes and themes. Axial and

theoretical coding processes were utilized to develop connections between codes and

themes as well as to develop conceptual frameworks to summarize the research. A gap

was identified in data and the researcher determined it was necessary to obtain historical AYP data in order to validate participant responses. As a result of this identified gap, the researcher also collected and analyzed historical AYP data for Upper Midwest Middle School for all available years that data was collected by the state ranging from AYP year 2004 until AYP year 2011.

Twenty-eight pages of transcribed data were drawn from the participant responses to the external consultant questions. This pre-existing data was coded, themes identified, and a conceptual framework developed to assist in answering research question 1.

Six hours of recorded interviews with a total of 85 transcribed pages of data were drawn from open-ended interviews with participants. This data was coded, themes identified, and a conceptual framework developed to assist in answering research questions 1, 2, and 3.

Historical AYP data was collected for Upper Midwest Middle School for all available years that data was collected by the state ranging from AYP year 2004 until AYP year 2011. This data was then combined with state targets for annual student proficiency rates for both reading and mathematics indicating the progressively higher proficiency targets required by NCLB for the state to reach 100% proficiency by the 2013-2014 school year.

<div align="center">The Researcher's Role and Validity Threats</div>

The researcher began employment at Upper Midwest Middle School at the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year, two years after the identification of concerns which facilitated change and one school year after the transition to the current principal leadership team in the building. Although currently employed in the school that was the

focus of this study, the situation prompting the change happened prior to the researcher's employment and the researcher made full attempt to keep the information as unbiased as possible.

In completing the study, pre-existing data from focus groups and historical AYP data were obtained and analyzed by a single researcher. Additionally, all interview data collection, transcription, and analysis were completed by the same single researcher.

Data was triangulated through a collection of pre-existing data, historical sources, and interviews from various participants with a variety of roles within the organization that was studied. The transcripts, content analysis, and outcomes were reviewed by participants for accuracy and to ensure that collected data truly represented the meaning attributed to the study by members of the organization. Coding techniques were utilized to impose meaning to the interview data collected. The first draft of Chapters IV and V were provided to the superintendent and two principals to check for accuracy and validity prior to conclusion and university submission.

Ethical Considerations

All efforts were made to ensure that the rights and welfare of all participants in this study were adequately protected. All requirements established by the University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board were strictly followed. This qualitative research study was conducted in an educational setting involving normal educational practices. No participants were under the age of 18 years. Pre-existing and historical data were utilized with additional data being collected in open-ended, semi-structured qualitative interviews with participants.

Participants were provided discussion questions in advance of the scheduled interviews to use as a guideline, provided written informed consent to participate, and had the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants were provided latitude to expand responses from the outlined questions which were utilized as a framework for interviews. Transcripts of interviews were sent to participants via e-mail for correction, additions, and deletions. The final report was checked by the superintendent, principal, and assistant principal for validity and meaning. Pseudonyms were utilized for the school and district names and the identities of all participants and any individuals identified during the study have remained anonymous. There are no foreseeable risks involved with participation. All research activities have been agreed upon by the district superintendent and building principals.

Description of the Next Chapters

Coded results of focus group data and open-ended interviews from study participants along with a summary of historical AYP data are described in Chapter IV. Evidence was drawn from focus group comments, interview transcripts, coded data, and descriptive statistics to answer the three research questions used to guide the study.

The study concludes in Chapter V. It includes a summary of the themes and issues from study results, discussion and conclusions, concluding thoughts, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER IV

STUDY RESULTS

The purpose of this chapter is to give a detailed report of the findings of the data collection and analysis activities conducted at Upper Midwest Middle School. The chapter is divided into four sections: analysis of pre-existing data from focus group responses provided by an external consultant, the analysis of open-ended interviews, a summary of historical AYP data, and a summary of the first three sections to address the study research questions.

Pre-existing Data from Focus Groups Responses

As a result the turmoil at Upper Midwest Middle School during the 2008-2009 school year, the district superintendent hired an external consultant to facilitate healing sessions to repair relationships among the staff. Focus groups were facilitated by the consultant and anonymous statements were documented. This pre-existing data was summarized and the content analyzed through coding where the text was sorted and organized to identify recurring themes or concepts to describe the school's culture prior to the change.

When asked what UMMS should take while it moves into the future, staff members made some comments which referred to the climate at UMMS during 2008-2009:

- "Continue to work hard, but bring fun back into the workplace"

- "We need to get back the feeling of community, respect from principals for our ideas, and better, consistent discipline for students"

- "We need leadership who will understand they are there to maintain order among the students, not just be buddy, buddy with them while the school erupts in chaos around them. Without a sense of order, what is acceptable and not acceptable, nothing else will be possible. We need to maintain our identity which is based on tradition, past practice, etcetera"

- "We need to be able to respectfully share, discuss, and listen with one another whether we agree or disagree"

- "I don't want to be told that we are starting from scratch. I want our history on how we have done things in the past that worked to at least be of some value to the new leader"

- "We should not lose the relationships we have built with each other as a staff and with students. Relationships are very important, don't lose them"

- "A family environment that will continue to teach our children respect, good morals, and working together"

- "We have many teachers and staff who do extra, behind the scenes work like staff development, site council, recertification, extra help sessions, TAT, child study, etc.. These people have really been strong for our school. It is important that they don't lose heart and will keep working to make us all stronger"

- "We have a lot of teachers who have expertise in various areas: reading strategies, data analysis, special education, etc.. We have always been able to rely on each other. We need to keep this"

- "The relationships we made before all this happened"

- "It took a long time to build all the good things, but such a short time to have things fall apart"

Resulting in descriptions of the school climate during the 2008-2009 school year, staff members were asked to identify factors hindering the healing process at UMMS. Comments included:

- "Lack of communication"

- "Not being granted the same access to information, respectful treatment"

- "Lack of open-mindedness"

- "Lack of trust and communication"

- "Whispering"

- "Grudges"

- "My way or the highway"

- "Lack of caring and respect"

- "Arrogant attitudes"

- "Griping and complaining"

- "Extreme judgment of and by others"

- "Constantly talking about problems and other staff"

- "They will not greet others when spoken to or only do so in a curt, monosyllabic manner"

- "People in halls avoiding eye contact and walking away"

- "Faculty members won't help one another"

- "Reveal the information on why so many teachers signed the petition"

- "Accept change that it won't be like it used to be when we had someone else as principal. This never would have happened with someone else as principal. We need to understand what worked in the 'old' days may not be effective or acceptable now"

- "We need to keep from burying ourselves in our little words and shutting out everything. In other words-communicate"

- "The issues that have driven a wedge into the relationships between people in this building need to be addressed. There is a lot of misinformation about what went on in this building and why a large group of teachers felt the need to write a letter to deal with the situation. Maybe those who were not in support of the letter truly didn't know or understand what was going on"

In order to obtain a better understanding of the culture that had developed at UMMS during the 2008-2009 school year, pre-existing data from the focus groups is summarized in Table 3 according to identified codes and subsequent themes with the conceptual framework based upon the Grounded Theory Model summarized in Figure 2.

Table 3. Axial Coding of Pre-existing Data from Focus Groups.

CODES		

Rumors
Misunderstanding
Misinformation
Lack of communication
Gossip
Lack of access to information
Lack of information
Lack of leadership
No leadership
Non-renewed principals
  making decisions for next year
District administrative presence
Breakdown in leadership
Lack of trust
Dishonesty
Lack of open mindedness
	Whispering
	Questioning others'
	  judgment
	Behind the back talking
	Grudges
	Self-righteousness
	Closed minded
	Anger
	Negativity
	Insubordination
	Disrespect
	Resentment
	Hurt feelings
	Fear
	Non-verbal gestures
	Betrayal
		Bitterness
		Extreme judgment by others
		Bullying
		Union loyalty
		Constant focus on problems
		Closed door meetings
		Office conflict
		Ignore others
		Labeling
		Isolation
		Avoidance
		Disrespect
		Refuse to help others
		Devaluation
		Excluding others
		Lack of unity

THEMES				
Communication	Leadership	Trust	Feelings	Staff Division

Causal Conditions
- NCLB
- Accountability
- Retirement of Principal Leadership Team
- District Leadership Vision for Best Practices Resulting in Increased Student Success

Context
- Lack of Teacher Knowledge/ Skills in Best Practices
- Teacher Resistance to Change

Central Phenomena
- Principal Leadership and Change

Intervening Conditions
- New Principal Leadership Team with an Autocratic Style
- Lack of Experience from Assistant Principal
- District Administration Pressure for Change to Best Practices

Strategies
- Ineffective Communication
- Disregard for the Importance of Relationship Building
- Bullying
- Attempts to Facilitate a Quick Change
- "Fundamentalist" Teachers Banding Together to "Get Rid of" Principal Leadership Team

Outcomes
- Lack of Trust Between Leadership and Staff
- Negative Feelings Between Leadership, Staff, and Co-workers
- Staff Division
- Focus on Staff Rather than Students
- Lack of Student Success (Discipline and Achievement)
- Toxic School Culture
- Non-renewal of Principal Leadership Team

Figure 2. Pre-existing Data from Focus Groups Conceptual Framework.

Analysis of Open-ended Interviews

Data was initially analyzed during researcher transcription of the interview

sessions. An axial coding process was undertaken to assign codes to the data (Table 4).

Additional data analysis was completed through a theoretical coding process to develop

connections and resulted in the identification of seven themes: vision, power, change,

relationships, student discipline, school culture, and student achievement. Final analysis

resulted in the development of the conceptual framework based upon the Grounded

Theory Model (Figure 3).

Table 4. Axial Coding of Open-ended Interviews.

CODES		
Core values	Lack of growth	Personal skills
Goals	Hiring practices	Arrogance
Passionate staff	Continuous improvement	Inflexible
District-wide vision	Staff turnover	Lack of support
District-wide support	Team	Accountability
Empowered staff	Leadership style	Research-based strategies
Top-down leadership	Trust	Success
Intimidation	Fair	Turnaround
Communication	Respect	Reputation
Meeting with staff	Staff division	Best practices
Micromanage	Staff unity	Meet AYP
Autocratic leadership	Cliques	Positive atmosphere
Closed door practices	Validation of veterans	Welcoming
Open door practices	Honesty	Pride
Hierarchy	Listen	Unified
Get rid of principals	Feedback	Morale
Process	Perceptions	Conflict
Buy in	Healing	Apathy
Time	Threatened	Community Support
Resistance to change	Undermined	Complacent
Quality new hires	Building consensus	Non-welcoming feel
Internal hiring		

THEMES				
Vision	Power	Change	Relationships	Student Discipline
School Culture			Student Achievement	

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Context
- Toxic School Culture that Developed in 2008-2009
- Teachers' Perception that They "Got Rid of" Principal Leadership in Spring 2009
- Teachers Open to Another Change in Principal Leadership

Causal Conditions
- NCLB
- Accountability
- Traditional Principal Leadership Teams Prior to 2008-2009
- Non-renewal of the Principal Leadership Team in the Spring 2009
- District Leadership Vision for Best Practices Resulting in Increased Student Success

Central Phenomena
- Principal Leadership and Change

Intervening Conditions
- Teacher Input in Regard to the New Principal Leadership Team
- Knowledge, Skills and Experience of Principal Leadership Team Hired in Spring 2009
- District Administration Support for Teachers in Spring 2009

Strategies
- Development of a Strong School Vision that Focuses on Student Success
- Effective Communication
- Empowerment of Individuals and Teams
- Development of Healthy Relationships
- Slow, Effective Change
- The Use of Best Practices Strategies
- Fair and Consistent Student Discipline

Outcomes
- Trust Developed Between Leadership and Staff
- Healthy Relationships Developed between Leadership, Staff, and Co-workers
- Staff Collaboration
- Focus on Student Success
- Healthy School Culture
- Student Success (Discipline and Achievement)
- Positive Recognition from School Stakeholders
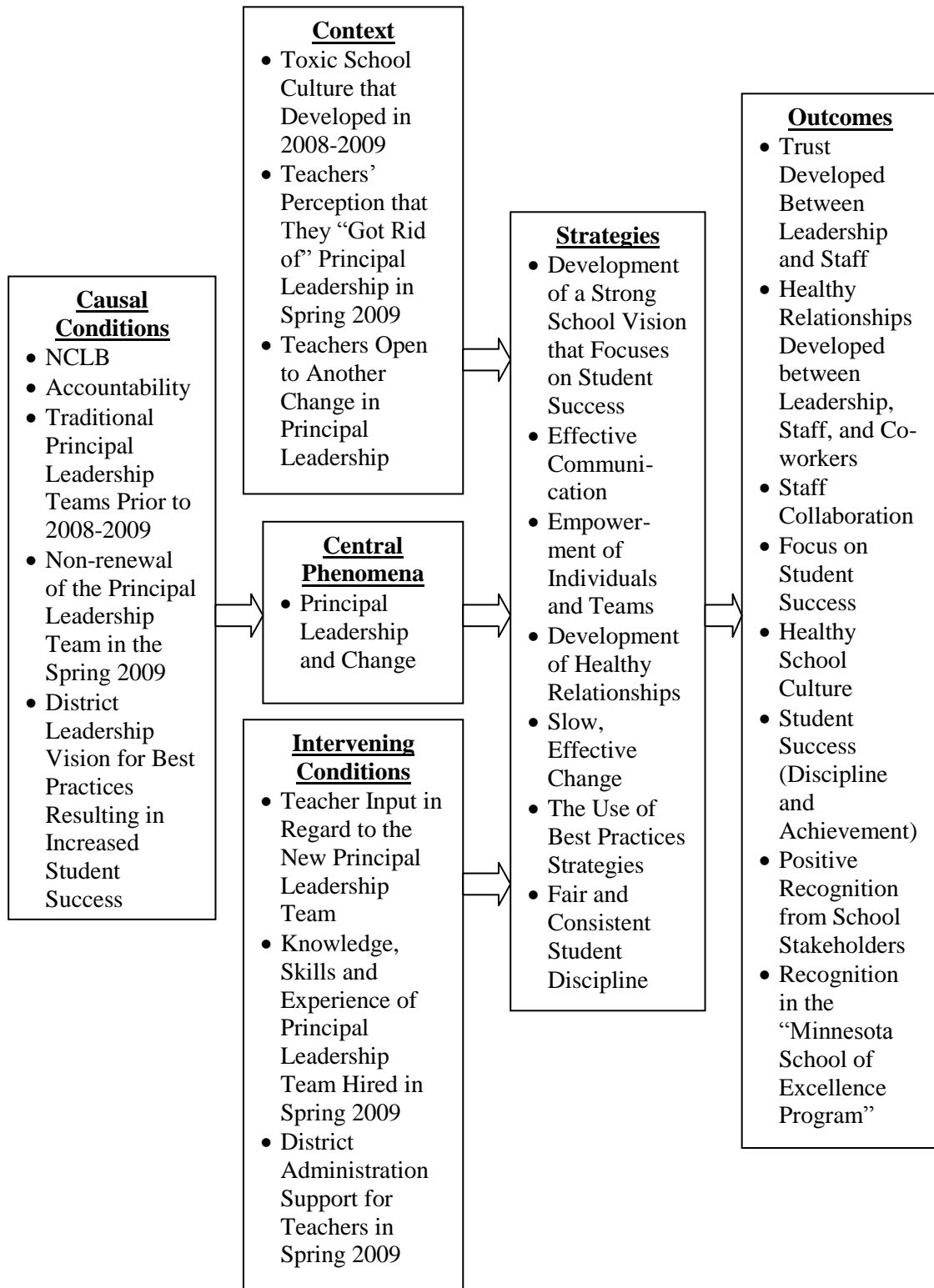- Recognition in the "Minnesota School of Excellence Program"

Figure 3. Open-ended Interviews Conceptual Framework.

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Historical AYP Data

Original implementation of No Child Left Behind required states to increase their proportion of proficient students at a rate that allowed 100% of all students to be proficient by the school year 2013-2014. In order to comply with this requirement, the state adopted annual measureable targets for schools to meet in order make adequate yearly progress (AYP). Table 5 summarizes the AYP status of Upper Midwest Middle School between the 2004 and 2011 AYP years. It is significant to note that although UMMS made AYP in years 2004 and 2005, proficiency targets for math and reading were significantly lower with drastically reduced student proficiency standards than student proficiency targets required to make AYP in years 2009, 2010, and 2011. Historical AYP data for Upper Midwest Middle School indicates student proficiency was highest during the 2009, 2010, and 2011 AYP years which directly corresponds to the tenure of the current principal leadership team in the school.

Table 5. Upper Midwest Middle School AYP Historical Data

AYP Year	Status	Math Scores	Reading Scores	Other AYP Criteria Scores
2004	Making AYP	Above Target State Target: 65.4% Proficient	Above Target State Target: 69.9% Proficient	Above Targets
2005	Making AYP	Above Target State Target: 68.9% Proficient	Above Target State Target: 72.9% Proficient	Above Targets
2006	Not Making AYP	Above Target State Target: 72.3% Proficient	Below Target State Target: 75.9% Proficient	Above Targets
2007	Not Making AYP	Above Target State Target: 75.8% Proficient	Below Target State Target: 78.9% Proficient	Above Targets
2008	Not Making AYP	Below Target State Target: 79.2% Proficient	Below Target State Target: 81.9% Proficient	Above Targets
2009	Making AYP	Above Target State Target: 82.7% Proficient	Above Target State Target: 85.0% Proficient	Above Targets
2010	Making AYP	Above Target State Target: 86.2% Proficient	Above Target State Target: 88.0% Proficient	Above Targets
2011	Making AYP	Above Target State Target: 89.6% Proficient	Above Target State Target: 91.0% Proficient	Above Targets

(Minnesota Department of Education, 2011a; Minnesota Department of Education, 2004)

Summary and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to describe the perceived problems that precipitated principal leadership change at the end of the 2008-2009 school year at Upper Midwest Middle School and to describe the effects from the perspective of system participants. Using a case study approach, the research focused on the perceived effects of principal leadership change and its' impact on the perception of the school's culture and student success.

The summary and conclusions are drawn from extensive and careful interpretation of collected and analyzed research data that has been validated through various methods.

All pre-existing data collection completed by an external consultant and qualitative interview data collected by the researcher were transcribed and analyzed by the single researcher who is an experienced teacher and administrator who has successfully completed education and training in qualitative research methods. Data was triangulated through a collection of pre-existing data, historical data, and interviews from various participants with a variety of roles within the organization that was studied. All participants were permitted to direct their interview in a manner that provided meaning to them and obtained the most valid research results to answer the three research questions. Interview schedules, processes, and recording practices were first piloted with the administrator participants and then administered with the teachers and support staff. The transcripts, content analysis, and outcomes were reviewed by participants for accuracy and to ensure that collected data truly represented the meaning attributed to the study by members of the organization. Coding techniques were utilized to impose meaning to the data collected. In response to interview comments provided to the researcher in regard to student achievement at Upper Midwest Middle School, the researcher determined there was a gap in data. As a result, the researcher obtained and analyzed historical AYP data to further validate participant responses. Finally, the first draft of Chapters IV and V were provided to the superintendent and two principals to check for accuracy and validity prior to completion of the study and university submission.

In conclusion, the research questions used to guide this research study are addressed:

1. What were the perceived problems at Upper Midwest Middle School that precipitated principal leadership change at the end of the 2008-2009 school year?

2. To what extent has the change in principal leadership at Upper Midwest Middle School impacted the perception of the school's culture since the 2009-2010 school year?

3. To what extent has the change in principal leadership at Upper Midwest Middle School impacted student achievement as well as the perception of student success since the 2009-2010 school year?

1. What were the perceived problems at Upper Midwest Middle School that precipitated principal leadership change at the end of the 2008-2009 school year? In order to answer this research question, triangulation of three sources of data was utilized: pre-existing data from focus group responses, data from open-ended interviews, and historical AYP data for Upper Midwest Middle School.

<div align="center">Pre-existing Data from Focus Groups Themes</div>

The analysis of pre-existing data from focus group responses resulted in the identification of five themes, each of which indicated significant problems were perceived from participants in regard to Upper Midwest Middle School during the 2008-2009 school year. The five identified themes are: communication, leadership, trust, feelings, and staff division.

Theme 1: Communication

Focus group participant comments indicated significant concerns in regard to communication at Upper Midwest Middle School during the 2008-2009 school year. Examples of comments pertaining to communication concerns include:

- "lack of communication"

- "rumors"

- "misunderstanding"

- "misinformation"

- "not being granted the same access to information"

- "gossiping"

- "lack of information".

Theme 2: Leadership

Leadership was the second theme identified in the analysis of focus group participant comments. Specific comments indicating participant negative perceptions include:

- "lack of middle school leaders"

- "no leadership in the middle school"

- "administration refuses to accept some responsibility for the situation"

- "breakdown in leadership".

Theme 3: Trust

The third theme identified in the analysis of focus group participant comments was trust. Participant comments that indicate negative perceptions include:

- "my role at UMMS has been devalued and distorted"

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- "I want all staff to be treated equally"

- "lack of open-mindedness"

- "dishonesty"

- "questioning others' judgment and experiences"

- "whispering"

- "lack of trust"

- "behind the back talking".

Theme 4: Feelings

The fourth theme identified in the analysis of focus group participant comments was feelings. Specific comments indicating the perception of negative feelings from participants in the focus group include:

- "My value as a teacher has never been this close to being destroyed"

- "I want to be treated fairly. I want to be happy again. I do much better and my confidence increases when I feel valued and not judged"

- "we need to be treated respectfully"

- "grudges"

- "negativity"

- "my way or the highway attitude"

- "lack of caring and respect"

- "anger"

- "resentment"

- "arrogant attitudes"

- "hurt feelings"

- "stubbornness"

- "fear of change and loss of control"

- "lack of forgiveness".

Theme 5: Staff Division

The fifth and final theme identified through the analysis of focus group comments was staff division. Comments indicating negative perceptions of participants include:

- "lack of respect for each other"

- "extreme judgment of and by others"

- "being bullied"

- "ganging up on administration"

- "union loyalty"

- "constant talking about problems and other staff"

- "closed door meetings, side A verses side B"

- "those who continue to ignore and not speak to colleagues"

- "we were placed into the 'positive' and 'not positive' groups by some staff"

- "they will not greet others when spoken to or only do so in a curt, mono-
  syllabic manner"

- "people in the halls avoiding eye contact and walking away"

- "isolation"

- "lack of understanding the viewpoint of others"

- "excluding on purpose"

- "the division of staff on the issue: either for or against"

- "staff posturing"

- "dividing of colleagues".

Multiple comments from interview participants from a variety of roles at Upper Midwest Middle School addressed perceived problems that precipitated principal leadership change at Upper Midwest Middle School at the end of the 2008-2009 school year. Examples of participant comments describing their perceptions include:

- "They (the principals) were goal oriented and they had a vision, but their delivery of what their expectations were was poor. They had a difficult time communicating it without coming across as arrogant or inflexible."

- "The principal was very top-down, very much 'I've got my way to do things and this is the way we're going to do it.'"

- "The previous administration came in and tried to bulldoze their way through."

- "The principals were dysfunctional and we needed to do something for the good of the community and the good of the kids."

- "His style was 'it's my idea and this is how it is going.'"

- "I believe that the principal probably didn't handle the staff very well as far as how he was going about the change. It was more of a dictatorship than viewing it as teamwork."

- "I don't think they built enough relationships with staff before making the changes that they wanted to see occur."

- "I think people were in shock because everything had changed so drastically in such a short period of time."

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- "They (teachers and staff) felt threatened. They felt unsupported. They felt undermined or like they were part of an organization that wasn't as professional as they thought it should be."

- "People felt undervalued or looked over. Their skills, for people who had been here before and were maybe used to being the 'go to' people and were respected, were now with new administration who didn't know them, didn't recognize their strengths, and were pointing out weaknesses. It didn't sit well."

- "Competencies were questioned."

- "There was a lot of mistrust going back and forth between principals and teachers."

- "They would try to micromanage a classroom and tell people who had taught for many years that they weren't handling students right, that they were not disciplining them right."

- "People were in tears because if you gave any indication whatsoever that you agreed with anything the principals were doing, you were ostracized. You were bullied."

- "There were some bully type teachers here at the time that would make people feel like you couldn't argue with them or disagree with them."

- "There were teachers who felt like their rights were being violated. They had no respect for how long they had been teaching or what they knew. It was 'my way or the highway' and teachers were immediately identifying that this was not right. This began the very first weeks of school."

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- "There were over 3,000 discipline referrals."

- "The assistant principal was always taking the side of the students and was never supportive of teachers."

- "Kids weren't afraid of getting into trouble because there were no consequences."

- "Discipline was very lax. It was more of 'let's just have a little talk here about how this shouldn't happen anymore and then you go on about your day and have a good day. There wasn't a definite consequence."

- "They (students) just didn't care what they did. There was just a total lack of respect and there wasn't enough discipline."

- "Believe it or not, one of the biggest issues for this school was gum chewing. The teachers wanted that handled by the assistant principal and the assistant principal wanted that to be taken care of inside the classroom. That was huge! The teachers were not happy about that and that is how petty it got. We really had a tough time getting off from those types of things and on to more significant, more important issues that year."

- "There were major difficulties within the building. It has split the staff and it had split the community."

- "The pole of support and the pole of opposition kept driving farther and farther and getting more and more entrenched."

- "Everywhere it seemed there was bickering. People were talking all the time, groups of three or four and you could just tell it was negative. It was like that

everywhere: outside classrooms, in the teachers' lounge, there would be teachers meeting in classrooms after school."

- "Most of the teachers were united in trying to work together to remove the principals."

- "Morale was terrible!"

- "We had people coming to work literally in tears when they were in their classrooms. We had people really pulled apart in different ways."

- The school climate was not good! Very tense! Very tense, there is just no other word to describe it. Very tense and very unfriendly!"

- "Walking down the hallway you would come across little pockets of teachers gathered and when you came up close to them, they would quit talking."

- "Because the students weren't being held accountable, they really weren't too concerned about getting things done, so they didn't strive to do better…they didn't work to try to achieve their best."

- "I don't believe student achievement was a focus when teachers were so wrapped up in trying to get rid of the administration. I have a hard time believing that there would have been time or energy to focus on student achievement. With everything else that was trying to be achieved, student achievement didn't appear to be the focus."

Historical AYP data for Upper Midwest Middle School was the third source of triangulated data utilized to describe the perceived problems that precipitated principal leadership change at the end of the 2008-2009 school year. For the 2008 AYP year which correlates with the 2008-2009 school year, Upper Midwest Middle School student

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proficiency rates were below the state targets for both reading and math scores. Although

the school failed to make AYP during the 2006 and 2007 AYP years due to not reaching

state targets for reading proficiency, the 2008 AYP year was the only year in which the

school failed to meet targets in both academic areas (Minnesota Department of

Education, 2011a; Minnesota Department of Education, 2004).

Based upon the triangulation of these three sources of research data, it is

concluded that there were multiple perceived problems at Upper Midwest Middle School

that precipitated principal leadership at the end of the 2008-2009 school year. Not only

did system participants describe a dysfunctional and "toxic" school culture, but both

participant perceptions and AYP data indicate students were not achieving at targeted

levels in academics or behaviors.

2. To what extent has the change in principal leadership at Upper Midwest

Middle School impacted the perception of the school's culture since the 2009-2010

school year?   In order to answer research question two, triangulation of data from open-

ended interviews of different participants from various roles at Upper Midwest Middle

School was utilized. This comparison of comments between participants from various

roles within the system assists to ensure both validity and reliability of results.

As data was collected and analysis progressed, it became apparent that the change

that occurred at Upper Midwest Middle School included not only the transition between

the principal leadership from the 2008-2009 school year to present, but also the principal

leadership prior to the 2008-2009 school year. As a result, data was analyzed and

evaluated according to principal leadership tenure in three categories: principal leadership

prior to 2008, principal leadership during 2008-2009, and principal leadership 2009 to

present (Table 6). Additionally, seven themes were identified through analysis of data:

vision, power, change, relationships, student discipline, school culture, and student

achievement.

Table 6. Comparison of Themes by Principal Leadership Tenure.

	Principal Leadership Prior to 2008	Principal Leadership 2008-2009	Principal Leadership 2009-Present
Theme 1: Vision	Lacked Vision (-)	Strong Vision, but Unable to Achieve It (+/-)	Strong Vision (+)
Theme 2: Power	Teachers had Power (+/-)	Most Teachers had No Power (-)	All Teachers are Empowered (+)
Theme 3: Change	No Change (-)	Quick but Ineffective Change (-)	Slow and Effective Change (+)
Theme 4: Relationships	Teachers/Principals were Peers/Friends (+)	Negative Relationships/ Staff Division (-)	Positive Relationships/Staff Unity (+)
Theme 5: Student Discipline	Strong Discipline (-)	Weak/Inconsistent/ Ineffective Discipline (-)	Fair/Consistent/Effective Discipline (+)
Theme 6: School Culture	Positive for Staff/Negative for Stakeholders (+/-)	Negative for Staff/Neutral for Stakeholders (-, +/-)	Positive for Staff/Positive for Stakeholders (+)
Theme 7: Student Achievement	Unsuccessful (-)	Unsuccessful (-)	Successful (+)

Key: (-) = negative impact, (+/-) = neutral impact, (+) = positive impact

Each of the seven themes was then described for the three principal tenure periods

through the use of participant comments from interview sessions (Appendices G-M). A

comparison of participant responses provided for validation of the data.

Analysis of Open-ended Interview Themes

Theme 1: Vision

The school vision was described by a variety of participants for each principal

leadership tenure period at UMMS. Descriptions indicate there was no identified vision

from the principal leadership prior to 2008. One participant described the lack of vision

during this time period:

> We had been sort of an ingrown system in regard to our principalship for a
> number of years at that facility. We hired principals who had been assistant
> principals for several generations. So we got people who were trained in what we
> had and so we continued to have the same style. We had seen little growth there.

Various participants indicated the principal leadership during the 2008-2009

school year had a vision; however, due to personal barriers, that leadership team was

unable to create staff buy-in and were unsuccessful in facilitating the pursuit of their

vision. One participant described it, "They were goal oriented and they had a vision, but

their delivery of what their expectations were was poor. They had a difficult time

communicating it without coming across as arrogant or inflexible".

Participant perceptions of the vision of the principal leadership team since 2009

indicated that it is strong. According to one participant, "They have a vision and we were

able to accomplish things that were in that vision and that built confidence in our team

that we are going to move forward".

Another participant indicated, "They focus on continuous improvement and

making it the best it can be".

Theme 2: Power

Power was the second theme identified during the analysis of data through the theoretical coding process. The concept of power was described quite differently by participants in regard to the three principal leadership tenures at UMMS.

Participants indicated the teachers had a significant amount of power prior to 2008. According to one description, "I saw a lot of issues with more or less the principal asking teaching staff if it was ok to do certain things. So what I was seeing is that the actual teaching staff was pretty much calling the shots as to how the middle school was being handled".

According to participants, power was shared by only a few individuals during the 2008-2009 tenure period. "The principal was very top-down, very much 'I've got my way to do things and this is the way we're going to do it'".

Another participant indicated there was a small group of teachers who were given power during the 2008-2009 tenure. "There was a handful of five to six very die hard supporters (of the principals) who were sort of given power. They were considered the faculty leaders of academics. And then there was everyone else who was sort of entrenched and felt put upon and not listed to".

Participants consistently described power as being shared and teachers being empowered at UMMS under the principal leadership since 2009. One participant indicated:

> Our principal has enabled the staff to be in the position to drive the change. In fact, all of our committees, our climate committee, our literacy team, our technology team, our crisis team, those didn't exist. Those are all new. And in a very non-confrontational way, at the end of the current administration's first year, they said, "These will be the teams. Please choose one of them that you would like to be on". So essentially, what they were saying was everyone needs to be on

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a team and everyone needs to sign up, and that was good. So now everyone is involved in something in the building, so you're not just sitting and you're part of something. You're not on the sidelines. If you're criticizing or saying you want change, or if you have good ideas, then you could join that team.

Another participant described the current distribution of power in this way:

This administration handles people very well. They kind of put the responsibility back on the staff. They will help them in any way they can. They've got certain goals they know need to be reached and then they handle it in a way where they say, "This is what needs to happen. You let us know how we can help you achieve that". And so, they empower the staff.

Theme 3: Change

Change was the third theme identified through the theoretical coding process during the analysis of qualitative interview data. One participant indicated there was very little change at UMMS that occurred during the principal leadership tenure prior to 2008. "We got people who were trained in what we had, so we continued to have the same style. We had seen little to no growth there".

Participants described very quick, but ineffective change during the principal leadership tenure of 2008-2009. One participant described change during that time, "I think people were in shock because everything had changed so drastically in such a short period of time".

Another participant described change during 2008-2009, "This building needed change, but it didn't need it as drastic and as fast, without understanding the political ramifications that they were forcing onto the culture of the school and the culture of the community, and the organization".

Various participants described change as much more productive under the principal leadership since 2009. One participant described change during this timeframe:

I think our current leadership did a good job of just observing and building relationships before they implemented any new or big changes. I think that they came in with some big things that had to be changed, but they kind of coasted on that for a while, so they did a good job of listening and learning about the environment and checking things out before they moved forward with anything new.

Another participant described change at UMMS since 2009:

You've got to get buy-in. The way to get buy-in is to find staff members who believe in some of the core values and believe that we need to work with kids and we need to get them to a high achieving level. With that, little by little, you get momentum as a staff and make positive changes.

A third participant explained change under the current principal leadership team, "The current administration put people in the position to be part of the change and to use their strengths and to contribute what they can. Buy-in has been huge".

Theme 4: Relationships

The fourth theme identified in the analysis of interview data was relationships. Relationships between principals, teachers, and staff were reported to be very positive throughout the tenure of principal leadership prior to 2008. One participant explained, "The principals were teachers in the same building at some point and therefore, co-workers and friends of the staff they were supervising".

Another participant indicated, "They all got along. They were more or less like one happy family".

Various conflicting relationships were described by participants about the 2008-2009 principal leadership tenure. These included not only conflicts between the principals and staff, but also conflicts between teachers.

One participant described the conflict between the principals and teachers, "They would try to micromanage a classroom and tell people who had taught for many years that they weren't handling the students right, that they were not disciplining them right".

Another participant explained:

There were teachers who felt like their rights were being violated. They had no respect for how long they had been teaching or what they knew. It was "my way or the highway" and teachers were immediately identifying that this was not right. This began the very first weeks of school.

Not only was conflict described between administration and staff during 2008-2009, but there was significant conflict described as a result of teacher relationships during that timeframe. "People were in tears because if you gave any indication whatsoever that you agreed with anything the principals were doing, you were ostracized. You were bullied," explained one participant.

Another participant described, "There were some bully type teachers here at the time that would make people feel like you couldn't argue with them or disagree with them".

Participants described relationships very differently under the principal leadership since 2009. One description of current relationships at UMMS is:

Our principals have been very, very open that they trust us to be able to get our work done. They don't have to watch over us. They told us, "You guys are professionals. We know that you are going to get your work done and we don't have to watch you". I think that was a key right from the start. They put us back in charge of our classrooms.

A second participant indicated that teachers and administration under the principal leadership since 2009 "treat everyone fairly and respectfully and professionally".

Another participant described current relationships at UMMS:

What I've found is after you've built some relationships with staff, they realize that you have no intention of undermining what's going on or I guess driving something that they're not supportive of. It seems like just spending time, just having discussions with people, all the pieces seem to line themselves up.

Theme 5: Student Discipline

Student discipline was a theme that several participants made very passionate statements about and one that was identified a key issue throughout the three principal leadership tenures. Descriptions of student discipline indicate the styles utilized by principal leadership teams varied significantly.

Very strict and punitive student discipline was described for principal leadership prior to 2008 at UMMS. "The teachers pretty much dictated what the assistant principal would do. If they had an issue in their classroom, they pretty much told him how to handle it and he would do what they wanted," is the description of one participant.

Another indicated, "It was sort of an autocratic place where the assistant principal pounds heads".

Other participants indicated gum chewing was not allowed and tardiness was dealt with harshly during that timeframe which resulted in significant conflict during the 2008-2009 principal leadership tenure where disciplinary style was very different. One participant explained:

> Believe it or not, one of the biggest issues for this school was gum chewing. The teachers wanted that handled by the assistant principal and the assistant principal wanted that to be taken care of inside the classroom. That was huge! The teachers were not happy about that and that is how petty it got. We really had a tough time getting off from those types of things and on to more significant, more important issues that year.

Other participants perceived that student discipline was very minimal during the 2008-2009 timeframe. One participant explained, "Discipline was very lax. It was more

of 'let's just have a little talk here about how this shouldn't happen anymore and then you go on about your day and have a good day'. There wasn't a definite consequence".

Another participant explained his experiences during that time:

There were times when I sent kids down to be suspended for doing something wrong in my class and I would get, "We talked to the student and the student says he's sorry, so we're not going to do that". So if you asked them to do something, you could never get anyone to stand and say, "Yep, we're going to do this! This is what you would like, boom!" It was always, "Well, we're working on it and you can't always do that".

Participants described a very different style in regard to student discipline since the principal leadership change in 2009. One participant explained:

If you tell a student he or she is going to the office or this is going to be a behavior referral, they sit up and think about it. In the same sense, I've seen the same kids who are your frequent fliers if you will, when they are doing well, they seek out the assistant principal and they let him know because he calls it like it is and when they do well, he is the first one to be all over them and acknowledge that success. I think they see that honesty and that they don't perceive that he's always nice, but if they step out of line, he's going to call them on it and when they do well, he's going to acknowledge that too.

Another participant explained, "There were over 3,000 discipline referrals per year before. We will probably end this year well under 2,000 discipline referrals, so to me, that's hardcore data. The student numbers have not dropped, but discipline referrals have significantly decreased."

One participant described the disciplinary style of the current assistant principal,

Our current assistant principal has quite a bit of experience in that position. I think he's pretty much by the book as far as one violation, a write-up warning and progressing, but he's willing to change if he believes there are extenuating circumstances. I think he's really confident in his decision making and it's pretty evident whether it is parents, staff, or students and so I think he has a lot more tools in his tool belt to work from. I think the teachers support him as well.

Theme 6: School Culture

The sixth theme identified through the theoretical coding process was school culture. Participants report significant differences in the school culture, especially during the tenure of the principal leadership at UMMS during 2008-2009.

According to participant comments, the school culture at UMMS prior to 2008 was perceived negatively from external stakeholders; however, staff from within the building perceived it very positively. One participant described the perception from external stakeholders, "The parents of the middle school had a negative opinion about it for a number of years".

Another research participant explained the school culture prior to 2008 in regard to internal stakeholders, "The climate was great! Senior staff, they had all been here for many years and they all got along. They were more or less like one happy family".

One participant described the school culture in regard to external stakeholder input at UMMS during the 2008-2009 school year, "I didn't get a lot of feedback from parents either positive or negative. They were relatively neutral."

All other descriptions of participant perceptions were very negative in regard to the school culture at UMMS during 2008-2009. One participant reported, "The school climate was not good! Very tense! Very Tense! There is just no other word to describe it! Very tense and very unfriendly!".

Another participant explained, "Everywhere it seemed there was bickering. People talking all the time, groups of three or four and you could just tell it was negative. It was like that everywhere: outside classrooms, in the teachers' lounge, there would be teachers meeting in classrooms after school".

One participant described his observations, "We had people coming to work literally in tears when they were in their classrooms. We had people really pulled apart in different ways".

One participant summarized the school culture at UMMS during 2008-2009, "There were major difficulties within the building. It had split the staff".

Research participants reported a significantly different school culture since the current principal leadership came to UMMS in 2009. One participant described the school culture from the perception of external stakeholders, "The last parent survey completed last fall indicated from the parents that took the survey that UMMS was the most welcoming school in the district and that's huge because it was never perceived that way in the past".

Another participant indicated, "We've had a total turnaround from what we were to where we are now. We now have a building where we have people who are happy to come here and enjoy coming to work. We have people who are willing to work together to help each other".

One participant explained, "This is a place where there's a lot of momentum, things are going really well. We have a great staff, a great administrative team, great board, and tremendous support from the community".

To summarize her perceptions of principal leadership and the changes that have occurred at UMMS, one participant explained:

> I am very, very happy that even though some of the things bothered me, I am very happy with where we are at and I would do it again if we could get the leadership we have now and to be where we are. I am glad that we have different leadership. They fit better and their strategies of making change are better and overall, it is much better now.

Theme 7: Student Achievement

Theme 7, Student Achievement, will be described in detail later in this summary as it specifically addresses research question 3.

Based upon the triangulation and theoretical analysis of open-ended interviews from participants with varying roles at Upper Midwest Middle School change in principal leadership has had significant positive effect upon the perception of the school's culture since the 2009-2010 school year. When comparing the principal leadership tenures that encompassed change within the system, three time periods were analyzed and compared: principal leadership prior to 2008, principal leadership during 2008-2009, and principal leadership since 2009. According to participant perceptions, the school culture at UMMS prior to 2008 was positive for staff, but negative for stakeholders. Their perceptions indicate school culture during the 2008-2009 school year was very negative for staff, but neutral for stakeholders. Finally, participant perceptions described a very positive school culture for both staff and stakeholders since the 2009-2010 school year.

3. To what extent has the change in principal leadership at Upper Midwest Middle School impacted student achievement as well as the perception of student success since the 2009-2010 school year?   In order to answer research question three, two sources of data were utilized: triangulation of data from open-ended interviews of different participants from various roles at Upper Midwest Middle School and historical AYP data for Upper Midwest Middle School. Based upon participant comments, a gap in original data was identified and subsequent data collection of annual AYP data was analyzed to validate responses (Table 5).

Student achievement was the seventh theme identified through the theoretical coding process during the analysis of open-ended qualitative interview data. According to participant comments, student achievement was not a focus during the principal leadership tenure at UMMS prior to 2008. One participant described, "I don't know that the principals really understood the whole picture as far as student achievement and being able to look at data and determining how things were going academically".

Another participant explained, "UMMS was sort of seen as the weak link in our whole k-12 system. We had good elementary schools. We had a high school that was high flying with big academics, and the middle school was sort of lost in la la land of early hormonal adolescence".

Although the principal leadership during 2008-2009 was concerned about student achievement, research participants reported there were barriers to student success during that time period. One participant explained, "Because the students weren't being held accountable, they really weren't too concerned about getting things done, so they didn't strive to do better…they didn't work to try to achieve their best".

Another participant described her perceptions of student achievement during 2008-2009 principal leadership tenure:

> I don't believe student achievement was a focus when teachers were so wrapped up in trying to get rid of the administration. I have a hard time believing that there would have been time or energy to focus on student achievement. With everything else that was trying to be achieved, student achievement didn't seem to be the focus.

According to each participant, student achievement has been a high priority at UMMS since the current leadership team began in 2009. One participant described this focus:

We now have the Reading and Math Academy, RAMA. Those classes have changed into a smaller load, smaller amount of kids, and also the philosophy in that classroom is that we are not just going to shove the same information down their throats. We are going to try different strategies, proven research strategies to teach literacy, math, and science and get that information to the kids with a new means of delivery.

Another participant explained, "We have done a significant amount of work on student achievement and have become a model for other schools".

One participant described the success UMMS students experienced who were enrolled in RAMA and had consistently failed to meet reading standards prior to that intervention:

With the students in RAMA, the literacy increases were significant on the MCA tests. Usually we hear that a 3% increase is significant. Of our fifth grade RAMA kids, we had an increase of 44% of those kids meeting or exceeding the state standards. In grade six we had a 20% increase, in grade seven an 18.9% increase, and in grade 8 we had an 8.83% increase.

Another participant concluded, "Our school was a school that was not making AYP. That has been turned around now in just a matter of a few short years. We've turned that around as one of the few schools in the district making AYP! Our at-risk populations are showing unbelievable gains".

Another participant summarized the current focus on student achievement, "It's all about students! I believe everything rotates around student achievement. One thing that I have found out working with the current administration is if there is ever a decision to be made the first question that is asked is 'How does this effect students?'".

Historical AYP data for Upper Midwest Middle School was the second source of triangulated data utilized to determine the extent that the change in principal leadership at Upper Midwest Middle School has impacted student achievement as well as the perception of student success since the 2009-2010 school year. Original implementation

of No Child Left Behind required states to increase their proportion of proficient students at a rate that allowed 100% of all students to be proficient by the school year 2013-2014. In order to comply with this requirement, the state adopted annual measureable targets for schools to meet in order make adequate yearly progress (AYP). Table 5 summarizes the AYP status of Upper Midwest Middle School between the 2004 and 2011 AYP years. According to the Minnesota Department of Education (2011a), Upper Midwest Middle School made AYP during AYP years 2004 and 2005, failed to make AYP during years 2006, 2007, and 2008, and then made AYP again in years 2009, 2010, and 2011. It is significant to note that although UMMS made AYP in years 2004 and 2005, proficiency targets for math and reading were significantly lower than student proficiency targets required to make AYP in subsequent years. For the 2008 AYP year which encompasses the 2008-2009 school year, Upper Midwest Middle School student proficiency rates were below the state targets for both reading and math scores. Although the school failed to make AYP during the 2006 and 2007 AYP years due to not reaching state targets for reading proficiency, the 2008 AYP year was the only year in which the school failed to meet targets in both academic areas. Historical AYP data for Upper Midwest Middle School indicates student achievement was highest during the 2009, 2010, and 2011 AYP years which directly correlates to the tenure of the current principal leadership team in the school. (Minnesota Department of Education, 2011a,; Minnesota Department of Education, 2004).

Based upon the triangulation and conceptual framework analysis of open-ended interviews from participants with varying roles at Upper Midwest Middle School and historical AYP data, change in principal leadership has had significant positive effect

upon student achievement as well as the perception of student success since the 2009-2010 school year. When comparing the principal leadership tenures that encompassed change within the system, three time periods were analyzed and compared: principal leadership prior to 2008, principal leadership during 2008-2009, and principal leadership since 2009. According to participant perceptions, student achievement at UMMS prior to 2008 and during the 2008-2009 school year was negatively impacted by principal leadership. Participants described positive perceptions of student achievement since the change in principal leadership at the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year. Additionally, participant perceptions in regard to student discipline, another indicator of student success, was negatively impacted by principal leadership during the leadership tenures prior to 2008 and during the 2008-2009 school year. Participant perceptions indicate student discipline has been positively impacted since the principal leadership change beginning with the 2009-2010 school year. Historical AYP data validates participant perceptions that the change in principal leadership at Upper Midwest Middle school positively impacted student achievement since the 2009-2010 school year.

<center>Description of the Next Chapter</center>

The study concludes in Chapter V. It includes a summary of the themes and issues from study results, discussion and conclusions, concluding thoughts, and recommendations for further research.

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CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to describe the perceived problems that precipitated principal leadership change at Upper Midwest Middle School and to describe the effects from the perspective of system participants. Using a case study approach, the research focused on the perceived effects of principal leadership change and its' impact on the perception of the school's culture and student success.

Data was triangulated from various sources to accomplish the goals of this research. First, pre-existing data was collected and analyzed from participant comments from focus groups facilitated by a consultant hired to conduct healing sessions with school staff in the spring of 2009. Second, eight confidential, open-ended interviews were conducted with participants from the system to include the superintendent, current principal, current assistant principal, and five teachers and/or staff members who were employed at Upper Midwest Middle School prior to and since the change in principal leadership that occurred in the fall of 2009. Data was validated through comments about the perceptions of various participants from various roles within the system. As a result of the researcher identifying a gap in data, historical AYP data for UMMS was subsequently collected and analyzed as a means to further validate participant perceptions. The summary of results in Chapter IV concluded by answering the following research questions:

1. What were the perceived problems at Upper Midwest Middle School that precipitated principal leadership change at the end of the 2008-2009 school year?

2. To what extent has the change in principal leadership at Upper Midwest Middle School impacted the perception of the school's culture since the 2009-2010 school year?

3. To what extent has the change in principal leadership at Upper Midwest Middle School impacted student achievement as well as the perception of student success since the 2009-2010 school year?

This chapter summarizes the key themes identified in the Chapter IV, discusses the main issues, and concludes with recommendations for further study.

Summary of Themes and Issues

The study of the perceived problems that precipitated principal leadership change at Upper Midwest Middle School and the effects from the perspective of system participants in regard to the impact of the change on the school's culture and student success raises a number of key issues to be considered for Upper Midwest School District and for administrators in the nation's schools who are struggling to meet the expectations of NCLB and must facilitate change. The themes identified from the analysis of open-ended interviews offer important frames to discuss the central issues of this study. These themes include:

1. Vision.

2. Power.

3. Change.

4. Relationships.

5. Student discipline.

6. School culture.

7. Student achievement.

Theme 1: Vision

Deming (1993) believes strongly that without a transformation of traditional methods, organizations including schools, will fail. He explained that one important job of an organizational leader is to facilitate change from traditional methods and the foundation upon which that can be done is through the creation of a vision. Multiple research studies and respected authorities support Deming's theory and have recognized the necessity of a strong vision for any school or organization to be successful during this age of accountability (DuFour & Eaker, 1992; Maxwell, 1998; Collins, 2001; Cotton, 2003; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Marzano et al., 2005; Senge, 2006; National School Climate Council, 2007; AdvancEd, 2010; Blanchard, 2010; Valentine & Prater). Murphy and Meyers (2008) completed research which explored the importance of a school's vision and concluded that one of the internal causes found in failing schools was a lack of a cohesive school vision. Research supports the necessity of a strong vision for a school to be successful in the 21st century.

Within the three principal leadership tenures identified through the analysis of open-ended qualitative interviews, three distinct differences in regard to vision were described by participants. Participant perceptions indicated UMMS principal leadership prior to 2008 lacked a vision. Leadership during the 2008-2009 school year had an identified vision; however, they were unable to implement it due to a variety of personal

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and professional barriers. According to participants, principal leadership since the 2009-2010 school year has demonstrated a strong vision.

Like many of the nation's schools struggling to make AYP during the early years of NCLB, Upper Midwest Middle School had principal leadership that was approaching retirement age, had completed graduate work in educational leadership years, and sometimes decades earlier, and were unfamiliar with leading change in the 21st century. The use of technology, newly accepted leadership practices, and the utilization of data to make decisions was not only foreign to many of them, but presented new challenges at a time in their professional careers when they were unwilling to embrace change. As a result of the significant obstacles to providing educational services during changing times and the public humiliation to those schools failing to meet increasing accountability standards, many of these aging educational leaders chose to retire rather than to lead change. A school vision was secondary to their goal of a peaceful retirement not only to the principal leadership team at UMMS prior to the 2008-2009 school year, but also to many of their counterparts across the nation.

The retirement of both members of a principal leadership team by the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year provided a unique opportunity to district administration for a new beginning at Upper Midwest Middle School, one of the district's schools that had a history of a negative image from community stakeholders and was struggling to meet the expectations of NCLB. Change was imminent and finding principal leadership with the vision to lead UMMS into the 21st century was imperative. According to participant perceptions, the leadership team that was hired that year possessed the necessary vision; however, they lacked the personal and professional skills to elicit staff buy-in of their

vision and to accomplish the goals necessary to achieve the vision. As a result, another year passed at UMMS where a strong vision and 21st century success eluded them.

Perceptions described by research participants indicate the principal leadership team that began at Upper Midwest Middle School during the 2009-2010 school year have a strong vision and have been able to facilitate staff buy-in and implement strategies to successfully achieve the vision. They have established goals and keep those goals in the forefront of the school's attention. The current leadership team has built the foundation upon which change from traditional methods can be made through their creation of a strong vision. According to participants, the vision of the current principal leadership team at UMMS has had a positive impact on the school's 21st century success.

Theme 2: Power

Significant research has been conducted in regard to the importance of the sharing of power and leadership between administration and subordinates in successful schools and organizations. Leithwood and Mascall (2008) studied the impact on student achievement when power is shared in a school through collective or shared leadership. Defined as a shift away from conventional, hierarchical patterns of leadership, collective or shared leadership is exemplified through the collaboration and decision-making of both teachers and administrative staff to coordinate work and resolve barriers. Results indicate that higher-achieving schools demonstrated a higher level of collective leadership than lower-achieving schools. Additionally, shared leadership was found to be important for school improvement efforts to be effective in research conducted by Louis, Dretzke, and Wahlstrom (2010). The dissemination of power through the use of shared leadership is also supported by various other researchers (Deming, 1993; Cotton, 2003;

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Kannapel & Clements, 2005; Marzano et al., 2005; Senge, 2006; AdvancEd, 2010; Blanchard, 2010).

Power was described quite differently by participants about the three principal leadership tenures identified in the research study. According to participant perceptions, teachers had a great deal of power during the principal leadership tenure prior to the 2008-2009 school year. Power to make decisions about firm student discipline and a master schedule that met teacher desires were the norm. In contrast, participants reported there was a very autocratic style of leadership during the 2008-2009 school year with the principal emulating an attitude of "it's my way or the highway" and multiple participant references in regard to micromanagement by the principal, thus defining his attempts to maintain the power within the school. The empowerment of teachers and staff to make important decisions within the school was described by participants about the issue of power under the principal leadership at UMMS since the 2009-2010 school year. Various teaching teams charged with the tasks to identify and continuously improve issues within the school were described as the current norm. According to participants, the empowerment of teachers to do their jobs and to make shared decisions under the current principal leadership has had a positive impact on UMMS while the allocation of power in both previous leadership tenures negatively impacted UMMS.

Theme 3: Change

Anthony Muhammad (2009) recognized that school improvement and change are imperative for schools in the 21st century in order to meet the requirements of No Child Left Behind and, most importantly, to maximize student success. Additionally, Marzano, et al.,(2005) indicated that when implemented correctly through a systematic process,

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principal leaders are able to facilitate change that results in second-order change altering

the system in fundamental ways and enabling long-term success in 21st century schools.

Change is a constant that various researchers and practitioners have indicated

effective leaders have a responsibility to facilitate and manage in a manner that results in

staff buy-in and the optimization of organizational success (Deming, 1993; Collins, 2001;

Cotton, 2003; Marzano et al., 2005; McEwan, 2005; Senge, 2006; Spiro, 2009;

Muhammad, 2009; Blanchard, 2010). Failure to effectively facilitate and manage change

results in failed organizations and schools that are unable to optimize student success.

Change is the third theme identified through the analysis of open-ended interview

responses. Participant perception in regard to change varied significantly between the

principal leadership tenure periods at Upper Midwest Middle School.

Plagued by generations of principals who were promoted from within the ranks of

assistant principals in the same school prior to the 2008-2009 school year, UMMS

experienced leadership with very similar traditional styles and skills for many years.

Research participants reported little growth and no change during that time period.

According to participant perceptions, change was a high priority for district

administration and the principal leadership at UMMS during the 2008-2009 school year.

However, there were significant barriers that prevented successful change that year.

First, participants indicated that many of the teachers at UMMS had been friends

and co-workers with the previous administration. In that environment, teachers had

power, were free to discipline students in a firm manner, ran their classrooms as they

chose to do so, and for the most part, perceived UMMS as a good place to work where

they were a big, happy family. Many of the teachers had experienced success in the

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traditional school culture, resented any attempts to change the culture, and were strongly committed to preserving the status quo. According to participant descriptions, UMMS had many teachers within its ranks that Anthony Muhammad would identify as "Fundamentalists" (2009) and these teachers led the charge to get rid of the new administration that was attempting to facilitate drastic change.

The other significant barrier to change identified by participants was their perception that the principal leadership team during 2008-2009 lacked the personal and professional skills to obtain staff buy-in and effectively implement change at UMMS. Participants described incidents where the principal leadership was unwilling to listen to others, made decisions without input, micromanaged classrooms, attempted to make changes at a quick pace, and demonstrated an autocratic leadership style. According to participants, these behaviors created animosity among the teaching ranks and intensified their resistance to any proposed change from the principal leadership team. As a result of these significant barriers, participants shared their perceptions that staff did not buy-in to the change initiatives attempted by the principal leadership team during 2008-2009 at UMMS resulting in failure within the system.

Participants described a drastically different change environment under the current principal leadership team at UMMS. First, participants described the importance of the principal leadership team observing and building relationships during their first year in 2009-2010 which was perceived very positively after the dysfunction participants experienced the previous year. The "toxicity" of the school's culture during the 2008-2009 school year likely eased the pressure on the current principal leadership during their first year as participants reported being so happy that they had "gotten rid of the previous

principals" that anyone would be better than the old principals. The utilization of a strong

vision, a structured and slow change process, obtaining staff buy-in, a focus on

continuous improvement, and putting teachers in key positions to be part of the change

were all behaviors described by participants to explain their perceptions that the current

principal leadership team is very effective in facilitating second-order change at UMMS.

Theme 4: Relationships

Building and maintaining healthy relationships within the school community is

central to overall success and impacts every facet of the system. The skills and abilities to

build and maintain effective relationships have a significant impact upon the

effectiveness of school leaders and the overall success of the school (Burns, 1978;

DuFour & Eaker, 1992; Maxwell, 1998; Greenleaf, 2002; Knapp et al., 2003; Leithwood

& Riehl, 2003; Marzano et al., 2005; Blanchard, 2010; Maxwell, 2011; Valentine &

Prater, 2011). According to Maxwell (1998), effective leaders must master the skills to

invest and inspire people, build a team that produces and achieves results, helps people to

develop their own leadership skills, and ultimately, extend their influence beyond their

immediate reach and time for the benefit of others.

Significant research has been completed and theories have been developed to

support the importance of relationships in the facilitation of change (Deming, 1993;

McEwan, 2005; Senge, 2006; Fullan, 2008; Muhammad, 2009; Spiro, 2009). Fullan's

(2008) research and subsequent change theory indicates that investing in employees is a

strategy that can result in customer appreciation and profitability. Fullan recommended

that leaders enable employees to continuously learn, find meaning in their work, find

meaning in their relationship to coworkers, and find meaning in the company as a whole.

There were similarities in participant perceptions of relationships during the principal leadership tenures prior to 2008 and with the current principal leadership at UMMS; however, relationships during the 2008-2009 school year were perceived drastically different by research participants. According to participant perceptions, the principals and teachers demonstrated friendly and supportive relationships prior to the 2008-2009 school year. The principals had previously been teachers within the same building, thus were co-workers and friends with many of the staff. They had similar belief systems in regard to issues such as student discipline and the status quo worked quite well. Comparatively speaking, although the current principals did not work in the school prior to their hire at the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year, multiple participants indicated the current principal leadership has positive relationships, took time to build healthy relationships, support teachers, and demonstrate trust among the teaching staff, thus strengthening their relationships with subordinates. Additionally, participant comments indicate that teaching staff is willing to work with one another and generally have positive relationships within the teaching ranks since the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year.

In significant contrast, participant perceptions paint a very negative picture in regard to relationships at UMMS during the 2008-2009 school year where participants describe not only substantial conflict between the principals and staff, but also within the teaching ranks. Participants describe perceptions of feeling threatened, unsupported, undervalued, undermined, and disrespected by the principal leadership during 2008-2009. Additionally, descriptions of significant staff division, bullying, tears, and multiple acts of disrespect were described by participants in regard to the manner in which teachers

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treated each other during the time. Overall, relationships were perceived to have a positive impact on UMMS during the principal leadership tenures prior to and after the 2008-2009 school year, but a significantly negative impact on the school during the 2008-2009 school year.

Theme 5: Student Discipline

No one would question that order, as opposed to chaos, is good for a school. One important component to providing an orderly school environment is the concept of student discipline. Providing and reinforcing clear and consistent rules and expectations for students behaviors provide them structure in which academic success and emotional growth can be facilitated (Marzano et al., 2005).

Student discipline was the fifth theme identified through the analysis of open-ended interview responses. Participant perception in regard to student discipline varied significantly between the principal leadership tenure periods at Upper Midwest Middle School and strong feelings in regard to this theme was perceived by participants.

Participant perception of student discipline prior to the 2008-2009 school year was the students towed the line. There were strict, very traditional rules in regard to student behaviors and issues such as chewing gum and tardiness were described as being dealt with by the principal leadership in a harsh and punitive manner. Teachers did not tolerate misbehavior and would send students to the assistant principal for quick and effective discipline. Participants perceived that teachers had a great deal of input in regard to the disciplinary action handed down to students and students generally responded to correction.

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The firm, traditional manner in which the principal leadership administered

student discipline prior to the 2008-2009 school year likely intensified problems that

occurred during the 2008-2009 school year where the assistant principal lacked

experience and also dealt with student discipline in a drastically different manner than his

predecessors. Participant perception was student discipline was extremely lax during the

2008-2009 school year where discipline referrals rose significantly, the assistant principal

dealt with most issues by talking with students rather than supporting the

recommendations of the referring teacher, and the assistant principal's perception of

important issues conflicted with those of most of the teaching staff who possessed

Fundamentalist views (Muhammad, 2009) in regard to behavioral expectations for

students. Participants described perceptions of student disrespect, chaos, and lack of

support for teachers.

Participants reported an overall positive perception to student discipline under the

current principal leadership at UMMS. Descriptions of the assistant principal's

experience and skills working with students, having clear expectations with consistent

follow-up, and general support of teachers in regard to student discipline were common.

Participants perceived that discipline referrals have reduced significantly under the

current principal leadership and that student disruptions from class have been minimized.

Overall, participant perceptions were student discipline was handled in a manner that had

a positive impact on UMMS prior to and after the 2008-2009 school year, while it had a

significantly negative impact during the 2008-2009 school year and was likely a primary

catalyst to much of the turmoil experienced during that year.

Theme 6: School Culture

Considerable research has been conducted linking school culture or climate to student academic performance. Most research concludes that a positive school culture is an essential element of student success (Brookover et al., 1977; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Center for Social and Emotional Education, 2010). Roney, Coleman, and Schlichting (2007) studied the relationship between the organizational health or school culture of five middle schools and student reading achievement. Three specific factors were identified as being key in the climate of those schools: teacher affiliation, academic emphasis, and collegial leadership. Healthy schools were recognized by positive behaviors among teachers and students, a focus on academic goals and student achievement, as well as principal leadership that is guided by supportive, transparent, and fair practices. The researchers found that when these three elements were present in middle schools, it had a positive correlation with student academic success.

School culture was the sixth theme identified through the data obtained during open-ended interviews. Again, significantly different perceptions were reported from participants in regard to the school culture at UMMS during the three principal leadership tenure periods.

Participant perception in regard to the school culture during the principal leadership at UMMS prior to the 2008-2009 school year indicated that community stakeholders perceived the school in a negative light and that it was not a good facility. One participant indicated the district experienced multiple out-of-district students enrolling in the district's elementary and high schools, but during the middle school years, those same students enrolled elsewhere. Contrary to this negative perception of the

school's culture from community stakeholders, participants' perception that the culture from the teaching staff was very positive and "they were more or less one happy family".

Participant perceptions of the school culture during the 2008-2009 school year were very negative in regard to internal stakeholders, but neutral from community stakeholders. Staff division, significant internal conflict between the principal leadership and staff, teachers in tears, bullying, and the overall description that the school climate was very negative and tense during this time was described by every participant affiliated with the school during that year. In contrast, one participant reported there was neutral feedback from community stakeholders during that year in regard to the school's culture.

Participants reported very positive perceptions about the culture at UMMS under the current principal leadership team. Participants described a friendly, positive, environment where leadership and staff work collaboratively and focus on student success. Positive momentum, pride, teamwork, and the description of a total turnaround from the culture at UMMS during 2008-2009 were described. Comments were also positive in regard to both the culture from the perspective of external stakeholders where a recent parent survey was referenced indicating UMMS was the most welcoming school in the district. Overall, participant perceptions were the school culture positively impacted internal stakeholders and negatively impacted external stakeholders at UMMS prior to the 2008-2009 school year. The culture negatively impacted internal stakeholders and had a neutral impact for external stakeholders during the 2008-2009 school year. Participant perceptions indicated the school culture has a positive impact on all stakeholders under the current principal leadership.

Theme 7: Student Achievement

Research conducted recently as well as meta-analysis of multiple research studies support that school leadership influences student achievement (Cotton, 2003; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Marzano, 2005; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2010; Valentine & Prater, 2011). Valentine and Prater (2011) studied the relationship between principal leadership and student achievement in 131 high schools in Missouri where the principal had served as head principal for three or more years. Nine effective principal leadership variables were identified as being significant to student achievement and include: instructional improvement, curricular improvement, developing a vision, modeling, fostering group goals, providing stimulation, high expectations, and implementing interactive processes.

The seventh theme identified through data analysis of open-ended interviews is student achievement. Participant perceptions indicate there was significant difference in regard to student achievement during the three principal leadership tenure periods at UMMS.

Multiple participant perceptions indicated student achievement was not a focus during the principal leadership tenure prior to the 2008-2009 school year. Participants described UMMS as being a weak link within the school district, that students did not understand the importance of statewide testing, and that it did not appear that the principal leadership during that timeframe understood the relationship between the use of data and the academic achievement of students. Based upon these perceptions, it appears that the principal leadership at UMMS prior to the 2008-2009 school year demonstrated

traditional thinking and skills which typically conflict with a school's focus on student achievement.

Participants describe a toxic school environment that undermined student achievement during the 2008-2009 school year. Perceptions indicate student behaviors had regressed significantly, students were not striving to do their best academically, and there was so much chaos among the adults within the building that the focus of the school was on internal conflicts, rather than on student achievement.

According to participant perceptions, student achievement is the focus of UMMS under the current principal leadership. Participants report that safety nets have been put into place for struggling students, interventions have been implemented that are based upon research-based best practices, the proficiency levels of at-risk populations have increased dramatically, and AYP has been achieved for the last three, consecutive years. Overall, participant perceptions are student achievement was not a focus at UMMS prior to and during the 2008-2009 school year and it is the primary focus under the current principal leadership which has positively impacted the school and students.

<div align="center">Discussion and Conclusions</div>

When I draw final conclusions on this study from the perspective of objective researcher I would like to stress that I am an experienced educator and leader who entered this research setting after the change process that I studied had occurred. Additionally, my professional experiences have included employment within a variety of education and social service agencies in both the private and public sectors where the systems' cultures were oftentimes highlighted through their mission statements and

practices, thus giving me a unique perspective in which to better understand the culture of Upper Midwest Middle School.

Teachers in Upper Midwest School District had not yet settled the labor contract when I began working there during the fall 2010 and underlying tension in regard to that issue was apparent. It was dealt with by teachers and building principals in a professional manner that I did not perceive to negatively impact the school's climate nor student success. Since I had been part of teacher and support staff negotiations in a previous administrative role that were contentious, I was relieved that the continuing negotiation process in one of the few districts within the state that were working without a contract and had not yet settled a new contract remained respectful within the work environment.

As a former administrator and current graduate student in educational leadership, I had a unique perspective in which to informally assess my new school upon arrival. I recognized multiple research based strategies being implemented at UMMS to facilitate student success. All teachers were empowered to make decisions as members of multiple teams in which we worked, as well as through various building level assignments. I saw district-wide strategic initiatives being implemented for 21st century learning and I observed my principal and assistant principal consistently demonstrating knowledge and skills that I was aware have a direct correlation with effectiveness, school success, and most important, student achievement. There were not even subtle indicators to me during my first year of employment that UMMS had recently transformed from a dysfunctional, "toxic" climate that were later described to me in detail by participants in this research study.

I was quite surprised when I met with the principal and assistant principal of Upper Midwest Middle School on September 30, 2011 and they described their perception of the turmoil that had occurred in the school three years prior. The more they explained what had been shared with them and described their own experiences during their first year in 2009-2010, it became apparent to me that the change that had occurred at UMMS was indeed unique and was worthy of in-depth study. This study became especially intriguing to me because of my objective observations from my first year of employment within this school where I had concluded that it was a very healthy and progressive environment for both students and staff.

My initial perception when I began this research study was the principal change I would be studying at UMMS began in the 2008-2009 school year. As I interviewed more and more participants, it became clear that change at UMMS started prior to the 2008-2009 school year and there were three, distinct, principal tenure periods upon which I would be studying. When I began to evaluate data from this alternative framework the picture of the change in principal leadership and its' impact on the school's culture and student success became much clearer.

Although given different names by researchers, each of the seven themes identified in this study through the analysis of open-ended interviews has been recognized in numerous research studies (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Augustine et al., 2009; Branch et al., 2009; Leithwood et al., 2010; Louis et al., 2010; Wallace Foundation, 2010; Valentine & Prater, 2011) and the meta-analysis of multiple studies (Cotton, 2003; Marzano et al., 2005) as a characteristic of principal leadership that positively impacts school culture and/or student achievement. In

considering results of the current study, participant perceptions on the impact that each of

these themes had on UMMS during the change that occurred during the three principal

leadership tenure periods identified is significant. Participants perceived positive impact

on UMMS by one theme, neutral impact by two themes, and negative impact by four of

the identified themes during the principal leadership tenure prior to the 2008-2009 school

year. Neutral impact on UMMS was identified by two themes and negative impact by

five of the identified themes by participant perceptions during the 2008-2009 school year.

It is significant to note that participants perceived positive impact on UMMS by all seven

themes during the current principal leadership tenure. It is concluded that participants

perceived significant change resulting in a positive turnaround in both school culture and

student success defined by both student achievement and student behaviors as a result of

principal leadership at UMMS during the timeframe studied. It is also important to note

that the themes identified as important by study participants directly correlate with

principal behaviors identified in multiple research studies to positively impact school

culture and student achievement.

Finally, it is important to note in the conclusions that this case study did not result

in theory development nor expansion. It does; however, confirm best practices research in

regard to organizational change and the effects of principal leadership on school culture

and student success.

Senge's Learning Organizations Theory

Although this research study focused on change from the perceptions of system

participants and did not focus on a specific theoretical framework from which system

leaders were attempting to facilitate change, this researcher chose to compare and

contrast observations in regard to change identified in this study with Senge's change theory of learning organizations (2006) that focuses on systems thinking as the significant, second order change that has occurred at UMMS in such a short period of time is only possible through the use of a systems approach. This theory was chosen as it appears that many of the methods utilized to facilitate change under the current principal leadership at UMMS obtained some level of success as a result of calculated efforts from the principal leadership and shared leadership teams utilizing a systems approach to correct identified barriers within the school.

Senge's first of five components is his theory of learning organizations is personal mastery where organizational leaders support the personal development and fulfillment of all employees. According to Senge (2006), this component is developed when a personal vision is clearly developed for individuals and it becomes a roadmap to guide employees to reach their ideal state within their current reality. At this stage, individuals become committed to seeking the truth where biases, assumptions, and perceptions are critically explored. Senge, indicated that organizations can role model a culture that values honesty, challenges the status quo, and compares the vision with the current reality. He recommends the use of evaluations to identify long-term employee goals, and the use of data to promote a clear picture of the current reality to create a culture ripe for individuals to engage.

Participant descriptions of the culture created under the current principal leadership at UMMS confirm the existence of personal mastery. Participants described a commitment to continuous improvement, trust, the utilization of data to make decisions, and research based strategies being implemented to facilitate change and student success.

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Additionally, although not highlighted in the study themes, during his interview the current principal described a practice of a principal meeting with each teacher to facilitate the development of professional goals for that teacher. All of these descriptions support the existence of personal mastery and promote a culture ripe for individuals to engage.

The second component of Senge's theory of learning organizations (2006), mental models, are the assumptions and beliefs that individuals hold about concepts or events that impact behavior and shape the organizational perception of reality. Mental models that conflict with organizational goals or are inconsistent with reality become barriers to organizational success. Leaders can develop processes that encourage the challenging of mental models, resulting in critical analysis and exploration of new ways of thinking and new ways of doing things.

Direct evidence of the concept of mental models was not obtained during this research study. However, multiple references were made from participants indicating that various teams where leadership is shared within the school have been implemented since the tenure of the current principal leadership team. Additionally, participants described the AYP team where research-based strategies have been identified and plans have been developed for their implementation. It is suspected by this researcher that "learningful" conversations occur within various collaborative team meetings at UMMS and it is recommended that this variable be explored further in this setting to either confirm the existence or non-existence of mental models.

Developing a shared vision is the third component of Senge's theory of learning organizations which is critical for effective change to occur. According to Senge (2006), an organization having a shared vision acts as a positive force for change whereby

employees who participate in its creation are able to buy-in to the vision and increase

their commitment to it. Organizational leaders are able to gain momentum in regard to

employee commitment to the vision by recognizing those staff members who are

committed to the vision and appointing them to key positions of shared leadership while

also developing key strategies to communicate and reinforce the vision with those staff

members who may be demonstrating apathy or resistance.

Multiple examples of developing a shared vision were evident in participant

perceptions since the tenure of the current principal leadership at UMMS. References to

the vision, staff buy-in, appointing staff to key positions of shared leadership, and an

overall pride in the success of the school in working toward the achievement of the vision

were made by all interview participants.

Team learning, the fourth component of Senge's theory, is the process of groups

of employees working together to create the desired results. According to Senge (2006),

most decisions made by organizations are made by teams, thus groups that are able to

effectively function, align their efforts toward the shared vision, and capitalize on the

strengths of each member produce positive, systematic change within the organization.

Three conditions can be utilized to promote team learning: setting up opportunities for

teams to think critically about complex organizational issues, coordinating opportunities

for team members to rely upon one another, and integrating teams within an organization.

The process of groups of employees working together to create the desired results

was evident in a variety of participant perceptions about UMMS since the tenure of the

current principal leadership. Participants described a culture where each teacher has

volunteered for one or more building level teams, that people work together at UMMS to achieve goals, and that teams work together to address complex issues.

The foundation upon which all other components operate, systems thinking, is the final component of Senge's theory of change in learning organizations (2006). Senge explains that as conditions in the world continue to become more complex, systems thinking from a holistic perspective is very important. It is in an environment such as this that organizational members are enabled to make decisions in a manner whereby the consequences of decisions and their impact upon on the rest of the system are considered. Senge indicates the use of interdisciplinary teams help to facilitate systems thinking as different perspectives become part of team decision making.

Participants in this study referenced interdisciplinary teams at UMMS based upon individual interests; however, no other specific details indicating that systems thinking where consequences of decisions and their impact upon on the rest of the system were considered were evident from participant perceptions. It is highly suspected by this researcher that a systems thinking approach occurs at UMMS to facilitate change under the tenure of the current principal leadership and additional research in regard to this area is recommended.

Unfortunately, it is all too common in today's ever changing climate in American education for leaders to jump on the newest fad or suggested method to improve student achievement in attempts to meet state and federal expectations. Many of these methods are not based upon a theoretical framework and oftentimes do not provide the results being sought by leaders. It is unclear to the researcher if the principal leadership at UMMS developed the plan for change based upon the theoretical framework of Senge's

learning organizations, another theoretical framework, or if they simply got lucky to experience the level of success in the change described in this study by participant perceptions.

Concluding Thoughts

The turnaround that occurred at Upper Midwest Middle School leads this researcher to conclude that principal leadership is the most key position in k-12 education during the 21st century. The current and future climate of education is fated to be plagued with changing expectations, public accountability, and deteriorating resources. Such an environment will require talented principal leaders with the knowledge, skills, and personal attributes that will enable them to negotiate ever-changing barriers from a plethora of stakeholders and political arenas.

The evidence supports Anthony Muhammad's (2009) belief that:

Change…requires leaders adept at gaining cooperation and skilled in the arts of diplomacy, salesmanship, patience, endurance, and encouragement. It takes knowledge of where a school has been and agreement about where the school should go. It requires an ability to deal with beliefs, policies, and institutions that have been established to buffer educators from change and accountability. It is a tightrope act of major proportion. (p. 16)

Limitations of the Research

This small-scale, qualitative case study of the perceived problems that precipitated principal leadership change at Upper Midwest Middle School and the effects from the perspective of system participants in regard to the impact of the change on the school's culture and student success makes no claim other than to describe the

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phenomena identified. The conclusions drawn from the analysis of pre-existing data from focus groups, open-ended qualitative interviews, and the analysis of historical AYP data were interpreted by the researcher and checked for accuracy prior to conclusion being drawn from the data. The complexity and correlation of the knowledge, skills, and style of principal leadership teams and their impact on change within one middle school that was the focus of this study are examined only from the viewpoint of participants in the system. The research should be valued based upon the richness of the varied comments, not in providing an objective, third-person perspective often found in quantitative studies.

Recommendations for Further Research

The results of this research study indicate that the change that occurred at Upper Midwest Middle School during the timeframe of the three principal leadership tenures identified is very unique. Participants began this journey in an environment that was managed in a very traditional manner, perceived negatively by the community, and where students struggled to meet state and federal expectations. The next transition was led by a principal leadership team that lasted for only one year and plagued employees with an extremely toxic culture where student achievement was not a focus due to the intensity of the internal turmoil. Finally, under the guidance of the current principal leadership team, UMMS has done a complete turnaround. It is a school where the students have met the increased proficiency expectations of NCLB for the past 3 consecutive years. The perceptions of participants from within the system describe a healthy, collaborative, and welcoming school culture. And finally, the school has recently been validated by the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association as one of only seven schools endorsed in the 2012-2013 Minnesota Schools of Excellence Program due to its total

commitment to educational excellence. Something unique and quite special has occurred at UMMS and the perceptions of system participants and well as the conclusion of this researcher are the current principal leadership team is to be credited with facilitating the change that resulted in this success.

Because there was such dramatic and positive change facilitated in a brief amount of time, Upper Midwest Middle School is an environment rich for additional research studies. First, a study designed to gain a better understanding of the theoretical framework used to facilitate change at UMMS is recommended. Results of the current study indicate the change process utilized by the current principal leadership team is extremely effective. Further analysis of the theoretical framework that this change process was based upon will likely produce results that either support Senge's learning organizations theory or may offer insight to consider further expansion or alteration of current theory.

The second recommendation for further study is for research to be completed focusing on the leadership style and specific principal behaviors of the current leadership team at UMMS. A study of these characteristics as well as the extent of their impact on the school's culture and student success will likely provide significant insight to district leaders needing to hire and facilitate professional development for principals in 21st century schools that must succeed in an ever-changing, volatile climate.

Finally, a comprehensive study designed to identify instructional strategies and methods that have positively impacted student success at UMMS is recommended. Participants in the current study describe significant academic growth, especially with at-risk populations since the change in principal leadership. Further study of this topic will

provide additional insight which may statistically verify participant perceptions, identify

strategies currently being utilized that may not be as effective as perceived, or may

identify new strategies that are successful and can be replicated in other settings to

facilitate student success.

<div align="center">Recommendations for Practice</div>

Although this study did not develop nor expand current theory, it does confirm a

multitude of principal leadership best practices that have been identified by other

researchers in regard to change and the effects of principal leadership on the school

culture and student success. Based upon the results of this case study, the following

recommendations are made for district and principal leaders needing to facilitate change

in their schools or those struggling amidst the change process to gain a better

understanding of how principal leadership can impact change on school culture and

student success:

1. Appoint a principal leadership team with a strong vision for 21st century education
   with demonstrated knowledge and skills to facilitate staff buy-in and implement
   strategies to successfully achieve the vision.

2. The principal leadership team must train and empower teachers and teams to
   make important, shared decisions within the school.

3. When facilitating change, a slow and structured process is necessary where staff
   buy-in, a focus on continuous improvement, and putting teachers in key positions
   to be part of the change are the norm.

4. The development of positive relationships within the school is imperative.
   Principal leadership teams must take the time to build healthy relationships with

teachers and support staff, communicate effectively, support teachers, and facilitate trust among all staff.

5. The principal leadership team must demonstrate knowledge and skills in working with students, having clear expectations with consistent follow-up, and general support of teachers in regard to student discipline.

6. The principal leadership team must facilitate and maintain a school culture that is a friendly, positive, environment where leadership, staff, students, and stakeholders work collaboratively and focus on student success.

7. Most importantly, student achievement must be the focus of the school. Safety nets must be put into place for struggling students and interventions and instruction must be established from research-based best practices.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Superintendent Permission Letter and Consent Document

[PLEASE PRINT ON DISTRICT LETTERHEAD]

To: Theresa Meyers
           6638 County 4 NE
           Remer, MN 56672

From: Midwest Public School District

Date: XXXX xx, 2012

Re: Agreement to participate in proposed field research study

Midwest Public School District has agreed to participate in a research study of the change process that occurred at Upper Midwest Middle School since the 2008-2009 school year. The overall purpose of this study will be to describe the perceived problems that precipitated principal leadership change at Upper Midwest Middle School and to describe the effects from the perspective of system participants. The results of this research have practical interest and relevance to education professionals committed to school improvement efforts in schools struggling to meet the increasing expectations for AYP.

It is understood that all participation is voluntary and that individuals can withdraw from the project at any time. As discussed previously, no identifying information will be published in regard to participants and a pseudonym will be utilized for the school name so that confidentiality is protected.

Sincerely,

[PLEASE SIGN]

Superintendent
Midwest Public School District

Title: Turnaround in an Upper Midwest Middle School: A Case Study of the Perceived Effects of Change in Principal Leadership

Project Director: Theresa Meyers

Phone Number: (218)398-7145

Department: Educational Leadership, University of North Dakota

Statement of Research:

A person who is to participate in the research must give his or her informed consent to such participation. This consent must be based on an understanding of the nature and risks of the research. This document provides information that is important for this understanding. Research projects include only subjects who choose to take part. Please take your time in making your decision as to whether to participate. If you have any questions at any time, please ask.

What is the purpose of this study?

You are invited to be in a research study about the change process that occurred at Upper Midwest Middle School since the 2008-2009 school year.

The purpose of this research study is to describe the phenomenon that occurred at UMMS and to evaluate the change process and its' effects from the perspective of system participants. This information will not only benefit Midwest Public School District administrators in understanding the change process, but will also assist educational leaders throughout the nation who are struggling to facilitate effective change within their systems.

How many people will participate?

Approximately eight people will take part in this study at Upper Midwest Middle School.

How long will I be in this study?

Your participation in this study will last for approximately one hour and 30 minutes.

What will happen during this study?

You will be asked a series of questions about your experiences and observations of the change in principal leadership that occurred at Upper Midwest Middle School since the 2008-2009 school year. You are free to skip any questions that you prefer not to answer. A transcript will be completed based upon your interview responses and you will be asked to review it and provide feedback for any corrections or clarifications.

What are the risks of the study?

There is minimal anticipated emotional risk to subjects who experienced turmoil in the school prior to the change and a slight possibility that describing their experiences causes minimal stress for them. However, because of the nature of this study which includes subordinate staff members sharing their experiences about their previous and current working environments, it is possible that one or more may have critical opinions of a principal and/or the superintendent which has the potential to compromise the subject in terms of employment and/or promotion, etc.

What are the benefits of this study?

You may not benefit personally from being in this study; however, it is hoped that this research will facilitate a better understanding of the effects of the change in principal leadership that occurred at Upper Midwest Middle School that will benefit both Midwest Public School District and other districts throughout the nation who are struggling to facilitate effective systemic change.

Will it cost me anything to be in this study?

You will not have any costs for being in this research study.

Will I be paid for participating?

You will not be paid for being in this research study.

Who is funding this study?

The University of North Dakota and the research team are receiving no payments from other agencies, organizations, or companies to conduct this research study.

<div align="right">

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Date _____

Subject Initials _____

</div>

Confidentiality

The records of this study will be kept private to the extent permitted by law. In any report about this study that might be published, you will not be identified, nor will Upper Midwest Middle School or Midwest Public School District. Your study may be reviewed by government agencies, and the University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board.

Any information that is obtained in this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. In order to minimize potential risks to participants in regard to those who may provide critical opinions of a principal and/or the superintendent, the researcher will keep confidential the names and roles of study participants so that school and district administrators will not know the identity of subordinate participants. The opportunity for participant compromise in terms of employment, promotion, etc. will thus be minimized. If a report or article is written about this study, study results will be described in a summarized manner so that you, the school, and the school district cannot be identified.

Your interview will be digitally recorded and transcribed. You will be given the opportunity to review a written copy of the transcript and edit it for accuracy. Once you have approved the transcription, the paper copy will be returned to the researcher to complete necessary revisions, the written copy will be shredded and the digital recording will be erased. Information collected from you will only be used for educational purposes.

Is this study voluntary?

Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or loos of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of North Dakota.

Contacts and Questions?

The researcher conducting this study is Theresa Meyers. You may ask any questions you have now. If you later have questions, concerns or complaints about the research, please contact the student's advisor, Dr. Gary Schnellert, at (320) 260-0609.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, or if you have any concerns or complaints about the research, you may contact the University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board at (701) 777-4279. Please call this number if you cannot reach the researcher or you wish to speak with someone else.

<div align="right">
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Date _____

Subject Initials _____
</div>

Your signature indicates that this research study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Subject Name: _____

_____   _____
Signature of Subject   Date

I have discussed the above points with the subject.

_____   _____
Signature of Person Who Obtained Consent   Date

Appendix C

Fact-finding Interview Guide: Superintendent

1.   What is your educational history to include college degrees, professional certifications, trainings, as well as your teaching and administrative experiences?

2.   Please tell me about your history of service in Midwest Public School District and your current role in the district.

3.   What concerns did you observe or were brought to your attention in regard to Upper Midwest Middle School during the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 school years?

4.   What actions did you take in order to investigate concerns you observed as well as those brought to your attention at Upper Midwest Middle School during the 2008-2009 school year?

5.   What were the conclusions of the investigation into concerns at Upper Midwest Middle School during the 2008-2009 school year?

6.   What correction plans did you implement to address concerns that were identified through the investigation?

7.   What factors or concerns were you specifically targeting for improvement in your correction plan?

8.   What skills, experience, and characteristics were you targeting for the new principal leadership team at Upper Midwest Middle School for the 2009-2010 school year? Did you achieve these targets? How do you evaluate this?

9.   What impact do you believe the principal leadership team has made on the school climate at Upper Midwest Middle School since the 2009-2010 school year? What do you use to evaluate the impact of the change in principal leadership on school climate?

10.   What impact do you believe the principal leadership team has made on student achievement and success at Upper Midwest Middle School since

the 2009-2010 school year? What do you use to evaluate the impact of the change in principal leadership on student achievement and success?

11.   Is there anything else you believe I should know about your experiences or observations about the impact of the change in principal leadership on school climate and student success at Upper Midwest Middle School?

Appendix D

Fact-finding Interview Guide: Principals

1. What is your role at Upper Midwest Middle School?

2. What is your educational history to include college degrees, professional certifications, trainings, as well as your teaching and administrative experiences?

3. What is your primary leadership style and what actions or behaviors do you demonstrate when implementing that style?

4. What were your top 3 priorities when you became a principal at Upper Midwest Middle School? How did you demonstrate importance for these priorities?

5. What strategies have you used to facilitate change at Upper Midwest Middle School?

6. What strategies have you used to address resistance to change from teaching and support staff members?

7. What strategies have you used to effectively work with other building leadership?

8. In what ways to you believe your leadership has impacted the school climate at Upper Midwest Middle School? How do you evaluate this impact?

9. In what ways do you believe your leadership has impacted student achievement at Upper Midwest Middle School? How do you evaluate this impact?

10. In what ways do you believe your leadership has impacted overall student success at Upper Midwest Middle School? How do you evaluate this impact?

11. Is there anything else you think I should know about your experiences as a principal at Upper Midwest Middle School, change that has occurred

during your tenure here, the school's climate, student achievement and/or student success here?

Appendix E

Fact-finding Interview Guide: Teachers and Support Staff

1. What is your role at Upper Midwest Middle School?

2. What is your educational history to include college degrees, professional
    certifications, trainings, as well as your teaching or other professional
    experiences?

3. Please describe your perception of strengths and concerns that were evident at
    Upper Midwest Middle School during the final years of the previous principal
    leadership team that left at the end of the 2008-2009 school year.

4. Please describe your perception of the school climate at Upper Midwest
    Middle School during the final years of the previous principal leadership team
    that left at the end of the 2008-2009 school year.

5. Please describe your perception of student achievement and student success
    and/or challenges at Upper Midwest Middle School during the final years of
    the previous principal leadership team that left at the end of the 2008-2009
    school year.

6. Please describe your perception of the changes that have taken place at Upper
    Midwest Middle School since the current principal leadership team was hired
    during the summer of 2009.

7. What strategies have you observed the current principals use to facilitate
    change at Upper Midwest Middle School? How effective/ineffective do you
    believe these strategies have been? How do you evaluate this?

8. How do you perceive the current principal leadership has impacted the school
    climate at Upper Midwest Middle School? How do you evaluate this?

9. How do you perceive the current principal leadership has impacted student
    achievement and overall student success at Upper Midwest Middle School?
    How do you evaluate this?

10. Is there anything else you think I should know about your perception of things
    under the leadership of the previous principals, change that has occurred under
    the leadership of the current principals, and/or the impact of the current

principal leadership on the school's climate, student achievement and/or student success at Upper Midwest Middle School?

Appendix F
Summary Sheet of Pre-existing Data Themes

PRE-EXISTING DATA THEMES SUMMARY SHEET

Themes	Supporting Participant Comments
Communication	"Lack of communication". "Rumors". "Misunderstanding". "Misinformation". "Not being granted the same access to information". "Gossiping". "Lack of information".
Leadership	"Lack of middle school leaders". "No leadership in the middle school". "Administration refuses to accept some responsibility for the situation". "Breakdown in leadership".
Trust	"My role at UMMS has been devalued and distorted". "I want all staff to be treated equally". "Lack of open-mindedness". "Dishonesty". "Questioning others' judgment and experiences". "Whispering". "Lack of trust". "Behind the back talking".
Feelings	"My value as a teacher has never been this close to being destroyed". "I want to be treated fairly. I want to be happy again. I do much better and my confidence increases when I feel valued and not judged". "We need to be treated respectfully". "Grudges". "Negativity". "My way or the highway attitude". "Lack of caring and respect". "Anger". "Resentment". "Arrogant attitudes". "Hurt feelings". "Stubbornness". "Fear of change and loss of control". "Lack of forgiveness"

	"Griping and complaining".
	"Feeling of betrayal".
Staff Division	"Lack of respect for each other".
	"Extreme judgment of and by others".
	"Being bullied".
	"Ganging up on administration".
	"Union loyalty".
	"Constant talking about problems and other staff".
	"Closed door meetings, side A verses side B".
	"Those who continue to ignore and not speak to colleagues".
	"We were placed into the 'positive' and 'not positive' groups by some staff".
	"They will not greet others when spoken to or only do so in a curt, mono-syllabic manner".
	"People in the halls avoiding eye contact and walking away".
	"Isolation".
	"Lack of understanding the viewpoint of others".
	"Excluding others on purpose".
	"The division of staff on the issue: either for or against".
	"Staff posturing".
	"Dividing of colleagues".

Appendix G

Summary Sheet of Interview Theme 1: Vision

INTERVIEW DATA THEMES SUMMARY SHEET: VISION

Theme: Vision	Principal Leadership Prior to 2008	Principal Leadership 2008-2009	Principal Leadership 2009-Present
Supporting Participant Comments	"We had been sort of an ingrown system in regard to our principalship for a number of years at that facility. We hired principals who had been assistant principals for several generations. So we got people who were trained in what we had and so we continued to have the same style….We had seen little to no growth there. We seemed to be more concerned about bubble gum and tardiness than we were about students and academic achievement." "I think it was very confusing to a lot of people."	"The vision was strong and was based upon a lot of best practices." "The principal's attitude was, 'This is my vision and I am going to come in and you are going to do it whether you like it or not.'" "He had a vision, but his personal skills prevented him from achieving it." "The principal was very zeroed in on the data and student achievement." "They were goal oriented and they had a vision, but their delivery of what their expectations were was poor. They had a difficult time communicating it without coming across as arrogant or inflexible."	"We are visionary. We know where we want to get to." "They have a vision and we were able to accomplish things that were in that vision and that built confidence in our team that we are going to move forward." "They focus on continuous improvement and making it the best it can be." "I think the principals are very driven by wanting kids to achieve and I think that's obvious to students and staff as well."

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Summary Conclusions	Lacked Vision (-) impact	Strong Vision, but Unable Achieve It (+/-) impact	Strong Vision (+) impact

Appendix H
Summary Sheet of Interview Theme 2: Power

INTERVIEW DATA THEMES SUMMARY SHEET: POWER

Theme: Power	Principal Leadership Prior to 2008	Principal Leadership 2008-2009	Principal Leadership 2009-Present
Supporting Participant Comments	"I saw a lot of issues with more or less, the principal asking teaching staff if it was ok to do certain things. So what I was seeing is that the actual teaching staff was pretty much calling the shots as to how the middle school was being handled." "In July, the principal was still negotiating with teachers what the master schedule would be for the upcoming year." "A lot of decisions prior to 08-09 were made by teacher opinion. Teachers had more say in many things."	"The principal was very top-down, very much 'I've got my way to do things and this is the way we're going to do it'." "There was a handful of five to six very die hard supporters (of the principals) who were sort of given power… They were considered the faculty leaders of academics. And then there was everyone else who were sort of entrenched and felt put upon and not listened to." "They (principals) had a small core group that they surrounded themselves with and they just either disregarded the rest or felt that they weren't there." "His attitude was 'I'm up here and I am above you.'"	"I really, really believe in empowering my staff." "Empowering staff to do what they were hired to do." "Our principal has enabled the staff to be in the position to drive the change. In fact, all of our committees, our climate committee, our literacy team, our technology team, our crisis team, those didn't exist. Those are all new. And in a very non-confrontational way, at the end of the new administration's first year, they said, these will be the teams. Please choose one of them that you would like to be on. So essentially, what they were saying was everyone needs to be on a team and everyone needs to sign up, and that was good.

| | | "The previous administration came in and tried to bulldoze their way through." | So now everyone is involved in something in the building, so you're not just sitting and you're part of something. You're not on the sidelines. If you're criticizing or saying you want change, or if you have good ideas, then you could join that team."

"This administration handles people very well. They kind of put the responsibility back on the staff. They will help them in any way they can. They've got certain goals they know need to be reached and then they handle it in a way where they say, 'This is what needs to happen, you let us know how we can help you achieve that.' And so, they empower the staff." |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Summary Conclusions** | Teachers had Power

(+/-) impact | Most Teachers had No Power
(-) impact | All Teachers are Empowered
(+) impact |

Appendix I
Summary Sheet of Interview Theme 3: Change

INTERVIEW DATA THEMES SUMMARY SHEET: CHANGE

Theme: Change	Principal Leadership Prior to 2008	Principal Leadership 2008-2009	Principal Leadership 2009-Present
Supporting Participant Comments	"We had seen little to no growth there."	Leadership team was advised, "don't make drastic changes because those will burn you if you do that in your first year." "This building needed change, but it didn't need it as drastic and as fast, without understanding the political ramifications that they were forcing on to the culture of the school and the culture of the community and the organization." "The principals were dysfunctional and we needed to do something for the good of the community and the good of the kids." "It seemed that there were a lot of people who felt challenged because of the way they had done things versus the way new things were being	"The principals are both process people." "You've got to get buy-in. The way to get buy-in is to find staff members who believe in some of the core values and believe that we need to work with kids and we need to get them to a high achieving level. With that, little by little, you get momentum as a staff and make positive change." "Take your time, use research based strategies, and get the team mates out there that can help it get rolling." "Isolate the negative energy, go with the positive people, pull the moveable middle, and little by little, hopefully, they will jump on board. We have seen some good

| | | handled."

"His style was 'it's my idea and this is how it is going.'"

"I think the staff was a challenge for this leadership team. I believe the new team was directed by district administration that there were certain things that needed to be changed. That's what they were trying to do, but because staff was so used to having it one way, they did not care for the new leadership at all and what they were trying to achieve."

"I believe that the principal probably didn't handle the staff very well as far as how he was going about the change. It was more of a dictatorship than viewing it as teamwork."

"The ones that really didn't see too much wrong with them were the newer teachers. The new teachers that weren't senior that liked it the way it used to be."

"It is my belief that it would not make any difference who came | improvement that way."

"We bring our staff in and we meet with our staff and process with them."

"The change process is always challenging and one of the things I have always said is time is our friend. I like to take time, strategically figure out how we can make certain changes and be patient, but I have to have my staff empowered and they need to own it. They have to own the change."

"You need to work with the living."

"In these challenging times, we know funding is actually decreasing. The revenues have gone down and the expenditures have gone up. At the same time, we've squeezed everything we can out of every nickel and we are doing some really good things."

"The current administration put people in the position to be part of the change and to use their |

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| | | into those positions that year they would not have been successful because the veteran staff did not want things to change."

"I don't think they built enough relationships with staff before making the changes necessary or those changes that they wanted to see occur."

"I think people were in shock because everything had changed so drastically in such a short period of time." | strengths and to contribute what they can. Buy-in has been huge!"

"The ability to facilitate change positively and the ability to be patient. The first year there was very little change, but they had a plan."

"They don't ever seem like they are getting too comfortable with success. It seems like something else comes out or they go somewhere and learn something new. They are always trying to improve."

"I think our current leadership did a good job of just observing and building relationships before they implemented any new or big changes. I think that they came in with some big things that had to be changed, but they kind of coasted on that for a while, so they did a good job of listening and learning about the environment and checking things out before they moved forward with anything new."

"When they came in, |

			they understood and they didn't try to micromanage a lot of things. They sat back for the first year and said, 'Ok, what works and what doesn't work?' and, they actually, in my opinion, observed more than try to change anything."
Summary Conclusions	No Change (-) impact	Quick but Ineffective Change (-) impact	Slow and Effective Change (+) impact

Appendix J

Summary Sheet of Interview Theme 4: Relationships

INTERVIEW DATA THEMES SUMMARY SHEET: RELATIONSHIPS

Theme: Relationships	Principal Leadership Prior to 2008	Principal Leadership 2008-2009	Principal Leadership 2009-Present
Supporting Participant Comments	"The principals were teachers in the same building at some point and therefore, co-workers and friends of the staff they were supervising." "They all got along. They were more or less like one happy family!"	"The principal was adamant about the fact that he was a good listener, but yet I kept hearing from people that he's not a good listener." "He interrupts me when I am talking." "I feel like I get lectured to after I brought something different or a different opinion." "You've changed the handbook without their input (teachers). You have said you're not going to take care of tardiness. You're not going to handle this, you're not going to handle that, and they just feel unsupported and lost." "They felt threatened. They felt unsupported. They felt undermined or like they were part	"I am a firm believer in relationship building whether that be with staff so that they understand and trust that we are all on the same page or if it is with students where I get to know them and they know that I care about them." "I think we have one of the strongest teams I have ever seen and have been a part of here at UMMS." "I think a big part of team building is showing other people that you are human. It may mean just spending some quality time asking staff about family or personal life, things that are non-job related so that they know that you have a pulse and that you care about them."

		of an organization that wasn't as professional as they thought it should be."	"Treating everyone fairly and respectfully and professionally."
		"People felt undervalued or looked over. Their skills, for people who had been here before and were maybe used to being the 'go to' people and were respected, were now with new administration who didn't know them, didn't recognize their strengths, and were pointing out weaknesses. It didn't sit well."	"Relationships are an absolute key to performance whether it be students or staff. If they know that you encourage and want them to achieve, they seem to want to achieve. It is contagious."
		"Competencies were questioned."	"What I've found is after you've built some relationships with the staff, they realize that you have no intention of undermining what's going on or I guess driving something that they're not supportive of. It seems like just spending time, just having discussions with people, all the pieces seem to line themselves up."
		"At our first staff meeting of the year, the principal told us that if we needed to see him, to make an appointment with his secretary. It came across as if you want to see me, make an appointment. It was perceived very negatively."	
		"There was a lot of mistrust going back and forth between principals and teachers."	"We've had a lot of new teachers over the last three years and our principals have supported them by giving them what they need. And the veteran teachers, they have tapped into what they're good at. I think they've made it clear that those veteran teachers have knowledge and skills.
		"It was unfair the way teachers were being	

		treated by principals. One teacher would get shut down on an event or a field trip…and other teachers were actually given extra money to go on their trips."	They have recognized that the veterans are worthy of recognition."
		"They would try to micromanage a classroom and tell people who had taught for many years that they weren't handling the students right, that they were not disciplining them right."	"The principals that we have now show that they trust us to use our professional judgment and take care of a classroom. They don't have to worry about every little detail that goes on."
		"People were in tears because if you gave any indication whatsoever that you agreed with anything the principals were doing, you were ostracized. You were bullied."	"Our principals have been very, very open that they trust us to be able to get our work done. They don't have to watch over us. They told us, 'You guys are professionals. We know that you are going to get you work done and we don't have to watch you.' I think that was a key right from the start. They put us back in charge of our classrooms."
		"Word got out which ones to bully and ostracize because they thought these principals were doing a good job."	
		"There were some bully type teachers here at the time that would make people feel like you couldn't argue with them or disagree with them."	"Staff is more willing to work with this leadership team and definitely like this leadership team more."
		"There were teachers	"They've done a good job of explaining their decision. This is why and it makes sense so

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		who felt like their rights were being violated. They had no respect for how long they had been teaching or what they knew. It was 'my way or the highway' and teachers were immediately identifying that this was not right. This began the very first weeks of school."	even if the person does not really like the decision, they can see that it is benefitting the student or there is a good reason, so whether they like it or not, they can probably accept the decision." "It is a much friendlier attitude when going in and talking to the current principals. I'm not worried about saying something and worried about them immediately trying to hang me out to dry. They will listen and they don't become vindictive."
Summary Conclusions	Teachers/Principals were Peers/Friends (+) impact	Negative Relationships/ Staff Division (-) impact	Positive Relationships/Staff Unity (+) impact

Appendix K

Summary Sheet of Interview Theme 5: Student Discipline

INTERVIEW DATA THEMES SUMMARY SHEET: STUDENT DISCIPLINE

Theme: Student Discipline	Principal Leadership Prior to 2008	Principal Leadership 2008-2009	Principal Leadership 2009-Present
Supporting Participant Comments	"It was sort of an autocratic place where the assistant principal pounds heads and was more concerned about getting his lunch than he was about doing anything else." "The teachers pretty much dictated what the assistant principal would do. If they had an issue in their classroom, they pretty much told him how to handle it and he would do what they wanted." "If a student did something wrong, they would get detention after school."	"Kids were pulled out of class for up to 40 minutes to be talked to and dealt with on the disciplinary front." "There were over 3,000 discipline referrals." "The assistant principal was always taking the side of the students and was never supportive of the teachers." "There seemed to be a lot of discipline or more discipline issues and it didn't seem like the teachers were backed and supported." "There were a lot more fights." "He may be good at a lot of things, but student discipline, especially with dealing	"A big goal is to minimize disruptions. Kid's get shagged, but it is at lunch or before school or trying to get them at times when it's not going to impact their academic growth." "We will probably end this school year well under 2,000 discipline referrals, so to me, that's hardcore data the student numbers have not dropped, but discipline referrals have significantly decreased." "The current assistant principal is very knowledgeable and is very good with student discipline. He is extremely supportive of the teachers. I mean he backs the teachers both to the students, and if ever needed, to parents. It is just a lot more professional than it was previously."

		with a middle school student discipline; it did not seem like a strength for him."

"Kids weren't afraid of getting into trouble because there were no consequences."

"Discipline was very lax. It was more of 'let's just have a little talk here about how this shouldn't happen anymore and then you go on about your day and have a good day.' There wasn't a definite consequence."

"They (students) just didn't care what they did. There was just a total lack of respect and there wasn't enough discipline."

"The assistant principal was very good with communication and discussing issues with students."

"Believe it or not, one of the biggest issues for this school was gum chewing." The teachers wanted that handled by the assistant principal and the assistant principal wanted that to be taken care of inside the classroom. That was | "If you tell a student he or she is going to the office or this is going to be a behavior referral, they sit up and think about it. In the same sense, I've seen the same kids who are your frequent fliers if you will, when they are doing well, they seek out the assistant principal and they let him know because he calls it like it is and when they do well, he is the first one to be all over them and acknowledge that success. I think they see that honesty and that they don't perceive that he's always nice, but if they step out of line, he's going to call them on it and when they do well, he's going to acknowledge that too."

"When a kid is stepping out of line or a student is not doing what they are supposed to do, they are getting a consequence and they have learned that and they definitely understand that their behavior is going to result in some kind of consequence. It might be positive or negative depending upon what it is."

"Our current assistant principal has quite a bit |

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		huge! The teachers were not happy about that and that is how petty it got. We really had a tough time getting off from those types of things and on to more significant, more important issues that year."	of experience in that position. I think he's pretty much by the book as far as one violation, a write-up warning and progressing, but he's willing to change if he believes there are extenuating circumstances. I think he's really confident in his decision making and it's pretty evident whether it is parents, staff or students, and so I think he has a lot more tools in his tool belt to work from. I think the teachers support him as well."
		"The assistant principal had a style with the younger students by making it a teachable moment when he was doing discipline. He spent a lot of time on those relationships."	
		"I think the assistant principal was inexperienced and he was cautious before he would send people home. He would do a lot of talking with students and visiting with students. Many times he would send them back to class after visiting with them."	
		"I think one of the things they were trying to educate the staff on in 08-09 was what is really a reason to send a kid to the office. Because there were so many things that were pretty minor. We're talking gum chewing and stuff like that. For	

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		whatever reason, that was a really big deal and so when that leadership team came in and said we're going to be able to chew gum the fact that we could in the first place tells you where things were at that time. There were really minor things that students were coming to the principal's office for, but major to the teachers, so they didn't feel supported if the principal didn't do what they thought was necessary." "There were times when I sent kids down to be suspended for doing something wrong in my class and I would get, 'We talked to the student and student says he's sorry so we're not going to do that.' So if you asked them to do something, you could never get anyone to stand and say, 'Yep, we're going to do this! This is what you would like, boom.' It was always, 'Well, we're working on it and you can't always do that.'"	
Summary Conclusions	Strong Discipline (+) impact	Weak/Inconsistent/ Ineffective Discipline (-) impact	Fair/Consistent/Effective Discipline (+) impact

Appendix L

Summary Sheet of Interview Theme 7: School Culture

INTERVIEW DATA THEMES SUMMARY SHEET: SCHOOL CULTURE

Theme: School Culture	Principal Leadership Prior to 2008	Principal Leadership 2008-2009	Principal Leadership 2009-Present
Supporting Participant Comments	"The parents of the middle school have had a negative opinion about it for a number of years." "The reputation was the middle school was not a good facility." "The climate was great! Senior staff, they had all been here for many years and they all got along. They were more or less like one happy family!"	"There were major difficulties within the building. It had split the staff. It had split the community." "I didn't get a lot of feedback from parents either positive or negative. They were relatively neutral." "The pole of support and the pole of opposition kept driving farther and farther and kept getting more and more entrenched." "Fifth grade moved into the building that same year, so you add 200 and some new kids as well as eight new teachers to a building who were all probably a little upset that they were now in a middle school instead of an elementary school." "Everywhere it seemed there was bickering.	"The bottom line is this place is a friendly place and a place to look forward to visiting." "The last parent survey completed last fall indicated from the parents that took the survey that UMMS was the most welcoming school in the district and that's huge because it was never perceived that way in the past." "This is a place where there's a lot of momentum, things are going really well. We have great staff, a great administrative team, great board, and tremendous support from the community." "Staff is proud of what they're doing. They are united in their efforts. The whole atmosphere of the

		People talking ALL the time: groups of three or four and you could just tell it was negative. It was like that everywhere: outside classrooms, in the teachers' lounge, there would be teachers meeting in classrooms after school."	building has changed in a very positive manner."
		"Most of the teachers were united in trying to work together to remove the principals."	"Now if people have problems they figure it out with the principal."
		"Morale was terrible!"	"We've had a total turnaround from what we were to where we are now. We now have a building where we have people who are happy to come here and enjoy coming to work. We have people who are willing to work together to help each other."
		"We had people coming to work literally in tears when they were in their classrooms. We had people really pulled apart in different ways."	
		"The school climate was not good! Very tense! Very tense, there is just no other word to describe it. Very tense and very unfriendly!"	"I am very, very happy that even though some of the things bothered me, I am very happy with where we are at and I would do it again if we could get the leadership we have now and to be where we are. I am glad that we have different leadership. They fit better and their strategies of making change are better and overall, it is much better now."
		"Walking down the hallway, you would come across little pockets of teachers gathered and when you came up close to them, they would quit talking."	
		"A lot of time was spent on people talking	

		about their concerns and then it was a lot of tension. By the end of the year, there were clearly two very separate feelings about the leadership." "People were talking amongst each other in small groups and if you approached, you could tell that you were interrupting something or that maybe they didn't want to say something in front of you."	
Summary Conclusions	Positive for Staff/Negative for Stakeholders (+/-) impact	Negative for Staff/Neutral for Stakeholders (- and +/-) impact	Positive for Staff/Positive for Stakeholders (+) impact

Appendix M
Summary Sheet of Interview Theme 6: Student Achievement

INTERVIEW DATA THEMES SUMMARY SHEET: STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Theme: Student Achievement	Principal Leadership Prior to 2008	Principal Leadership 2008-2009	Principal Leadership 2009-Present
Supporting Participant Comments	"It was sort of seen as the weak link in our whole k-12 system. We had good elementary schools. We had a high school that was high flying with big academics, and the middle school was sort of lost in la la land of early hormonal adolescence." "We got a great in-migration except at the middle level. We had huge open enrollments at our elementary schools, huge open enrollments at our secondary, but at our middle school they weren't coming." "Student behavior during the testing was a joke before and testing was looked at as a joke. Testing did not really mean	"Because the students weren't being held accountable, they really weren't too concerned about getting things done, so they didn't strive to do better…they didn't work to try to achieve their best." "I don't believe student achievement was a focus when teachers were so wrapped up in trying to get rid of the administration. I have a hard time believing that there would have been time or energy to focus on student achievement. With everything else that was trying to be achieved, student achievement didn't seem to be the focus." "The focus was not on student achievement. By the end of the year people were	"Safety nets have been developed in this building for at-risk students." "We now have the Reading and Math Academy, RAMA. Those classes have changed into a smaller load, smaller amount of kids, and also the philosophy in that classroom is that we are not just going to shove the same information down their throat. We are going to try different strategies, proven research strategies to teach literacy, math, and science and get that information to the kids with a new means of delivery." "When you look at the achievement gap within kids with free and reduced lunches and minority students,

	much."	preoccupied, teachers and staff. I just felt that people were preoccupied with other matters and I was concerned that the students weren't getting the best scenario of learning because there was a lot of stress and tension."	we are definitely seeing some ironclad numbers for better student achievement within those groups."
	"I didn't see any evidence that student achievement was important."		"We have done a significant amount of work on student achievement and have become a model for other schools."
	"I don't know that the principals really understood the whole picture as far as student achievement and being able to look at data and determining how things were going academically."		"We have an Adequate Yearly Progress, AYP Team, and it's all about student achievement."
			"We have made AYP at the middle school for three years in a row and for middle schools, that's pretty much unheard of at this point in time."
			"With the students in RAMA, the literacy increases were significant on the MCA tests. Usually we hear that 3% is significant. Of our 5th grade RAMA kids, we had an increase of 44% of those kids meeting or exceeding the state standards. In grade 6 RAMA we had a 20% increase, grade 7 an 18.9% increase and in grade 8 we had an 8.83% increase."

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| | | | "Our school was a school that was not making AYP. That has been turned around now in just a matter of a few short years. We've turned that around as one of the few schools in the district making AYP! Our at-risk populations are showing unbelievable gains!"

"The AYP team is all about student achievement. It's looking at the goals, it's looking at the reading and math achievement and how to improve scores. We just look at all things across the building, but it's basically built around improvement in MCA scores and increasing student achievement."

"With kids knowing that there are consequences and they are held accountable alone helps the students to achieve more. It pushes them to try to do better when they know that they are going to be held accountable for what it is that they produce. I also think the pride that they are starting to show in |
|---|---|---|---|

			their school has helped to carry over to the work that they produce."

"It's all about students! I believe everything rotates around student achievement. One thing that I have found out working with the current administration is if there is ever a decision to be made, the first question that is asked is, 'How does this affect students?'"

"There is a lot more student recognition, so the kids are doing good. They have worked hard to get that positive recognition." |
| **Summary Conclusions** | Unsuccessful (-) impact | Unsuccessful (-) impact | Successful (+) impact |

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