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The Chief Executive Officer of Charter Management Organizations and their Perspective on Instructional Leadership to Improve Student Achievement

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THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF CHARTER MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS
AND THEIR PERSPECTIVE ON INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP TO IMPROVE
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

By

Bryce A. Geigle

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Educational Administration and Leadership

University of the Pacific
Stockton, California

2019

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By

Bryce A. Geigle

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THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF CHARTER MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS
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DEDICATION

To my daughter – you watched "Daddy" pursue his dream. I promise to always be there for you as you pursue yours.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you for those who ever doubted, and in particular, the professor during my undergraduate degree who told me I should have never been accepted by the university.

I am forever grateful for the participants in this study and their candor that gave the research so much breadth in contributing to our education research. I am fortunate to have met amazing cohort members who challenged and supported me along our coursework. Thank you, Dr. Hallett, for being my source of guidance throughout my dissertation journey. Your encouragement and consistent feedback made the process worth it. I am forever indebted to the work of Dr. Skrla and her teachings throughout my doctoral adventure. Thank you for helping me activate and actualize the 'equity warrior' within me. I appreciate all the insight, knowledge, and support of Dr. Ellison. Your dedication to education is admirable. Thank you, Dr. George, for telling that young man who sat in the back of your master's class that he should pursue his doctorate. I will never forget that moment.

I appreciate the support and discussions with every teacher, leader, student, and family member who influenced my feet to continue moving toward my goals. This dissertation research and degree is for you. Thank you, Anthony Solina, for taking a chance on hiring a fresh out of college 'green' white guy to teach in your urban high school. My gratitude is endless for Adam Krusi-Thom for showing me educational leadership is a transformational process and has nothing to do with title, and has everything to do with heart. You are my forever mentor.

To my mother, the one who showed me grace, thank you for your undying love and support. From my childhood to meeting me in the waiting room to greet your granddaughter, you have been my constant pulse of love. Joe, thank you for being there for 'us boys' and loving

my mother. To my father, you never shuttered when supporting my dreams of going to college.

You were always there to save the day and provide direction in moments of panic. From the day

you dropped me off for my undergrad, to my late night writing sessions on your couch, your

pride has been my strength in completing this 12-year dream of higher education. Ede, thank

you for loving me as your own, always being a phone call away and being one of my biggest

cheerleaders.

To my wife, Lisa, your love and motherhood has been the reason for accomplishing my

dreams. You diminished any doubt, and infused adoration when I faced the valleys in this

journey. You were next to me celebrating at every hill. Harper, my little girl, thank you for

allowing "daddy" to sacrifice time and energy to reach his goals. My accomplishments are for

you to have every opportunity to uncover your dreams. Beckett, my unborn son, your mother

and I eagerly anticipate your birth and all the joy you will bring this world. Please know how

much has been sacrificed for the life you will live – may you grow, persevere, and learn to give

back to the community who will raise you.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF CHARTER MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS
AND THEIR PERSPECTIVE ON INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP TO IMPROVE
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Abstract

By Bryce A. Geigle

University of the Pacific
2019

The purpose of the study is to investigate the relationship between academic emphasis

and executive leadership from the perspective of a California charter management organization

(CMO) chief executive officer (CEO). Executive leaders in California CMOs have a unique

perspective that needs investigated. They experience educational leadership differently

depending upon their individual backgrounds, educational experiences, and the families they

serve. This study seeks to understand the experiences of a specific group of executive leaders

and how they define academic emphasis in their CMO. The theoretical framework used to

interpret the research findings was instructional leadership. The framework effectively built a

lens for the reader to conceptualize the research of this study. The theoretical framework worked

to guide and frame interpretation of respondent data. The research served to inform the research

questions, not answer them explicitly. The research used a qualitative case study design

approach focused on the story of the lived experience from the individual. The design aspired to

interpret meanings and experiences from responses to uncover deep and detailed understanding.

A CMO CEO responded to semi-structured interview questions. The interview protocol

consisted of various question types: open-ended questions, follow-up questions, and

classification questions. As transformational and educational leadership collide in Dr. Viviane

Robinson's current instructional leadership framework, the capability that is not explicitly presented is the ability for school leaders to build capacity for equity consciousness in all teammates in their organization and/or school. The findings from this study suggested that a fourth leadership capability is emerging in Dr. Robinson's framework. There is a critical need for organization and school leaders to be equipped with the skills to seed an equity consciousness across teammates and other stakeholders.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Nearly 25 years ago, charter schools were established in the United States to offer a different choice of schooling in education. Prior studies note that the focus of charter schools is to inspire and develop innovative practices, to serve as the standard for cultivating skillful teaching and learning across organizations and districts, and to ultimately improve student achievement (Wohlstetter, Smith, & Farrell, 2015). These schools of choice in the public school system are exempt from several local and state guidelines and regulations that govern traditional school districts. In the trade for autonomy, charter schools operate within the parameters of their charter petition that has been agreed upon with their charter authorizer. Charter authorizers are either a surrounding school district or the governing county office of education who in theory hold charter schools accountable for student achievement based on the outcomes written in their "charter" petitions. The authorizer can revoke or not renew the charter school based on academic or fiscal reasons. The innovative reform of charter schools has evolved from past education reforms such as, site-based management, deregulation, school choice, and performance accountability (Farrell, Wohlstetter, & Smith, 2012). Since charter schools, the demands of the organization leader have evolved into the knowledge and skills required of one operating a business; hence, the emergence of the role and title of "Chief Executive Officer" (CEO) in education. The leader at the top of the organization chart in charter school organizations may go by many titles, which include: executive director, superintendent, chief executive officer, head of school, principal (Bloomfield, 2013). For this study, the researcher will use the title "Chief Executive Officer" to understand and interpret the highest ranking administrative role in a charter management organization (CMO).

This dissertation examines an often overlooked yet significant subgroup in school leaders, and in this case, organizational leaders. Since few studies have been conducted with this group, I focus on understanding CMO school leaders' influence on student achievement. This exploratory study has three goals: 1) further develop how school leadership understand and interpret academic emphasis; 2) discuss the evolution of CMO and executive leadership as school leadership; and 3) identify core tenets in the background and culture of CMO executive leaders and how it intersects with the decisions around academic emphasis.

The following sections provide background on the gap that exists in the literature on CMOs. I provide an overview of instructional leadership as the theoretical framework driving the study, before briefly introducing each of the participants and describing their backgrounds in education. I begin by outlining the background of topics in the dissertation along with discussing the purpose of the study and the significance of the issue.

Background

We know little about how academic emphasis is shaped by executive leaders in CMOs. Charter school education has been a pertinent discussion amongst the current context of the American education system (Farrell et al., 2012). Many researchers have stated charter education has played a role in the evolution of education in America as the conversation has shifted towards *school choice* (Wohlstetter et al., 2015). There are various charter school networks available to students, families, and communities. The various types consist of education management organizations (EMOs), charter management organizations (CMOs), within district charter schools, and voucher endorsed charter schools. CMO models are structured based on the supports needed to fulfill the mission and vision of the organization. An example of this could be an emerging CMO who is located in one region may resemble a

traditional school district on paper. Whereas, a CMO operating across multiple regions may function under a model new to the educational landscape (Hess, 2006). A CMOs non-profit status lends itself a minimum of three advantages: greater mission alignment, dissolved political challenges, and access to philanthropic and benefaction capital (Peyser, 2011). Depending on the size of the CMO, the executive leadership team and many operations teams may be located on a school site or in a central office (Lake, Dusseault, Bowen, Demeritt, & Hill, 2010). These teams offer specific administrative, financial, and academic supports to each school in the network (Peyser, 2011).

The CMOs, who have chosen to scale-up to other regions and operate schools in other parts across the nation, have a superintendent role responsible for region performance per mission-alignment initiative from executive leadership at the central office. At the advent of local accountability, the role of the superintendency evolved, "shifting beyond reform-via-program- adoption to deep engagement in the work of systemic, practice-focused improvement" (Peurach & Gumus, 2011, p. 4). The job description and responsibilities of these superintendents have expanded to include: creating multi-year strategic plan for improvement, forming infrastructure for organizational and technical supports, fostering achievement-focused and practice-aligned culture, and building coherent, positive relationships with stakeholders and educational partners in the organization (Honig, Copland, Rainey, Lorton, & Newton, 2010; Honig & Hatch, 2004; Peurach & Gumus, 2011; Rorrer, Skrla, & Scheurich, 2008; Supovitz, 2006). Superintendents must focus on rhetoric and the political, social, historical nuances that are embedded. The vernacular of an educational leader must be inclusive for any stakeholder background (Slattery, 2013).

Academic emphasis in charter schools promote creativity and flexibility for all stakeholders (Wohlstetter & Chau, 2003). There are many academic aspects that influence student achievement of at-risk students: variation in pedagogy, structures of academic emphasis, educator collaboration, effective professional learning and development opportunities, foster student-teacher relationships, delivery of positive reinforcement, and strong intervention and prevention supports (Hung, Badeio, & Bennett, 2014). The charter sector constructs innovative support structures when scaling successful schools for replication (Farrell et al., 2012). Some CMOs leading the reform have developed their own training and certification programs for teachers and leaders that will ensure organization practices, culture and routine will set a frame for the establishment of any new school (Maas & Lake, 2015). The highest-achieving (student achievement data) CMOs in the NewSchools Venture Fund portfolio are those who emphasize a "no excuses" approach to teaching and learning. The culture of these organizations are "based on explicit expectations for both academic achievement and behavior, with meaningful consequences when those high expectations are not met" (Peyser, 2011, p. 37). Many scholars and leaders in education consider charter schools an alternative that provides "leadership teams the opportunity to image and create coherent, effective schools, free of institutional inertia and bureaucratic constraints" (Maas & Lake, 2015, p. 172). Leaders are allowed to build a staff that is united under one common mission, adhere to unifying instructional practices, and can subtly pivot to align with school policy and further cultivate the school's mission (Maas & Lake, 2015).

An *executive officer* is one who possess the responsibility for implementing, executing, and sustaining initiatives of the network. Responsibilities may be delegated by board or committee members and other stakeholders (Peurach & Gumus, 2011). Similar to the traditional unified school district superintendency, the CEO is hired by the board of directors of the

organization to oversee the operations and a direction of the CMO (Farrell et al., 2012).

Organizational leaders today are obligated to stay current with the rapidly evolving expectations

from local, state, and federal stakeholders and how those expectations will be executed in their

own organization (Clayton, 2015). This description primarily falls on the shoulder of the district

or organization's CEO or any of the following roles: other chief officers (e.g. chief financial

officer, chief operating officer, and chief information officer), president, vice president,

directors, board members, and managers roles who may have decision-making capabilities

(Peurach & Gumus, 2011). A CEO may act as the public face of the organization fulfilling

social responsibilities that include maintaining partnerships with influential stakeholders (e.g.,

board members, external partnerships, union representatives). The face of the organization

suggests being a lobbyist, advocate, and spokesperson for your "organization, its clients, its

supporters, and its cause" (Peurach & Gumus, 2011, p. 7-8).

Description of the Research Problem

The emergence of charter school networks adds an integral perspective to today's

educational landscape. We do not know enough about how academic emphasis is shaped by the

perspective of executive leadership in CMOs. One, in which, must be investigated and

acknowledged as significant amongst the current body of literature on educational leadership.

Simply, CMOs are considered new compared to the history of the traditional American education

system, and the term *executive leader* is new to the education scene as we have learned more

about the role of superintendency, yet we must investigate the indicators that make-up an

executive leader in a charter organization. Lastly, the influence of charter organization executive

leaders has on academic emphasis needs to be examined.

The current context of the U.S. Department of Education has established initiatives to increase funding for charter and voucher education. Under the direction of President Donald Trump and his administration, the appointment of Betsy DeVos to U.S. Secretary of Education has brought even more skepticism and discord between traditional and charter schooling due to the White House's stance on for-profit charter education (Heilig & Clark, 2018). Yet, the perspectives and understandings of non-profit charter schools/organizations are lumped into the White House for-profit and voucher "Charter School" and "School Choice" brand (Strauss, 2016). This study aims to contribute insights from organization leadership of non-profit public charter schools in CMOs. In addition, the study gears to highlight thinking and how decisions come into fruition from a CMO CEO in relation to academic emphasis and student achievement.

This study will fill deficiencies and extend scholarship on these topics by generating learning on the CEO's lens towards raising student achievement. For the purpose of this dissertation, I consider CEOs as the top educational administrator of the organization chart who facilitates decisions with all departments/teams driving the vision and mission of the organization. Since the CEO is the primary educational leader of a CMO, the study will inherently examine the underpinnings of structure and characteristics of CMOs as well.

One of the key findings in my dissertation was that I asked the wrong questions initially. The study found the influence of the CEO was more complex than just examining the chief executive officer role. There were other people who played a role and the structure of the CMO also mattered in efforts to improve student achievement. The nuances that surfaced from the study were from how the CEO interacted and worked with individuals from different levels of the organization who had impact on student achievement.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework constructed will entail the works of instructional leadership. The framework will effectively build a lens for the reader to conceptualize the research of this study. The theoretical framework will work to guide and frame interpretation of respondent data. This section will provide working definitions for the framework and how they will be applied to this study. The theoretical framework will be described in greater detail in Chapter Two.

Transformational leadership theory aims to acknowledge the creation of valuable and positive change in followers with the end goal of developing followers into leaders (Burns, 1978; Marks & Printy, 2003). Transformational leadership places an emphasis on earning trust through relationship building and providing support for another. Followers and leaders are bound together in the precipitating change of the transformation process. Transformational leadership positively effects the sense of collective teacher efficacy while influencing a faculty's commitment to a professional learning community (Orr, Berg, Shore, & Meier, 2008). The transformational leadership theory serves as the foundation for instructional leadership.

The existing literature on transformational leadership has evolved with the idea of instructional leadership (Marks & Printy, 2003). The dissertation acknowledges that the instructional leadership theory may or may not apply to the CEO's role; however, the goal of the study is to engage the CEO on their thoughts on instructional leadership and its impact on student achievement. Murphy (1990) acknowledges that effective school leaders demonstrate instructional leadership both implicitly and explicitly where the quality of teaching and learning were skillful. The school leaders practiced a shared form of instructional leadership. An ambitious instructional leader codifies and pursues a rich and complex vision of teaching and learning (Grossman & Cawn, 2016). School leaders who practice instructional leadership apply

four behaviors to elevate instruction: (a) developing school mission and goals; (b) coordinating, monitoring, and evaluating curriculum and instruction; (c) promoting a climate for learning; and (d) creating a supportive work environment (Murphy, 1990). With a focus on learning, leaders infuse management decisions and regular school routines with educational meaning (Dwyer, 1984). Instructional leadership theory (also known as student-centered leadership) has gained traction in recent years as Dr. Viviane Robinson has built on existing literature and defined the five dimensions of the theory in greater depth through quantitative research (Hattie, 2015). The dissertation will use Dr. Robinson's five dimensions as a lens to view the research findings.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study is to investigate the relationship between academic emphasis and executive leadership from the perspective of a California charter management organization (CMO) chief executive officer (CEO).

Research Question

Executive leaders in California CMOs have a unique perspective that needs to be investigated. They experience educational leadership differently depending upon their individual backgrounds, educational experiences, and the families they serve. This study seeks to understand how a specific group of executive leaders experience and define academic emphasis in CMOs. The following question frames the study: How does the chief executive officer of a charter management organization think about instructional leadership to improve student achievement?

Description of the Study

This section provides a brief description of the research design and will be described in more detail in Chapter Three. The research served to inform the research questions, not answer

them explicitly. The research entailed a case study design approach focused on the story of the lived experience from the individual. The design aspired to interpret meanings and experiences from responses to uncover deep and detailed understanding. A CMO CEO responded to semi-structured interview questions. The interview protocol consisted of various question types: open-ended questions, follow-up questions, and classification questions (Creswell, 2013). The criterion sampling model offered the study perspectives of executive leadership in a CMO. The perspectives helped determine tangible supports organization leaders can apply to better assist school-site leaders. The purpose of a criterion sample is to select cases that meet some criteria which is useful for quality assurance (Patton, 2002).

The idea of exploring the perspective of the CEO came when I attended a session titled "Founders Circle: Three Leaders Share Their Vision for the Future" at the California Charter School Association in 2017. The panel consisted of national educational leaders who were co-founders and acting CEOs of their organization. The first CEO discussed how racially and socioeconomically diverse charter schools offer students opportunities to create meaningful and authentic connections across lines of difference and prepare them to thrive in a diverse society. The second CEO spoke to personalized learning and how it has transformed the lives of students. The third CEO provided an overview on the significance of community organization and its impact of education justice. All three CEO and founders discussed their lived experiences and vignettes of their lives that influenced their journey while shaping the vision of their organization.

An epistemological lens of interpretivism was used to understand and interpret the CEO interview responses on their background, and its relationship to accountability and student achievement in education. Interpretivism allowed the CEO's voice to drive the findings of the

research. The theory acknowledged the natural and organic lived experiences within the

narrative of the CEO's background and its implications on their organization's future. The aim

was to interpret data to understand the prerogatives in opinions executive leadership hold when

facilitating mission-alignment to school leaders and educators.

The procedure entailed content analysis by the researcher to offer a more detailed

interpretation. Glaser and Straus (1967) used qualitative Constant Comparative Analysis to

systematically describe the meaning specified from the research questions. Constant

Comparative Analysis assisted the researcher in bracketing (or epoche) the data to remove all

preconceived notions to best understand respondent experiences (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas,

1994). Deductive coding was used as an invariant structure to highlight themes throughout

interview transcriptions to reduce text from participant experiences. Once a theme is identified

as essential and coded, there will be multiple reads to review if any evidence remained on that

specific theme. This process reoccurred as each theme was identified and coded. The analysis

and interpretation of the data referenced participant experiences in vignettes using clusters of

meanings to remove any overlap or repetitive statements (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994).

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the existing literature on educational leadership, to better

prepare executive leaders, and enrich the literature of charter schools. There are weak

understandings of the CEO's role that prevent efforts to support network executives. For

example, there is a lack of knowledge to enable leadership development, evaluation of funding

conditions operated by executive decision-making, and the assessment of network effectiveness,

sustainability, and size. The CEO is the primary educational administrator for the direction of

the organization (Peyser, 2011). Research is needed on executive leaders of CMOs to offer

insights on the day-to-day operations pursuing achievement-centered and practice-focused educational structures (Peurach & Gumus, 2011). The research would provide awareness of complexities and chaos to support unique leadership roles and academic achievement (Slattery, 2013).

There is a lack of understanding of the phrase *academic emphasis* due to the broad definition painted throughout the existing research. Even though the phrase is a way to frame high expectations in a classroom, how might a CEO elevate the practicality of the term academic emphasis to raise student achievement? Before the question is answered, we must build an understanding on how chief executives understand and interpret the term. The CEO has the ability to drive the organization meaning of the term academic emphasis. Tenets of the term may be woven throughout the organization from a top down perspective and may live in human resources, but at the end of the day the research on the topic lives in student achievement.

The study design paired with this significance offers a different perspective amongst our educational landscape. It is pertinent to obtain the narrative of chief executive officers of CMOs in order to understand how they frame decisions that impact student achievement. The perspectives will help establish a foundational outlook from the role of the CEO in education. Additionally, gleaning the personal perspective of the chief executive will add depth to the findings of the study.

Researcher Perspective/Positionality

My emerging perspective as a researcher leans on my experiences as a secondary and early college English teacher in a CMO. As an early career teacher in a CMO, I found ample supports on how to increase my effectiveness as a teacher serving inner city students and their families who chronically are underserved and underrepresented. My recent professional

endeavors have led me to assist in the development of a charter school that has aspirations of becoming a CMO in the breadth of expansion and scaling-up their model. My positionality relies on framing an academic emphasis from the classroom level to the organization level when raising the expectations for students and their families.

As a child growing up in a working-class home, I remember my parents struggling financially and the lived experience of having to live paycheck-to-paycheck. My father was a mechanic turned truck driver and my mother was a telephone operator. Both occupations making a little over minimum wage with minimal salary increases year-by-year left my brother and I designated as free-and-reduced lunch and our family as socio-economically disadvantaged. This experience showed me the importance of education and how education can be used to break the cycle of poverty. I strive to provide students and their families access to break their own cycles of low socio-economic status and create change in their communities.

My dissertation explores executive leadership in CMOs who serve low socio-economic families and their communities. I find it is my obligation as an emerging researcher who grew up in a working-class home to investigate how we can further develop an education system that fosters the full potential of all students. Within the current context of educational reform and charter schooling, it is critical to seek findings on how to better education of families and students who are underprivileged.

As a researcher, I influence the data collection process and the act of interpreting the data. As a white male, who is straight and married, a former Christian Baptist, an ex-football coach, and seeking a doctoral degree, I find myself obliged to state my lens in analyzing the data as my interpretations are one perspective. This rings truth as many CEOs of CMOs are woman whose narratives of being an executive leader in education need to be heard. It is without a

doubt listening to their perspectives will impact my perceptions on leadership; however, I will not be taking the stance as an insider. My Caucasian identity will serve as an outsider's lens to listen and invite agency to participant voice in research findings.

This study will offer me great insight on the work of executive leaders in CMOs and their perspectives and navigation on creating and sustaining academic emphasis to raise student achievement. Even though my bias cites the effectiveness of CMOs, I will provide opposing charter school literature specific to CMOs. Research in Chapter Two will glance at the discord between charter and traditional education, but will primarily focus on the flexibility and autonomy charter schools/organizations have when developing an academic emphasis. The purpose of this position is to spotlight the reform, not the contention.

Chapter Summary

In the chapters that follow, I discuss the experiences and perspectives of a chief executive officer in a CMO. The lives and voices of these executive leaders are used to understand the influence their role has on creating and sustaining an academic emphasis for their organizations. This dissertation focuses on tenets of how academic emphasis is understood, interpreted, and applied by executive leaders. Their voices and experiences are shared over six chapters.

Following this introductory chapter, I discuss the literature of charter schools in America, executive leadership, and academic emphasis. In Chapter Three, I describe the methodological tools used to collect and analyze data. Chapters Four and Five primarily focus on the presentation, analysis, and discussion of the perspectives of CEOs while Chapter Six offers recommendations for future research and conclusions on the dissertation. The terms "academic emphasis" and "academic press" are frequently considered interchangeable. Lessons can be learned from the existing literature on the traditional school district superintendency due to their

experiences as the highest ranking educational executive leader until this point. I use *executive leadership* to describe cabinet members on a CEO's leadership team. However, for this dissertation, I will solely be seeking to understand nuances of CEO as an executive leader in an educational environment.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

In this chapter, I discuss the theoretical framework to guide the study. I provide a summary of Charter Management Organizations (CMOs), executive leadership in education, and influential tenets to academic emphasis. I discuss strengths and opportunities for growth in a theoretical approach and apply theories in a practical context of chief executive officers (CEO) in CMOs. The final sections of this chapter outline how existing literature on how leadership understands academic emphasis to influence student achievement in the current study and how the theories align to the research questions. To begin, I provide a historical overview of charter school education in America.

History of Charter School Education

The landscape of American education has included a wide-range of institutions since the early 1800s. These institutions include: "church schools, small district and township schools, dame schools, academies, seminaries, colleges, schools associated with philanthropic societies, loose affiliations of students with private tutors, and other configurations" (Blount, 1998, p. 40). Nearly 25 years ago, charter schools launched to offer a different school choice in public education. Their focus is to inspire and develop innovative practices, to serve as the standard for cultivating skillful teaching and learning across organizations and districts, and to ultimately improve student achievement (Whitmire, 2016; Wohlstetter et al., 2015). These schools of choice in the public school system are exempt from several local and state guidelines and regulations that govern traditional unified school districts. In the trade for autonomy, charter schools operate within the parameters of their charter petition that has been agreed upon with their charter authorizer. Charter authorizers are either a surrounding school district or the governing county office of education who in theory hold charter schools accountable for student

achievement based on outcomes written in their "charter" petitions. The authorizer can revoke

or not renew charter schools for academic or fiscal reasons (Wohlstetter et al., 2015). The

innovative single reform of charter schools formulated from past isolated reforms such as, site-

based management, deregulation, school choice, and accountability dogma (Farrell et al., 2012).

Since the first charter legislation written in Minnesota in 1991, the one-by-one movement

transformed into networks of charter schools. The first network that emerged was for-profit

education management organizations (EMOs). The purpose of EMOs is to leverage and scale

economies to yield financial profit by providing educational services. CMOs appeared shortly

after as a non-profit counterpart. A CMO operates a minimum of three charter schools, a

minimum of 300 students, and under an umbrella supplying an aligned vision and mission,

instructional model, and central office team for ongoing management support (Wohlstetter et al.,

2015). Many charter schools act as start-up in their infancy and seek finances from funds

specific to charter schools and/or philanthropic avenues. For example, in California, the first

grant from the NewSchools Venture Fund came in 1998 to University Public Schools, an

emerging charter school network, founded by Don Shalvey and Reed Hastings. The charter

school network would soon be renamed Aspire Public Schools. After investments by

NewSchools Venture Fund and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundations, Aspire Public Schools

became the nation's first non-profit CMO (Peyser, 2011; Whitmire, 2016). By 2016, a study

found that there were 1,607 schools serving over 733,500 students operated by CMOs in the

United States (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2017).

Charter Schools

Charter school education has been a significant conversation amongst the current context

of American education system. Some researchers may state charter school reform has played a

role in the evolution of education in America as the conversation has shifted towards "school

choice". Hassel (2017) defines charter schools as:

> Charter schools are public schools of choice that operate with some independence from traditional school districts. Often operated by nonprofit organizations, they receive freedom from many of the laws and regulations that apply to public schools. In return, they are held accountable for their students' performance by their "authorizer," including the possibility of losing their charter and closing their doors if they fall short. As public schools, charters are open to all students, cannot charge tuition, and must abide by common public school policies related to health and safety, nondiscrimination, and good stewardship of public funds. (p. 13)

Many charter schools act as their own local education agency (LEA) (Whitmore, 2016) where

the principal is held in regards as a local CEO for the school site (Wohlstetter, Buck, Houston, &

Smith, 2016). The principal serves as the site instructional leader while accountable for day-to-

day operational and facility duties. In some instances, the principal (or other instructional

leaders) teachers courses to embody instructional leadership (Fusarelli, 2002). Some of the types

of charter schools available to students, families, and communities: EMOs, CMOs, within district

charter schools, and voucher endorsed charter schools. The majority of CMOs are structured like

traditional school district on paper (Farrell et al., 2012). A CMOs non-profit status lends itself a

minimum of three advantages: greater mission alignment, dissolved political challenges, and

access to philanthropic and benefaction capital. Executive leadership teams in CMOs offer

specific administrative, financial, and academic supports to each school in the network (Peyser,

2011).

The CMOs, who have regionally scaled-up their schools throughout the nation, have a

superintendent role responsible for region performance per mission-alignment initiative from

executive leadership at the central office. At the advent of local accountability, the role of the

superintendency has evolved, "shifting beyond reform-via-program-adoption to deep

engagement in the work of systemic, practice-focused improvement" (Peurach & Gumus, 2011,

p. 4). Similar to the traditional unified school district superintendency, the CEO is hired by the board of directors of the organization to oversee the operations and a direction of the CMO (Farrell et al., 2012). The job description and responsibilities of these superintendents have expanded to include: creating multi-year strategic plan for improvement, forming infrastructure for organizational and technical supports, fostering achievement-focused and practice-aligned culture, and building coherent, positive relationships with stakeholders and educational partners in the organization (Peurach & Gumus, 2011; Honig et al., 2010; Honig & Hatch, 2004; Rorrer et al., 2008; Supovitz, 2006).

Authorizers. An authorizer is the legal, charter-granting accountability measure to ensure high-quality performance of charter schools. Palmer and Gau (2005) provides a common list of authorizers across America: state school boards, independent state charter boards, university or community colleges, city or mayor's offices, nonprofit organizations, local, county, or regional school boards. After acknowledging the significance of charter authorization, the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) was founded to establish guidelines for oversight functions. NACSA published the first edition of *Principles and Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing* in 2004 that served as a guide on application process, performance contracting, oversight, evaluation, and renewal decision making (Wohlstetter et al., 2015).

In 2013, a NACSA survey discovered that 90 percent of authorizers were unified school districts also known as local education agencies (LEAs). The actions of authorizers have emphasized compliance over performance as the oversight of application processing, supervision monitoring, and renewal varied by authorizer and state (Wohlstetter et al., 2015). Carlson, Lavery, and Witte (2012) conducted research in Minnesota on authorizer and student

achievement data. The researchers found no difference statistically in charter school performance by type of authorizer (LEAs, higher education institutions, nonprofit organizations, and the State Department of Education). However, the study showed there is greater variability in student achievement among schools authorized by nonprofits than by LEAs. There is a need for more research on the types of authorizers and their impact on student achievement. Charter school quality more so depends on implementation, school design and development, and talent, rather than the actions of the authorizer (Lake, 2014).

Scaling-up & replication. Prior to a CMO scaling-up, authorizers, benefactors, and state and federal policymakers need to inspect the early performance of CMOs who desire to scale-up, not until after replication and network growth. The complexity of current environmental and organizational factors ultimately informs CMO growth (Wohlstetter et al., 2015). There are many external and internal factors that play into whether charter organizations scale-up and replicate. The external factors consist of state charter school policy and whether legislation is written to accept and favor charter schools. The most common external roadblocks charter schools face when scaling-up includes state charter cap, per-pupil funding, facilities availability and funding, and governance autonomy and authorization. Potential barriers that act as internal factors consist of funding practices, human capital needs, and central office capacity. Local factors take form as those in executive roles (e.g., district superintendents, local school board members, county leadership, mayors, city councilmen), opportunity for partnerships, and availability of local facilities (Farrell et al., 2012).

Bolman and Deal (2017) recognizes structural imperatives and draws connections to scaling up schools in CMO and the importance of leadership. A CMO operates different than any district as it is multi-regional. For example, as of 2018, Summit Public Schools website

displays the operation of eight schools in California (Sunnyvale, San Jose, and Richmond) and

three schools in Washington (Tacoma and Seattle). Another example is Aspire Public Schools

whose website presents the operation of 36 schools in California: 11 in the Bay Area, 14 in the

Central Valley, and 11 in Los Angeles. The CMO has four schools in Memphis, Tennessee as

well. The *size and age* has a tremendous impact on decision making in whether the

infrastructure of the organization can support growth based on *core processes in* student

achievement, fiscal sustainability, and human resource structures (Bolman & Deal, 2017). The

start-up of an independent charter school is similar to the start-up of a business. The two go

through the similar trials and tribulations in the foundational years while celebrating the small

wins. In many ways, a start-up must have a simpler structure for an *environment* to maintain

stability and to retain high-performing educators and support staff. Bolman and Deal (2017)

explain that *strategy and goals* needs to be consistent throughout any process of growth, but

should be delivered through various modes (i.e., signage, website, social media, etc.). The

operational systems need to be processes in delivering information in the organization. The

protocols within *informational technology* will provide a flexibility in disseminating information

across regions from schools to home office and vice versa. The *nature of the workforce* is

precedent on the vision of the professional learning and development model and the emphasis the

organization places on growth. The dimensions offer strong and effective characteristics in the

design of multi-regional organizations.

  Critique of charter schools. Charter schools are gaining traction in some regions of

America (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2015); however, critiques of charter

schools exist among empirical literature, media, and public discourse (Heilig & Clark, 2018).

The criticisms cover the unrealistic demands of charter schools among various stakeholders,

which include, communities, grassroots educators, students, and families (Ravitch, 2013). Tyack and Cuban (1995) indicate reform critics have produced claim after claim for decades on how radical change in education is code for the mere tinkering of rhetoric in long-standing routines and regulations (e.g., teacher-centered, standardized testing, etc.). Mirel (2001) notes that hegemonic forces (e.g., national standards, school choice, consumer demands, etc.) severely limit the grade in which any *break the mold reform design* is developed to make radical change and appeal to stakeholders.

In an ethnographic study of a CMO, Ross, McDonald, Alberg, Gallagher, and Calloway (2005) found teacher-centered as a dominant instructional strategy and disregarded strategies like systematic personalized instruction, performance tasks, student self-assessment, one-on-one tutoring, technology in the classroom, and parent/community engagement. On the surface, the radical reform of this CMO's extended school day and school year hides the fact that their approach relies on traditional instructional practices and are rather conservative (Lack, 2009). Many critics also lament that charter school ideology is linked to a form of social Darwinism (Wells, Lopez, Scott, & Holme, 1999) that students who are academically privileged or motivated survive while others are pushed back out to traditional public schools (Lacireno-Paquet, Holyoke, Moser, & Henig, 2002). Many CMOs have explicit contracts that hold students and their families responsible to the high expectations (e.g., elevated graduation requirements) of the organization to continue enrollment at the school year after year (Berliner & Glass, 2014).

In general, the conflict between market ideology and democracy receive many critiques in American public education. As democratic equality opposes social mobility and social efficiency, most CMOs claim to be a hybrid of private and public education that can increase

student outcomes, but works as detriment for the public good as it leaves those most chronically

underserved students behind after being pushed back to their neighborhood schools (Lack, 2009).

Labaree (1997) communicates the friction between these ideologies:

> Unfettered economic freedom leads to a highly unequal distribution of wealth and power, which in turn undercuts the possibility for democratic control; but at the same time, restricting such economic freedom in the name of equality infringes on individual liberty, without which democracy can turn into the dictatorship of the majority. Each generation of American reformers has tried to figure out a way to preserve the Jeffsonian ideal of political equality in the face of the Hamiltonian reality of economic inequality—and to do so without stifling the productivity of the market economy. (p. 41)

Critics argue charter schools could never practically scale across the nation due to the altruistic

belief that charter education provides a remedy to the failing democratic public schools in the

same underserved communities (Lack, 2009).

Charter and district discord. The conflict between charter and district began at the

inception of charter school education in the late 1990s. Since, the juxtaposition of the two

approaches has only amounted in debates that have divided our country on the issue of school

choice. Many conversations seem to be lined with political agendas filled with misconceptions

and overused generalizations of charter schools. One generalization being that charter schools

are market-driven for-profit entities who want to bank on entrepreneurs driving a culture of

performativity in schools. Even though there are EMOs who operate in this fashion (Saltman,

2007), there are effective and innovative CMOs whose non-profit agendas are strategically

planned to reform the many inequities American education system has provided for hundreds of

years.

However, there are many still skeptical of charter schools due to the generalizations of

privatized education. The landscape has forced CMOs to explicitly state they are a "public non-

profit" organization on their signage and websites. Giroux (2010b) believes the school leaders

operating charter schools might as well be following the blueprints of those wealthy entrepreneurs investing in for-profit universities. Saltman (2015) adds by noting that profits can seem subtle as non-profit charter school leaders intentionally have a substantial higher salary that lessens teacher salaries compared to the traditional unified school district's scale. Giroux (2010a) attests leadership is devalued in charter schools due to disconnect in the traditional democratic approach of schooling and the business model of schooling that uses power, quantitative tools, and systems to elevate performance. These market-driven concepts of management do not foster innovation and social integrity in schools. If anything, these concepts devalue the discourse and integrity of school leadership (Giroux, 2010a). Giroux (2010b) also opines charter schools are a vehicle for the middle-class and fostering tracking that hinders students in low socio-economic homes with less support and eventually kicks them back to their neighborhood district school.

Saltman (2007, 2015) notes there are a number of strategies to mask the privatization of U.S. education, for example, the dissolve of neighborhood district schools in poor communities to be replaced with charter schools, voucher schemes, and for-profit charter schools. Giroux (2010b) claims the privatization of schools is to blame for the destruction of public housing in urban neighborhoods in Chicago, which has gentrified those areas as a means for many gated communities. As the private industry emerges in American education, we can distinguish nuance between for-profit and non-profit in student enrollment. Vouchers are a corporate school reform (i.e., EMOs) ploy to shift public tax dollars to a non-neighborhood district school (Saltman, 2012). Whereas, public lottery procedures are educational code policies public non-profit charter organizations must follow. Both endorsing the idea of school choice. This is why vouchers, charters, and EMOs do not catalyze change in districts in richer communities because

families are less likely to leave the neighborhood district school (Saltman, 2007). Dr. Diane

Ravitch (2010), former assistant to U.S. Secretary of Education, explains she now disagrees with

her earlier works to expand school choice initiatives such as, privatization, charter schools, and

vouchers as these systems reward high-performance.

Charter Management Organizations (CMOs)

Due to the specificity of the research topic, this section will be devoted to citing relevant

literature on CMOs. According to the Center for Research on Education Outcomes at Stanford

University (2017), in order to qualify as a CMO, an organization manages the operation of at

least three charter schools. Likewise, when an organization is referred to as a "Network" it

oversees the operation of at least three charter schools. The term "Network" can be misleading

as it is used to describe both EMOs and CMOs. Farrell, Wohlstetter, and Smith (2012) defines a

CMO as a "(a) non-profit organization that (b) manages multiple charter schools (c) with a

common mission/instructional design with (d) a home office/management team that offers

ongoing support to its schools" (p. 503). The structure and function of CMOs are complex and

uncertain due to recent emerging literature (Peurach & Gumus, 2011). CMOs scale up

interdependent tasks, such as, crafting a strategic plan for growth, examining and interpreting

environments, building on-going professional learning and development, creating a public

identity, establishing a financial strategy, fostering relationships, evaluating success through

various measurements, and maintaining autonomy (Farrell, Nayfack, Smith, Wohlstetter, &

Wong, 2009).

Function. Key characteristics of the charter school reform are creativity and flexibility

for all stakeholders (Maas & Lake, 2015). There are many aspects that influence student

achievement of at-risk students; variation in pedagogy, structures of academic emphasis,

educator collaboration, effective professional learning and development opportunities, grow student-teacher relationships, delivery of positive reinforcement, and strong intervention and prevention supports (Hung et al., 2014). The charter sector constructs innovative support structures when scaling successful schools for replication. Some CMOs leading the reform have developed their own training and certification programs for teachers and leaders that will ensure organization practices, culture and routine will set a frame for the establishment of any new school (Maas & Lake, 2015). The highest-achieving (student achievement data) CMOs in the NewSchools Venture Fund portfolio are those who emphasize a "no excuses" approach to teaching and learning. The culture of these organizations are "based on explicit expectations for both academic achievement and behavior, with meaningful consequences when those high expectations are not met" (Peyser, 2011, p. 37). Many scholars and leaders in education consider charter schools as an alternative that provides "leadership teams the opportunity to image and create coherent, effective schools, free of institutional inertia and bureaucratic constraints" (Maas & Lake, 2015, p. 172). Leaders are allowed to build a staff that is united under one common mission, adhere to unifying instructional practices, and can subtly pivot with any school policy in order to align and further cultivate the mission of the school (Maas & Lake, 2015; Wohlstetter et al., 2015). Data points prove great variation from one CMO to the next, but there are differences in school design, staffing, and budget allocation (Peyser, 2011).

Structure. The infrastructure of a CMO also has the potential to remain flexible with the potential to pivot in another direction if need be. Designing an effective school is a demanding task no matter the environment, yet conditions create barriers that take attention away from improving teaching and learning for better success (Maas & Lake, 2015). Lake et al. (2010) notes that CMOs are structured to adapt to "accomplish a variety of goals, including increased

time for instruction, emphasis on teacher accountability, alternative performance reward systems for teachers, and less disruption due to traditional district politics" (as cited in Farrell et al., 2012).

Many challenges districts face when attempting to design highly effective schools are reform fatigue, union barriers, and bureaucratic red tape (Fullan, 2007; Kirst & Wirt, 2009). Even in the environments where school leaders confront the system to attend to student and teacher needs it is still challenging to cultivate a culture that calls for urgent improvement in schools (Maas & Lake, 2015). Darling-Hammond (1998) concurred with the necessity to examine the structures of conventional education authorities by building capacity in teachers. An equitable education is exemplified by teacher collaboration, compassionate behaviors, and shared decision-making (as cited in Mayfield & Garrison-Wade, 2015).

The most effective organizations seek to generate an excitement for learning and expectation for college access and success for all with a pledge to work hard and persevere through failures or roadblocks (Peyser, 2011). Normative challenges with implementation, development, and effectiveness raise speculation. Some critics, for instance, have depicted "the large-scale enactment of highly-specified, school-wide designs as a form of top-down, one-size-fits-all reform at odds with traditions of local autonomy and professional control in education" (Peurach & Gumus, 2011, p.3; Klugh & Borman, 2006). These widespread franchise-like enterprises in the non-profit division often depends on local players who develop personal value and reward from flexibility and agency for success (Peurach & Gumus, 2011).

Peyser (2011) notes the similarities and differences in the top five high-performing CMOs versus the bottom five CMOs all within the NewSchools Venture Fund portfolio as referenced earlier. The five highest-performing CMOs serve 85 schools and 28,000 students

where the majority are low-income. These CMOs have found their students earning more than 25 percent higher proficiency rates than local district counterparts. The portfolio found key similarities in comparing these CMOs: school populations are approximately the same, central office expenses in total CMO budget is the same, instructional programs are relatively the same as well. The differences between the CMOs: central/home office teammates committed to human resources is more prevalent, central office has a higher percentage of staff to support throughout total CMO teammates, school-level spending per student is higher (Peyser, 2011). Research on charter school networks (CMOs) has discovered that home office personnel often assume the role of facilitator in sharing across school sites—a model reinforced purposeful due to geographical clustering by regions (Wohlstetter, Houston, & Buck, 2015; Wohlstetter et al., 2015). For instance, it is common to find CMOs that have two schools Grades K–12 operating on the same campus (Wohlstetter et al., 2016). This presents a key factor as there is a 20 percent spending gap between the lowest and highest achievers though one of the CMOs in the top five high performers spends less per student that the portfolio average. The high-achieving CMOs devote the extra funds to hiring more teachers (Peyser, 2011).

Academic models. Overall, the academic programs and instructional models have variations in approach from one charter organization to another or even one charter organization to another. A study from Hung, Badejo, and Bennett (2014) describes that students feel a school-wide instructional approach was constructed to serve the specific student population based on the mission of the school. This provided variety from personalized instruction, teacher-centered instruction, computer-based independent study, or college credit dual enrollment. These mission-aligned themes offer the mode to desired student outcomes of the school or organization. The charter organizations with a data-driven approach to student achievement

often adopt standards-based curriculum that supplies a heavily weighted focus on math and English/language arts; especially, during the organizations start-up years or even in cases of scaling-up. This may look like extra time for reading and math each day and dependence on direct instruction and small group instruction as an act to differentiate pedagogy. These instructional models are calling for the development and implementation of comprehensive formative assessments along with instructional coaching models to complement effective and consistent data-driven classroom practice throughout a school year (Peyser, 2011).

Charter schools have been reported elevating learning opportunities for underserved and marginalized populations and offer quality education to serve students of color and their parents (Gleason, Clark, Tuttle, & Dwyer, 2010). Charter school education provides a more equitable learning experience serving as a school of choice (Lake et al., 2010). Half of the CMOs in the NewSchools portfolio are generating high student achievement results. The average students meeting standard proficiency rates are at minimum 15 percentage points higher than surrounding school districts (Peyser, 2011). The U.S. Labor Department reported a study in 2010 that stated approximately 70 percent of 2009 high school graduates enrolled in college the fall after graduation. Students from low socio-economic homes who were college bound high school graduates was 57 percent. Whereas, 84 percent of seniors who graduated from CMOs enrolled in college, and almost 60 percent of those graduates entering four-year universities (Peyser, 2011).

Executive Leadership

In 1837, the first local superintendents were first established in Buffalo, New York, and Louisville, Kentucky. There were over thirty large cities with superintendents in 1870. Local school boards were established within the 1870s and took the reigns as the authority in decision-

making. This authority gave school boards the hiring power for the superintendency and implications on how to operate the schools. Charles Frances Adams Jr. argued at a National Education Association meeting in 1880, "that those who filled [superintendency] positions were not particularly well trained for their work that mainly consisted of managing repairs" (Blount, 1998, p. 39).

In addition, Blount (1998) uses Charles Frances Adam Jr.'s three phases of the early superintendency to depict the evolution of the role. The first phase consists of the superintendent managing building structures and equipping school houses with the appropriate necessities, such as, an out-house, benches, desks, slates, text books, and a map. The second phase of the early superintendency came in the 1840s and 1850s as the role was expected to build schools with a pseudo-intellectual lens. Schools were structured to be "huge, mechanical, educational machines, or mills." In this era of education, it is not a surprise schools were expected to operate like "clockwork" as classes functioned "with military precision to a given destination at a specified date." By this time, schools began to resemble building structures and assembly line dispositions that surfaced during the industrial revolution. For example, school buildings took shape similar to state prisons, hospitals, railroad yards, and cotton mills. At the turn of the twentieth century, the third phase brought a scientific inquiry frame for superintendents to embed in their practice. The science of education forecasted a Baconian philosophy that suggested superintendents use the likes of the scientific method to improve student learning. The work of the executive school leader incorporated teacher education (i.e., professional development) and the philosophy of teaching and learning in general (Blount, 1998, p. 40).

In many instances, the ability to lead and facilitate curriculum and instruction tend to get the most focus. Executive leadership is a new concept to education, particularly in context of

charter school education, due to executive leader's role becoming more diverse and robust. In one instance, a 40-plus school CMO that spans across four regions will have a region superintendent while the CEO oversees the vision of all four regions. The CEO title may not be synonymous throughout all CMOs. The leader at the top of the organization chart in charter school organizations may go by many titles, which include: executive director, superintendent, chief executive officer, head of school, principal (Bottoms & O'Neil, 2001). For this study, the researcher will use the term "Chief Executive Officer" to understand and interpret the highest ranking administrative role in a CMO.

Some CMO chief executive officers are not geographically defined like a traditional district superintendent due to the oversight of schools located in multiple regions within a state and/or across state lines. With this business-like model, there is a significant hole in the research that has not examined the role and/or characteristics of a CMO chief executive officer, or any executive leaders on a senior leadership team for that matter. With this modest body of current research, the potential to make a meaningful contribution to understanding CMO executive leadership is great and can surface understandings about this non-profit business-like model we have in education. This will serve as an outline moving forward as the dissertation aims to examine executive leadership's understandings of academic emphasis and how their role supports student achievement.

The section will highlight the responsibilities and role of an executive leader. An "executive officer" is one who possess the responsibility for implementing, executing, and sustaining initiatives of the network. Responsibilities may be delegated by board or committee members and other stakeholders (Peurach & Gumus, 2011). Many executives are expected to exist as the cultural hero of the organization. They are perceived as "living logos, human icons,

whose words and deeds exemplify and reinforce core values" (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 245). As the role of school administrator was created, teachers simultaneously lost autonomy and authority due to school leadership consolidating and organizing daily operations (Blount, 1998, p. 40). Organizational leaders today are obligated to stay current with the rapidly evolving expectations from local, state, and federal stakeholders and how those expectations will be executed in their own organization (Clayton, 2015). This description primarily falls on the shoulder of the district or organization's CEO or any of the following roles: other C-suite officers (e.g. chief financial officer, chief operating officer, and chief information officer), president, vice president, directors, board members, and managers roles who have decision-making capabilities (Peurach & Gumus, 2011). Blount (1998) describes the superintendency as deserving the recognition of "school executive" as they stand "elbow-to-elbow with the captains of industry and other civic leaders" (p.40). A CEO acts as the public face of the organization fulfilling social responsibilities that include maintaining partnerships with influential stakeholders (e.g., board members, external partnerships, union representatives). The face of the organization suggests being a lobbyist, advocate, and spokesperson for your "organization, its clients, its supporters, and its cause" (Peurach & Gumus, 2011, p. 8). The school executive also prepares themselves by studying the philosophy of education rather than the practice of teaching (Blount, 1998, p. 40).

As the work of an executive leader in an educational setting is ever-evolving, their role is complex and ambiguous. Typically, the executive leaders focus is on elevating effectiveness and efficiency among organizational goals, such as, teaching and learning outcomes, leadership development, human resource protocols, and operational logistics. The functions performed by executive leaders tend to extend beyond the organization as stated above (e.g., acting as a

lobbyist, advocate, spokesperson, etc.), but the role's initial priority is to cultivate, catalyze, and codify culture and relationships within the organization (e.g., articulating the mission and vision, exhibiting norms and values, and build relationships). These functions expect the responsibilities of an entrepreneurial and innovative spirit that has their thumb on the pulse of the current educational landscape while securing the organization's viability and legitimacy to succeed (Peurach & Gumus, 2011). For example, effective executive leaders in CMOs place an emphasis on building capacity and support systems of the central office in the use of achievement data in impact talent development and daily classroom (Peyser, 2011).

There are weak understandings of the role that prevent efforts to support network executives, for example, there is a lack of knowledge to enable leadership development, evaluation of funding conditions operated by executive decision-making, and the assessment of network effectiveness, sustainability, and size (Peurach & Gumus, 2011). In particular, the CEO has the strategic responsibility to execute results on multiple goals, including elevating efficiency and effectiveness, maintaining the engagement and loyalty of teammates, sustaining the organization over time, and preserving the validity of your organization among key stakeholders (Peurach & Gumus, 2011).

Further research is necessary to "uncover the most efficacious school support practices in cases where different school leadership capacities and resources are present. Some school leaders flourish when given increased autonomy; others perform best with more direct guidance and outside support" (Wohlstetter et al., 2016, p. 180). An executive's weak understanding of the role may impact the knowledge and practices of networks in the organization and the K-12 public school system. This poses limits to create, innovate, and lead educational institutions that act as a catalyst to elevate pedagogy and achievement (Peurach & Gumus, 2011).

Theoretical Framework

The study will use the theoretical framework of instructional leadership as a lens to view and develop established empirical literature. The existing framework will function as a guide to build support and structure philosophical, epistemological, methodological, and analytical approaches throughout the dissertation (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). The approach intends to catalyze change in individuals and social systems.

The section of existing literature on the theoretical framework is reviewed in this chapter. The section will provide a frame for instructional leadership that will interpret the understandings of CMO chief executive officers. The section will begin with a brief review of literature on transformational leadership as there are tenets of the theory that serve as the foundation for instructional leadership.

Transformational leadership. The theory aims to acknowledge the creation of valuable and positive change in followers with the end goal of developing followers into leaders (Burns, 1978; Marks & Printy, 2003). Transformational leadership places an emphasis on earning trust through relationship building and providing support for another. Followers and leaders are bound together in the precipitating change of the transformation process. Transformational leadership positively effects the sense of collective teacher efficacy while influencing a faculty's commitment to a professional learning community (Orr et al., 2008).

Leadership is a vital part to any organization as poor leadership can lead to unhealthy adversity (Kellis & Ran, 2012). Burns (1978) reminds us that "leading does not mean managing" and iterates how leadership in our society is not always perfectly understood based on comments made about leaders (p. 451). Likewise, a manager telling a subordinate what to do, whereas a leader working cooperatively and collaboratively with others on ideas that align with a

vision (Rentz & Lentz, 2013). Burns (1978) establishes a lens that power is a universal tool and permeates human connection and relationship. Power exists and is not sought after. The nature of power is the light and the dark that burdens most humanity. Janda (1960) takes a different approach by defining power as "the ability to cause other persons to adjust their behavior in conformance with communicated behavior patterns" (as cited in Burns, 1978, p. 19). Burns (1978) continues with his own definition of power, "I define leadership as leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and motivations-the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations-of both leaders and followers" (p. 19).

Transformational leadership was originally discovered and applied in the business sector; however, scholars such as Bass, Avolio, and Leithwood were the pioneers to implement the theory in education (Burns, 1978). According to Burns (1978), the aim in developing transformational leadership was for the leader and colleagues to experience moral levels of conduct and ethical aspirations and optimism together. Leithwood, Begley, and Cousin (2005) define transformational leadership when a leader takes steps towards major changes in the structure, function, and nature in a phenomenon (as cited in Denmark, 2012). In addition, Leithwood (1994) framed seven characteristics an educational leader must have to be transformational: 1) building school vision and establishing goals, 2) creating a productive school culture, 3) providing intellectual stimulation, 4) offering individualized support, 5) modeling best practices and important organizational values, 6) demonstrating high-performance expectations, and 7) developing structures to foster participation in school decisions. Whereas, Bass (1998) included the areas of trust, admiration, and respect to transformational leadership theory.

Burns (1978) recognizes power and leadership as not things, but as relationship and human connection. Transformational leadership intends to elevate followers to the extent that leaders and followers depend on each other's feedback and collaboration. William James on human connection: "The deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated…First, arouse in the other person an eager want, then to satisfy" (as cited in Burns, 1978, p. 447). The goal of the theory is to uplift each individual to realize they are a part of something larger where collective interests are at the forefront of every discussion and decision, and personal interests are set aside (Burns, 1978).

Instructional leadership. Marks and Printy (2003) note the literature has evolved with the emphasis on instructional leadership. There are two approaches to effective school leadership: a *transformational leader* who focuses on teachers and an *instructional leader* who focuses on students (Hattie, 2015). Robinson (2011) acknowledges the difference between the two leadership theories, "The more generic nature of transformational leadership theory, with its focus on leader–follower relations rather than on the work of improving learning and teaching, may be responsible for its weaker effect on student outcomes. Transformational leadership theory predicts teacher attitudes and satisfaction, but, on the whole, its positive impacts on staff do not flow through to students" (p. 15).

Murphy (1990) acknowledges that effective school leaders where "the quality of teaching and learning were strong—demonstrated instructional leadership both directly and indirectly (as cited in Marks and Printy, 2003, p. 373)." The school leaders practiced a shared form of instructional leadership. An ambitious instructional leader codifies and pursues a rich and complex vision of teaching and learning (Grossman & Cawn, 2016). School leaders who practice a shared form of instructional leadership apply four behaviors with implications to

elevate instruction: (a) developing the school mission and goals; (b) coordinating, monitoring, and evaluating curriculum, instruction, and assessment; (c) promoting a climate for learning; and (d) creating a supportive work environment (Murphy, 1990). Focused on learning, instructional leaders infuse management decisions and regular school routines with educational meaning (Dwyer, 1984).

Instructional leadership theory (also known as student-centered leadership) has gained traction in recent years as Viviane Robinson has built on existing literature and defined the five dimensions of the theory in greater depth. Similar to the practices cited by Murphy (1990) in the paragraph above, the five dimensions of student-centered leadership are packaged with effect size impact on student achievement: (1) establishing goals and expectations has a 0.42 effect size, (2) resourcing strategically has a 0.31 effect size, (3) planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum has a 0.42 effect size, (4) promoting and participating in teacher learning and development has a 0.84 effect size, and (5) ensuring an orderly and supportive environment has a 0.27 effect size (Robinson, 2011). Based on the data, student achievement increases most when the instructional leader advocates and facilitates teacher learning and development. Timperley (2011) found the relationship between student achievement and teacher learning was established by a distributed leadership model where lead teachers and school leadership worked together to create learning situations and inquiry habits to shift mindsets about instructional practices that positively impact students. Table 1 defines each leadership practice as a dimension to student-centered leadership.

Table 1: Leadership Practices Derived from Studies of Effects of Leadership on Students

Dimension	Category	Meaning	Significance
1	Establishing goals and expectations	Setting goals and communicating expectations, while managing numerous equally important demands	Focuses on how to prioritize demands and involve staff to ensure clarity and consensus about goals
2	Strategic Resourcing	Resource allocation and staff recruitment that aligns with main teaching goals	Emphasizes the purpose of strategically allocating resources to align with pedagogical practices, and includes provision of appropriate expertise through staff recruitment
3	Planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum	Direct involvement in the support and evaluation of teaching through regular classroom visits and provision of formative and summative feedback to teachers. Direct oversight of curriculum through school-wide coordination	Signifies importance of including teacher and student stakeholders in pedagogical decisions; having educators coordinate curriculum evaluation; provide effective feedback to teachers to elevate instruction based on objective observation; and systematic monitoring of student progress across contents and grade-levels for school improvement
4	Promoting and participating in teacher learning and development	Leadership that not only promotes but directly participates with teachers in formal or informal professional learning	Explains both formal and informal professional learning. Formal: faculty meetings, professional learning communities, and professional development. Informal: conversations on teaching challenges
5	Ensuring an orderly and supportive environment	Protecting time for teaching and learning by reducing external pressures and interruptions and establishing an orderly and supportive environment both inside and outside classrooms	Indicates school leaders need to ensure an orderly and supportive environment through clear and consistently enforced social expectations

Note. Adapted from *Student-Centered Leadership* (143-148), by V.M.J. Robinson, 2011, Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass. Copyright [2011] by John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

The table above highlights the demands of the day-to-day practices for effective school leaders. Dimension one focuses on the significance of establishing goals and expectations and how multiple conflicting demands can make items seem equally significant. The goals set by leadership provides focus to what demand needs to be prioritized in efforts to tend to teacher and student growth. Dimension two emphasizes the purpose of strategically allocating resources to align with pedagogical practices. Whereas, dimension three signifies the importance of planning, coordinating, and evaluating high-quality teaching and learning. The practice includes: (1) including teacher and student stakeholders in pedagogical decisions, (2) leaning on educators to coordinate curriculum evaluation, (3) provide effective feedback to teachers to elevate instruction based on objective observation, and (4) systematic monitoring of student progress across contents and grade-levels for the purpose of school improvement. Dimension four requires leaders to promote and be a participant in teacher learning and development. Professional learning can be both formal (faculty meetings, professional learning communities, and professional development) and informal (conversations on teaching challenges). Dimension five indicates school leaders need to ensure an orderly and supportive environment through clear and consistently enforced social expectations (Robinson, 2011).

The five leadership dimensions are actionable practices to manage and optimize the learning environment. The goals of the dimensions are to ensure high-quality teaching and learning while developing a sense of collective efficacy among stakeholders (Bendikson, Robinson, & Hattie, 2012). The dimensions are effective foci alone; however, the practices call for a foundation of leadership capabilities to make gains in student achievement. The capabilities consist of (a) leadership knowledge, (b) solving complex problems, and (c) building relational trust amongst stakeholders (Robinson, 2010).

Table 2: Links Between Leadership Capabilities and Student Outcomes

Research Study	Leadership capabilities	Leadership practices	School and classroom conditions	Student outcomes
Leadership Content Knowledge (LCK) (Nelson & Sassi, 2005; Stein & Nelson, 2003)	Observations of classroom teaching followed by interviews to assess leaders' pedagogical content knowledge about the teaching of mathematical reasoning and how teachers learn to teach such reasoning	Observations of how principals observe in classrooms, give teacher feedback, lead discussion of curriculum choices, and lead teacher learning about student grouping practices	Interview data about how principals' new instructional leadership practices led to changes in administrative routines such as bringing classroom observation rubrics into closer alignment with curriculum goals	No evidence
Complex Problem-Solving (Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995)	Interviewed principals before and after staff meeting to discover the reasoning and attitudes that informed the intended and actual leadership practices	Observations of principals' leadership of a real staff problem-solving situation	Indirect links to school conditions through sample selection procedures	Indirect links to school outcome through sample selection procedures
Relational Trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002)	Annual surveys of teacher– principal trust based on teachers' perceptions of principal's • personal regard • interpersonal respect • competence • integrity	Qualitative assessment in intensive case studies of specific leadership practices that ground relational trust	Annual teacher surveys of: • attitude to innovation and risk • outreach to parents • teacher professional community	Trends in annual student achievement gains in reading and math

Note. Adapted from "Instructional Leadership to Leadership Capabilities: Empirical Findings and Methodological Challenges," by V.M.J. Robinson, 2010, *Leadership and Policy in Schools, 9,* p. 5. Copyright (2010) by Taylor & Francis.

Leithwood's research on three pillars of leadership capabilities indicated in Table 2 serve as domains school leaders approach the actionable dimensions. For example, school leaders who have a strong understanding in specific content knowledge and pedagogy are those who can facilitative knowledge and skill to teachers well. Whereas, a school leaders who does not have a strong foundation of educational knowledge will find challenges in supporting and monitoring teacher growth (Spillane and Seashore Louis, 2002). Additionally, the second pillar indicates leaders who can effectively solve complex problems that are originally ill-structured or lack adequate solution criteria are able to find clearer and greater outcomes for teacher and student outcomes (Robinson, 1993). The third pillar suggests the more leaders emphasize trust building in professional relationships and place teaching and learning as the core purpose, the greater their impact on student achievement will be (Robinson, 2011). Ultimately, these capabilities act as a lens to obtain high-quality teaching and learning to elevate student outcomes.

The social process behind building relational trust among stakeholders is significant. The school leader's role calls for the influence of others in ways that advance the progress of the group toward their goals (Robinson, 2001). The first criterion in the process is acknowledging that trust is built through interpersonal respect and consists of civil regard for others. The second element includes caring for others in both their professional roles and their personal lives. The third criterion provides the competence for others to collaborate with the school leader. The fourth principle is to hold a high regard for moral and ethical personal integrity that is used to mitigate challenges in schools (Robinson, 2010).
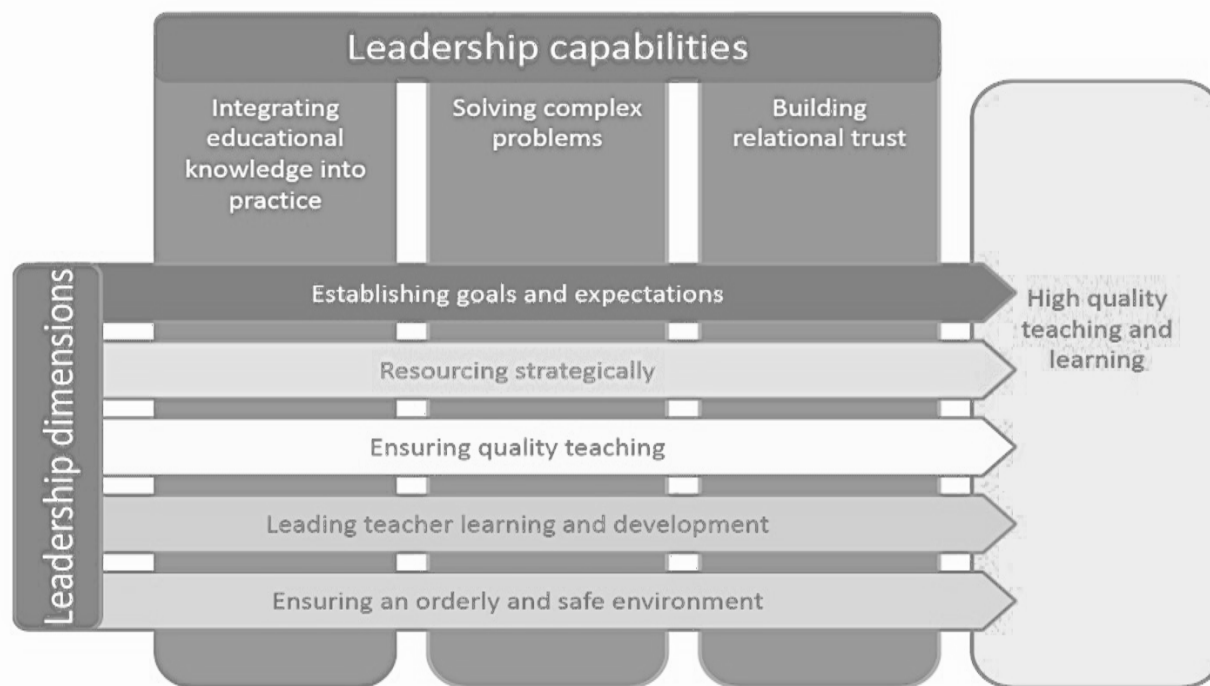
Figure 1: Instructional Leadership Framework. Adopted from *Student-Centered Leadership* (143-148), by V.M.J. Robinson, 2011, Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass. Copyright [2011] by John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

The student-centered leadership model is a collaboration of effective leadership capabilities and leadership dimensions, rather than the two concepts existing in isolation. As presented in Figure 1, the dimensions must travel through capabilities in order to elevate student achievement. The framework places student learning at the forefront as teacher effectiveness becomes a vehicle for student growth. Instructional leadership provides a framework for exploring an organization and school leader's approach in developing an academic emphasis that places high-quality teaching and learning first.

The study uses instructional leadership to draw parallels between an organization and school leader. The capabilities and dimension stated in the above figure provides relevant and tangible attributes that are effective practices for organization leadership as well as school leadership. This study seeks to explore the CEOs impact on student achievement through an the

lens of instructional leadership. With this, the study does not assume all CEOs have these skills, the study only seeks to interpret the data based on alignment to the capabilities and dimensions of the instructional leadership theory. The theory may or may not apply more effectively based on the different structures of traditional district and a CMO.

Social Cognitive Theory

This section is to establish background and existing literature on the significance of social cognitive theories' formative interactions with academic emphasis. Surveying the existing literature of social cognitive theory will offer scaffolding knowledge on how academic emphasis is built throughout an organization through a collective efficacious mindset. In these cases, social cognitive theory is presented as a transition into the existing literature on academic emphasis in the following section. Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory is the tenet on how cognition, environment, and behavior influences organizations' actions. Social cognitive theory relies on the cerebral capacity of individuals to organize and adapt behavior and environment to operate organizations. Bandura recommended a causation model that reciprocated cognition, environment, and behavior to work in tandem with each other. The theory suggests a nuanced structure that when one aspect of the structure is changed, the other two aspects change as well. Thus, the external environment (local, state, federal) that commands more rigorous academic expectations will cause an alteration in organization cognition and behavior (Bakewell Barron, 2014).

Bandura offers personal and social interactions that provides confidence within a collective system (e.g., classroom culture, teacher-student relationships, teacher teams, faculty teams), which are predicated on a group's collective shared belief in its capability to achieve goals and accomplish desired outcomes (Pajares, 2002). Bandura (1991) acknowledges that

behind the core of every interaction is the ability of "intentional and purposive action" (p. 248). Efficacy is one of the tenets of agency. Efficacy can be experienced at the individual or organizational level. Efficacy is the trust "the individual or organization has the capacity to reach a predetermined goal" (Bakewell Barron, 2014, p.17). Whereas, the belief to execute a strategy to accomplish a desired outcome is collective efficacy (Bandura, 1997). The base of social cognitive theory is grounded in the pairing of efficacious beliefs and agency (Bakewell Barron, 2014).

Normative environments. Hoy and Miskel (2005) describe how norms are a factor in the purpose and process of setting informal unified expectations established through collective experiences and held accountable by the larger whole in an organization. Even though Parson and Shils (1951) recognized norms determine processes in social systems, yet norms are not as magical as we think. Nonetheless, norms need to be read as one subsystem of a social system. Norms within a system are constantly amended to meet the expectations of the social system to guarantee stability. Norms also assists with membership and loyalty to mission-alignment in an organization. The individual and organization membership "voluntarily agree to the unwritten rules" of the leaders and decisions that govern the organization (Bakewell Barron, 2014, p. 20). An individual's loyalty to social norms relies on consistency and fidelity as the involvement in a social system is voluntary (Bandura, 1991).

Due to membership and allegiance being voluntary norms, rewards and support have the capacity to effect individual and organizational behaviors (Bakewell Barron, 2014). The commitment to a normative environment in a social system elevates cohesiveness as team that prevents noncompliance (Parsons, 1971). However, commitment to norms with fidelity provides

an unwavering social system that requires a cycle of attention and maintenance to ensure the effectiveness cultural subsystem's functions.

Parsons (1971) noted the most significant aspect to achieving the functions of assimilation in a social subsystem is to satisfy the shared agreements of a normative environment. Parsons associates norms of a social system with a shared culture that is institutionalized (e.g. common language, mission-alignment, and organization signs). Norms become expectations of the organization once they begin to drive the cognition and behavior of individuals and the collective group. The stability of the social system can be evaluated on the internalization of cultural norms by individuals and the concentration of expectations are adhered by the collective whole (Bakewell Barron, 2014).

Collective efficacy. Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2004) created a framework for collective efficacy. Human agency is vital piece to efficacious beliefs including self-efficacy. Human agency is the deliberate action to advocate for one's own needs to find stability in area of their life. Likewise, organizational agency is a strategic action to employ advocacy for the achievement of predetermined organizational objectives (Bakewell Barron, 2014). Standing on the shoulders of Bandura's (1986, 1997) research on collective efficacy, Goddard et al. (2004) adds that three aspects are present for collective efficacy to occur: 1) mastery and vicarious experiences, 2) enforce communal persuasion, and 3) experience many affective conditions. Schools with a solid capacity of collective efficacy practice empowering effects on their stakeholders, and these influences are tangible in evidence -- observations of these schools' "climate" describe them as effective schools (Pajares, 2002).

Goddard et al., (2004) states as teammates of the collective group learn as the organization builds capacity to learn. Goddard (2001) noted a significant predictor of the

school's collective efficacy is the mastery experiences in past performances. The school's perception of collective efficacy may be enhanced by vicarious experiences that include observing similar school's successes and/or replication of academic programs in comparable organizations (Goddard et al., 2004).

Organizational socialization is based on the social persuasion of individual experiences and the capacity to encourage or discourage needed behaviors for organization norms (Goddard et al., 2004). The culture of a school is predicated on social affirmations (positive or negative) to build a strong sense of collective efficacy within an organization that upholds compliance amongst individuals. Faculty and students experience normative emphasis in their interactions with various stakeholders of the school (Bakewell Barron, 2014). Collective efficacy amounts to organizational expectations and are a crucial element to socialization within the organization, foundational culture, and stimulus to member performance (Goddard, 2004). Members of an organization have the ability to create and adapt to norms for compliance with the use of positive or negative supports through the feature of social persuasion (Bakewell Barron, 2014).

The last element in Goddard's (2004) collective efficacy framework is affective states. Goddard asserts that schools with a strong sense of collective efficacy avoid ineffectiveness within the organization and endure external demands (Bakewell Barron, 2014). Organizations are just as adaptable as individuals when responding to the surrounding environmental forces (Bandura, 1997; Hoy & Miskel, 2005; Parsons, 1960, 1971, 1977). A school with positive efficacious beliefs will proceed to function with little distraction in a time of crisis. However, a school with less collective efficacy will yield to environmental demands and lose organizational integrity (Bakewell Barron, 2014).

A unified instructional framework supports academic emphasis simultaneous to elevating student mastery just as protocols prevent students from having to take remedial coursework (Murphy, 1982). A site norm of faculty responsibility for student achievement is more likely to become a staff belief and incorporated into protocols and practices (Murphy, 1982). This holds true to the demandingness of a teacher and school as they represent:

> "high expectations, and an orderly disciplinary climate, whereas responsiveness included supportive teacher–student relationships, a supportive school climate, and shared values. Studies found that an authoritative style was also effective in school settings." (Lee, 2012, p. 332)

Small learning communities catalyze two unalike reform techniques, the first highlights social capital among players as a shared support for learning, and the second emphasizes "high academic expectations and standards, termed academic press" (Fischer, 2013, p. 178). Students are held accountable for specific learning outcomes on knowledge and/or skill when a school-wide protocol on monitoring student achievement concurrent with instructional objectives is established and articulated (Murphy, 1982).

Another common nuance collective efficacy was a school's sustained rigorous instructional methods through professional learning and development and the time for collaboration between teachers and school leaders. School leaders identified school-wide practices that support student achievement (Hung et al., 2014).

Accountability allows school leaders to focus on some of the most significant aspects of the school's culture: the institution's vision for excellence, including values, core beliefs, and assumptions (Stolp & Smith, 1995). The site may have an instructional coach (i.e., consultant) in a core subject to consistently meet with teachers and guide them on their effectiveness and continuously project the instructional values and beliefs of the instructional program (Hung et al., 2014).

Academic Emphasis

Academic press (also known as academic emphasis or rigor) is based on cognitive and behavioral demands. An academic emphasis is the establishment of high academic goals for students, an orderly learning environment, motivated students, and a respect by all stakeholders for academic achievement (Bower, 2009; Hoy, Tarter, Woolfolk Hoy, 2006). With the emergence of academic press in the early 1980s, McDill, Natriello, and Pallas (1986) described academic press as an emphasis on academic excellence and conformity to specified academic standards experienced by school personnel (as cited in Fischer, 2013). The definition of academic press varies in the praxis of theory and practice. Academic press is defined as academic climate concurrent with disciplinary climate and teacher instructional practice. Academic climate consists of rigorous coursework, meaningful homework, and earned grades. Disciplinary climate catalyzes high attendance rates and positive behavior (Bowers, 2009). A similar definition notes academic press is the demand of environmental forces that press student achievement across aspects of a school. The idea is greater than the teacher setting high expectations, it places a demand on school policies, expectations, norms, practices, and rewards, which are created with students and staff. These demands establish an academic environment experienced by students and influence an emphasis on quality completion of tasks to do well academically (Murphy, 1982). Classroom instructional practices ensure high expectations, explicit goals and directions, and meaningful student feedback. As definitions vary, academic press "stands as a statistically significant predictor of school achievement" (Shouse, 1996, p. 61).

Academic emphasis is a normative and behavioral environment of a school that sets the precedence for academic excellence and conformity on academic expectations (Goddard et al., 2000; Lee & Smith, 1999). Goddard et al. (2000) adds "A normative environment emphasizing

academic excellence creates expectations of behaviors of teachers and students and imposes sanctions when individuals deviate from the expectations" (as cited in Lee, 2012, p. 331). Additional terminology in the literature includes academic optimism, teacher expectations, and academic standards. Academic achievement, daily attendance, and student sense of belonging have all been associated with the efforts of placing an academic emphasis (Goddard et al., 2000; Lee & Smith, 1999). For instance, Goddard et al. (2000) studied 45 elementary schools and 2429 students and concluded that academic emphasis in each school suggests about 50% between-school variability in reading and mathematics.

Educators need to create a demanding climate in order to establish academic press. An underlying nuance to academic press is the belief that all students can succeed. Teachers can do this by establishing rigorous and complex demands in course content, making course expectations and instructional objectives transparent, model tenets of a high academic work ethic, consistently assign tasks with immediate feedback, apply majority of instructional minutes to learning tasks, and by engaging parents to press the academic expectations in the classroom (Murphy, 1982). Delpit (1988) acknowledges that our students will be continually assessed on the product, regardless of the process, "Teachers do students no service to suggest, even implicitly, that 'product' is not important" (p. 287). Students are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of effort and perseverance in learning when they perceive teachers are placing an emphasis on academic achievement. Those teachers who do not hold high expectations create an environment of isolation for some students, specifically low performing students (Lee, 2012). Students internalize their ability to control their own success when teachers offer opportunities for student responsibility and leadership, hold students responsible for their own work, demand accountability, and student choice and empowerment (Murphy, 1982).

The high academic expectations of authoritative schools provide students the opportunity to self-regulate and build the skills necessary for society. Lee (2012) uses the term "authoritative" to provide context on how schools promote a student's sense of relatedness and support positive interpersonal relationships between peers and educators. Educators who take the energy to connect and establish supportive relationships, guide students to internalize extrinsic motivation to learn (Lee, 2012). Students who acknowledge their capability to achieve high academic expectations may have great self-awareness, whereas a student who believes one's efforts can make a difference in the school has a sense of academic self-efficacy (Murphy, 1982). The authoritative schools that support social environments "encourage the desired action of student engagement and produce the desired outcome of improved academic performance" (Lee, 2012, p. 332). Teachers can use explicit directions for task and content, provide teacher-directed and/or student directed, independent practice for academic accountability, give students immediate feedback, and monitor student progress through constant assessment to promote high academic expectations while exploiting student belongingness and ownership (Murphy, 1982).

Classroom culture. Each classroom learning environment is going to look different based on the academic emphasis established by the school and/or district/organization. An example of a learning environment with academic emphasis is when classrooms are well-managed, instructional time is utilized and maximized, learning is constantly assessed within a lesson, and student self-monitoring occurs (Murphy, 1982). Students recognize structures of academic emphasis placed by the teacher. This simultaneously elevates teacher credibility, content validity, and classroom behavior expectations. These ideas influence positive teacher-student relationships. Students who perceive they have positive rapport with teachers are more likely to feel a belongingness at the school, display increased effort and perseverance, and

achieve higher reading scores (Lee, 2012). Even though research has recognized significant predictors on student achievement with academic emphasis and supportive teacher-student relationships, several studies affirm there are numerous combinations of school factors that impact achievement (Lee, 2012; Shouse, 1996).

Academic emphasis could be considered as a form of teacher support as well. Students who feel supported by teachers will feel safe within themselves and others, and they will feel a part of the classroom and school community because of it (Lee, 2012). Collaborative small groups offer students a platform to apply real world situations and practice higher order thinking skills in a safe learning environment (Bower, 2009). Another predictor is the positive association between the desired action of student engagement and the desired outcome of academic achievement. The connection of social context and student self-monitoring to increase achievement resonates in student engagement (Lee, 2012; Tucker et al., 2002).

Student motivation. In academic emphasis, student motivation is influenced by the external normative environment that pressures academic excellence. These expectations create an environment for students to work hard for the structure and achieve academically, yet impose violations for those who deviate from the standard. Students are more likely to engage behaviorally and increase achievement, however the willingness to act and meet expectations varies between students. Students who performed to higher outcomes internalized values and expectations of their environment (Lee, 2012). The elevation of student engagement has been linked to small schools. Smaller environments impact several factors, including student interest in challenging academic coursework, rise in extracurricular activities, and decrease in dropout rates (Bower, 2009). Students experience different relationships with teachers, whether it be in

the same classroom and the same school, and their perception of academic emphasis may differ depends on the student's motivation to learn (Lee, 2012).

Differentiation in curriculum and instruction can also influence student motivation. An instructional model that lends autonomy in the curriculum for "student choice, inquiry, and significant small-group learning time, with arts, technology, and hip-hop enrichment infused into the weekly schedule" grows interest from students (Grossman & Cawn, 2016, p. 3). These avenues with project-based learning offers opportunities for students to demonstrate their knowledge and embrace real world challenges and raise self-confidence in order to exceed rigorous expectations (Bower, 2009). More structured opportunities with real-world practicality (e.g., STEM learning activities) allow students to investigate topics or problems they are interested, thus creating a platform for student engagement to occur. In the process of educators ensuring academic success, they must make demands and structure opportunities for students to succeed no matter the lesson delivery chosen (Murphy, 1982).

Academic emphasis and student achievement. Shouse (1996) discovered academic emphasis impacted student achievement of low socioeconomic-status (SES) schools that were communally organized. The research supported significance of academic emphasis in low SES schools; however, expectations particularly showed effective results when paired with a strong social-emotional learning environment. The student population most impacted by an academic emphasis model are those with low socio-economic backgrounds. Achievement results increased when paired with a culture of community and support within the school. Thus, academic emphasis offers a form of "cultural capital" by allowing space for all students to engage in challenging learning opportunities that provide real world-applications for building

background/content knowledge necessary for academic achievement (Bower, 2009; Shouse, 1996).

Snell (2003) argued that the nature of the opportunity/achievement gap and the foundation of its causes should be investigated by school leaders. Snell anticipated that coherent and comprehensive range of strategies should be designed by school leaders to support teaching and learning over time (as cited in Wright & Harris, 2010). Educational environments "cannot close opportunity/achievement gaps without culturally responsive practices". The implementation of school-wide practices can lessen historically disadvantaged student sub-groups (e.g., socioeconomic) and educational inequities by empowering before suppressing voices of stakeholders (Mayfield & Garrison-Wade, 2015, p. 15). Furthermore, Snell (2003) recommends that school leaders "should model a consistent sense of urgency towards the problem, such as helping the school confront difficult equity issues." The overall responsibility of closing the opportunity/achievement gap amongst student sub-groups is on the shoulders of the superintendent as the district CEO (as cited in Wright & Harris, 2010). A critical key is to examine the beliefs and assumptions on which school policies and systems are founded and personal beliefs and assumptions that foster a "fair and equitable learning environment" for mastery of teaching and learning to occur (Mayfield & Garrison-Wade, 2015).

Leadership makes the difference when closing the opportunity gap. When school leaders have the ability to acknowledge the significance of cultural competency and catalyze the readiness needed to address educational inequities throughout an organization it places cultural understandings as a key to academic progress. Many school districts who have committed their organization to be more culturally competent found a reduction in the achievement gap by at least 10% (Wright & Harris, 2010).

Chapter Summary

The survey of literature above is to frame tenets of existing research topics related to this dissertation. The review of literature on charter schools and executive leaders in education briefly examines concepts among academia that serves to inform future research in educational leadership. The sections in this chapter are to sufficiently offer a scope in which topics within the dissertation speak to each other. There are many areas that could be selected along this continuum of research; however, CMOs, chief executive officers, instructional leadership, and academic emphasis are areas most relevant to serving the purpose and significance of this dissertation. Some research that is cited in the Literature Review may act as background to help scaffold knowledge for future concepts to be addressed in the following chapters. In Chapter Three, I describe and justify the methodology used to address the dissertation's research questions.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The previous chapter outlined tenets of executive leadership that exist in charter school education. The study investigated the relationship between academic emphasis and executive leadership from the perspective of a California charter management organization (CMO) chief executive officer (CEO). Executive leaders in California CMOs have a unique perspective that needs investigation due to one-fourth of the state's charter schools are operated by CMOs (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2017). They experience educational leadership differently depending upon their individual backgrounds, educational experiences, and the families they serve. This study has sought to understand how a specific group of executive leaders experience and define academic emphasis in CMOs. The following research question will frame the study: How does the chief executive officer of a charter management organization think about instructional leadership to improve student achievement?

Qualitative research served to inform the research question. The case study design focused on the lived experience from the individual. The design aspired to interpret meanings and experiences from responses to uncover deep and detailed understanding. The CMO chief executive officer responded to semi-structured interview questions. The interview protocol consisted of various question types: open-ended questions, follow-up questions, and classification questions (Creswell, 2013). The criterion sampling model was chosen to offer the study perspectives in an executive leadership in a CMO. The perspectives helped determine tangible supports administrators can apply to better assist school-site leaders. The purpose of a criterion sample is to select cases that meet some criteria which is useful for quality assurance (Patton, 2002).

The following chapter provides a detailed description of the case study methodological approach and justifies *why* this approach is needed. There are sections that highlight the context for a case study, the methods design, and participant selection. I provide a section to discuss data collection and analysis. The chapter also includes the epistemology I used to frame my interpretations for the study. There are sections to describe my positionality as a researcher and the process I took to establish and ensure trustworthiness. Lastly, the chapter concludes with limitations of the study and summary of the research design.

Methodology: Qualitative Case Study

The characteristics of a qualitative research design is used in this study for flexibility, rather than [being] fixed (Robson, 2011). Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) note that qualitative research design is needed to be a "reflexive process operating through every stage of a project" (p. 24). Ultimately, qualitative studies are meant to build 'patterns' or 'explanations' (Yin, 2018) through using methods that shape epistemological discussions. The study used a qualitative case study approach that sought "to understand a specific issue, problem, or concern (e.g. teenage pregnancy) a case or cases selected to best understand the problem" (Stake, 1995, p. 3). Creswell (2013) explains case study researchers study "current, real-life cases that are in progress so that they can gather accurate information not lost by time" (p. 98).

The use of case studies is becoming a prominent research methodology in education and a variety of other fields (Asmussen & Creswell, 1995; Hamel, 1992; Perry & Kraemer, 1986; Tierney, 1993; Yin, 2018). The approach is used to research a real-life contemporary context or setting (Yin, 2018). Case study research has a long-standing history of prestige amongst social scientists: psychology (Freud), medicine (problem-based case analysis), law (case law), and political science (case reports) (Creswell, 2013). Hamel, Dufour, and Fortin (1993) found

anthropology and sociology to be the basis of modern social science case studies. The initial two purposes to a case study are (1) to summarize an event or an individual based on evidence that produces discussion (Creswell, 2013) and (2) refers to case studies being used through a qualitative and quantitative methodological lens (Hammersley, 1992; Yin, 2018). Educational case study research uses three epistemological approaches to view the object, person, or idea differently. The approaches include positivist, interpretive, and critical (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Merriam, 1998). A positivist case study takes a quantitative methodological approach by using an experimental design on an object to test a hypothesis in education. An interpretive case study seeks to understand how an assumption in education is experienced as a process. Whereas, a critical case study views education as a social institution and examines the existing systems that perpetuate societal patterns (Hallett, 2009). The dissertation called for an interpretive lens to understand data collection from multiple bounded systems (cases). The following section provides an overview of the methodology before highlighting advantages and disadvantages of the case study approach.

Case study research defined. A case study is a qualitative approach where the researcher "explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information" (Creswell, 2013, p. 73). Merriam (1998) suggests a broad approach to qualitative case studies is used in the landscape of educational research. A case study provides an empirical inquiry that examines a contemporary phenomenon in the form of its lived experience. This is purposeful when parameters between the context and phenomenon are not explicitly defined. A case study depends on various sources of evidence with triangulation of data that converges for the benefit of data collection and analysis of theoretical design (Yin, 2018). The next section expands on

the four features of a case study: context, bounded system, theory development, and data sources.

Table 3 provides further information on the various characteristics of a case study.

Table 3: Characteristics of a Case Study

Characteristic	Purpose
Focus	Developing an in-depth description and analysis of a case or multiple cases
Type of Problem Best Suited for Design	Providing an in-depth understanding of a case or cases
Discipline Background	Drawing from psychology, law, political science, and medicine
Unit of Analysis	Studying an event, a program, an activity, or more than one individual
Data Collection Forms	Using multiple sources, such as interviews, observations, documents, and artifacts
Data Analysis Strategies	Analyzing data through description of the case and themes of the case as well as cross-case themes
Written Report	Developing a detailed analysis of one or more cases
General Structure of Study	Entry vignette Introduction (problem, questions, case study, data collection, analysis, outcomes) Description of the case/cases and its/their context Development of issues Detail about selected issues Assertions Closing vignette (adapted from Stake, 1995)

Note. Adapted from *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (p. 104-106), by J.W. Creswell, 2013, Los Angeles: SAGE Publications. Copyright [2013] by SAGE Publications.

Context. A case study delivers a holistic perspective to researching a phenomenon by assessing both the specific nuances and the mundane (Patton, 2002; Stake, 2005). Case study researchers place the utmost weight on the context in which the data is collected (Patton, 2002;

Stake, 2005; Yin, 2018). An example of the importance of context in a case study is Padula and

Miller's (1999) exploration of women who re-enter a psychology doctoral program at a major

Midwestern research university. The authors discussed aspects of four women's lives who are

married and have children at home and made the decision to rent in a university setting as full-

time students. The researcher's intentionality emphasizes the phenomenon these women

experienced and were able to discuss intimate aspects of this case.

The context of this study is of chief executive officers of CMOs in California. In Chapter

Four, I will discuss the CEO's experience and perspective of academic emphasis in a CMO and

how these aspects differ from the traditional district superintendent. The presentation of the

CEO lived experience is to offer an understanding to their role and hierarchal operations of a

CMO. This context is a key underpinning to understanding features in this case study.

Bounded systems (cases). The researcher selects the approach in which they will study

the case. A definition of a *case* insists on a phenomenon that data can be collected and/or

analyzed and relates to the assertions made in the study (Hammersley, 1992). Researchers may

deem the real-life contemporary issue or idea to be examined through bounded systems (a

multisite study) over multiple cases with a variety of data collection sources (e.g., interviews,

observations, artifacts) or a bounded system (a within-site study) single case study (Creswell,

2013). Nonetheless, a bounded system is *bounded* by time and place. There is dispute among

scholars regarding the qualifications of a case; however, it is common that an individual, event,

or bounded group of people can be studied as a case (Stake, 2005). The dissertation research

questions used bounded systems to frame the study of executive leaders in the CMO. Hence, the

data is collected from multiple sources in the CMO, but the CEO is the primary study participant

As the two elements of time and place are significant to a case, the data collection and bounding time will be a challenge due to the CEO's schedule. The bounding of time needed thoughtfulness, reconsideration and flexibility, and assistance from an administrative assistant. The bounding of place was less of a challenge as the appointment to meet with the executives was in their office. This created a dynamic that is genuine to the bounded systems as the CEO be in "their space" and offered artifacts and documents throughout the interview. The office of the CEO is the primary space where data was collected.

Theory development. Case study and ethnographic data collection tools are comparable. It was important to draw distinctions of the two as it may be challenging at times to recognize their differences. A case study frequently offers initial theory before entering the field whereas ethnography eludes theoretical intentions prior to data collection (Hallett, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Van Maanen, 1988; Van Maanen et al., 1982; Yin, 2018). A thorough review of the existing literature on charter organizations, executive leadership, and academic emphasis is in Chapter Two. While my research question inquires how the chief executive officer of a CMO impacts student achievement, my hypothesis suggests instructional leadership development and competencies are needed to serve a charter network of schools. For example, the top executive must have transformational leadership skills in order to reach the tiers of people who support and work with students on a daily basis to truly impact change in student achievement. The theory of transformational leadership has formed to generate the study's theoretical framework, instructional leadership. The goal was to contribute to the development of this theory and draw connections to the lived experiences of an executive leader in education. Throughout the study, I sought to understand in-depth nuances of this theory and where it lives within each participant.

Data sources. Data collection and analysis in qualitative case studies typically consist of a small number of cases that occur naturally (Creswell, 2013; Hammersley, 1992). As the case emerged, so did a detailed description of the data, which included historical background on the case, event chronology, and daily activities (Creswell, 2013; Stake 1995). For example, Brickhouse and Bodner's research (1992) depicted a second-year science teacher's personal and professional history and perceptions prior to discussing emerging themes that drew implications on teacher-preparation programs and their influence on teacher beliefs. Most often, a complete description of each case can be provided with multiple methods of data collection (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2018). Both quantitative and qualitative methods can be used by the researcher to collect data (Hammersley 1992; Yin, 2018). Cases are not designed to be generalized, but to be studied for understanding core tenets that make-up the case (Stake, 2005). An in-depth rationale for data collection in this qualitative case study are offered in the following sections.

Types of Case Studies

Case studies can differ in both design and purpose even though previous sections have discussed homogenous groups (Hallett, 2009). There are three fundamental designs: intrinsic, instrumental, multiple (Stake, 1995; Creswell, 2013). An intrinsic approach to a study provides the researcher to investigate a particular case exclusively to understand without trying to generalize outside of the context (Hallett, 2009). In Rex's (2000) study of Judy, a student classified as learning disabled, the researcher offers a close analysis of Judy's historical and then present interactions within an inclusive environment and the outcomes. An instrumental design allows the researcher to detail a case for in-depth understanding and the development of theory to be used more commonly amongst scholars. In Hill, Vaughn, and Harrison's (1995) case study of five American Indian women teachers, we find a deep understanding of each woman's

narrative as it adds to the existing theory of the pressures to assimilate into Euro-American culture. The addition of more cases lets the researcher juxtapose emerging themes across a multiple case study that may lead to the generalization of the whole group. A multiple case study may use either intrinsic or instrumental approaches. The research question needs to relate to the various perspectives and lived experiences of the participants prior to selecting a multiple case study approach. In the 1991 text, *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools*, Kozol constructs a multiple case study approach that juxtaposes schools in low-income and affluent neighborhoods to depict the inequality of resource allocation in American education (Hallett, 2009).

The types of case studies defined in the previous section also may be attached with a general purpose: exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory (Yin 1981a, 1981b, 2018). It is challenging to identify the various distinctions between the purposes (e.g., explanation verses description). Based on the research question(s), one of the purposes is selected by the researcher (Yin, 2018); however, aspects of the remaining two purposes could be integrated into the final case study (Hallett, 2009). Transformational leadership theory discusses two practical groups: those leaders who are transformational and those who are not. I discussed attributes and experiences of CEOs from both categories in a multiple case study design. I described contexts in executive leadership and explained how these decisions are made in the following sections.

The study explored the perspectives of an underrepresented population, a CEO of CMOs, in educational research. This dissertation was designed to be exploratory research on multiple case studies that address the research question that frames instructional leadership in among CMO executives. However, after careful consideration and not receiving the volume of participants as hoped, I proposed the study explored one chief executive officer and their charter

management organization to my dissertation committee. Once granted IRB approval, I emailed 13 CEOs and their administrative assistants, and only one responded back willing to participate. The other 12 CEOs received follow-up emails, and I received no reply. I understand the role is demanding and it was a challenging time of year to find time to contribute to a study, thus diving deeper into how one CEO and their CMO articulates, perceives, and operationalizes instructional leadership transformed the study into an individual case study approach.

The prior sections discussed the context of case studies. The methodology allows opportunity to understand how a chief executive officer of CMOs navigate processes to raise student achievement. The subsequent sections will cover the tools that will be used to gather data on the case in this research.

Methods

A qualitative case study was needed for the exploration on an educational executive leader's impact on student achievement based on the following: (1) quantitative studies typically survey academic achievement, (2) the understanding of a CEO's role and attributes from their perspective, and (3) the examination of CMO operations and logistics. First, existing literature using quantitative methods have driven the discussion on academic emphasis in American schools. Based on educational trends, scholars tend to utilize quantitative methods to identify correlations in variables that influence student achievement, including educational leadership. Yet our field needs more qualitative data on how instructional leadership impacts student achievement, especially from the perspectives of CEOs. The previous chapter discussed tenets of academic emphasis and the significance of instructional leadership's role in establishing and maintaining an academic press on students, families, and the community. Quantitative designs have provided valuable interpretations for this theory, nevertheless the approaches do not allow

perspectives from the participants. A qualitative case study delivers the chance to "observe these processes in context" and listen to how participants perceive their experiences (Hallett, 2009). The participant's perspectives were analyzed as data points to understand how each of conceptual models explain educational leadership.

Next, the attributes of the CEO role in education needs understanding from their perspective. Executive leadership has been defined as a chief executive who acts as the public face of the organization fulfilling social responsibilities that include maintaining partnerships with influential stakeholders (e.g., board members, external partnerships, union representatives). There may not be a formal definition of an executive leader in the educational arena. Nevertheless, it may be defined as the face of the organization suggests being a lobbyist, advocate, and spokesperson for your "organization, its clients, its supporters, and its cause" (Peurach & Gumus, 2011, p. 8). The pursuit of understanding tenets of the school district superintendency has been at the forefront of transformational and instructional leadership theoretical frameworks. Studying this exclusive group of leaders will allow the future research more flexibility to identify phenomena based on the background of individual perspectives. A qualitative case study design suggests the opportunity to research these professionals in their regular environment with nuances of their language, social, and behavior interactions. The purpose of this research is not to generalize findings to all educational leaders as every leadership role experiences a different context that consists of a variety of successes and challenges. Instead, I sought to understand the CEO's experiential context, and investigate their role in raising student achievement.

Lastly, in the age of educational accountability, examination is needed on the logistics and operations of CMOs. Some scholars have argued that educational leaders at the top of the

district or organization, such as the superintendent, are not instructional leaders (Alsbury &

Whitaker, 2015). In Margaret Grogan's reader, *Educational Leadership* (2013), Dr. Vivian

Robinson expresses the need for instructional leaders to apply relevant knowledge, solve

complex problems, and build relational trust. This sets an approach for leaders, yet some may

argue that there are cultural competencies needed by leaders as well when supporting teacher and

student learning. Survey instruments are most common in these studies because of the intent to

focus on the complex processes in one's experiences. The use of qualitative methods allows for

the analysis in factors and how they interact and change in leadership styles. In addition, case

studies provide researchers the mode to discuss why factors evolve over time.

Researchers who perform qualitative case studies spend an extensive amount of time with

their participants (Hallett, 2009). In many instances, researchers and their participants form a

relationship that requires the positionality and bias to be reiterated multiple times across the

study by the researcher (Fine & Weis, 1996). The intentions of the researcher may be in

jeopardy as relationships are established with roles such as the CEO of an organization, a role

that some may perceive as a potential gatekeeper in an organization (Venkatesh, 2006).

Whereas, quantitative designs suggest relationships become data points that surface in the

analysis (Creswell, 2013). In upcoming sections, I will speak to how researchers can observe

without explicitly including participants (Hallett, 2009; Lareau, 2003). This tactic offers the

access needed for various perspectives to emerge under any environment and provides diversity

in qualitative data.

The study collected data to inform the theoretical framework and acting executive leaders

in charter organizations. The role of an executive leader is complex, which includes the

supervision and responsibility of multiple operational and instructional teams. The qualitative

case study approach inspired by the CEO's lived experiences through their narrative, feature successes and challenges in the role and their organization, and allows for on-going transformation in their reflections. The following section further highlights the methodology.

Description of Respondents

The setting and participants are appropriate for this study based on the framework of anthropology and sociology in the field of educational research. The dissertation design served as precedence from a multiple case study approach conducted in Dr. Linda Skrla's dissertation (1997) research on three woman superintendents. Dr. Skrla's dissertation called for the narratives of these woman superintendents and their experience that included others involved in their journey (e.g., district administrators, teachers, and community members). Her dissertation depicted the reasoning this underrepresented group in education ultimately left the superintendency. Even though my dissertation did not target a specific marginalized population, my goal was to design a study that pursued to uncover unique stories on how chief executives view methods to increasing student achievement with underserved populations today. As an exploratory study, my dissertation built on the CEO's role in charter education and their influence on student achievement. The explicit context of my subgroup demonstrated how they influence the educational process, resources and support they provide, and the educational networks they impact. The following section covers how the data was collected. I begin with a rationale for participation selection criteria and an ecological justification for location. The end of the section entails the methods in which I collected and analyzed data.

The idea of exploring the perspective of the CEO came when I attended a session titled "Founders Circle: Three Leaders Share Their Vision for the Future" at the California Charter School Association in 2017. The panel consisted of national educational leaders who were co-

founders and acting CEOs of their organization. The first CEO discussed how racially and socioeconomically diverse schools offer students opportunities to create meaningful and authentic connections across lines of difference and prepare them to thrive in a diverse society. The second CEO spoke to personalized learning and how it has transformed students' lives. The third CEO provided an overview on the significance of community organization and its impact of education justice. All three CEO and founders discussed their lived experiences and vignettes of their lives that influenced their journey while shaping the vision of their organization.

Participant selection. I selected one chief executive officer as the core focus of this study. In the initial meeting with the CEO, I described the location of meeting space, gathered self-identification information on demographics, and conducted our first interview. This information was used to affirm the diversity of the CEO selected. I chose the CEO because this allows me the ability to spread out multiple meetings with the CEO throughout a six-week time span upon their availability.

Due to the rapid and demanding lifestyle of a CEO of an organization, my position on site selection remained flexible. The interview protocols were conducted in the chief executive's office where responses are captured without distractions. The location of our interview appointment was at the CMO's central/home office. All interviews conducted within the study occurred in a private setting to ensure confidentiality. Again, my flexibility was key, and I did not mind meeting the chief executive at any location convenient for them. The CMO has a central office and schools located in California.

The selection of the CEO was purposeful. The CEO is the primary educational leader in their organization who has the responsibility of operations and instruction. The leader's demographic information is pertinent based on their perspectives and approaches to questions

that surfaced in the final analysis of the case. Their demographics joined with the mission of the CMO offered insights to their role as an instructional leader and their approach on raising student achievement. Not all CEOs reflect the demographics of their community, but the CEO in this study is more reflective of the community in which they serve. The CEO being from the community likely influences their leadership of the CMO. It speaks volumes that an individual would choose to come back and work in the community they grew up in after college and years of experience. We see that in this study as the CEO takes pride in serving students and families of the community who raised them. It is as if the CEO sees themselves and their own family in the constituents the CMO seeks to serve. The CEO and the research findings will be described in greater detail in Chapter Four. Interviews were conducted with them and their colleagues in their charter school network (e.g., senior leadership teammates).

Sampling models. I implemented a combination of three sampling models: purposeful, convenience, and criterion. These three sampling models allow maximum variation in collecting a diverse sample of individuals with specific characteristics. The purposive sampling model was designed for the CMOs missions/themes to be highlighted in the CEO's perspectives. The convenience sampling model was employed based on my current residency in California, and the ease it allowed me to travel (up to 500 miles) and save money, time, and effort, yet hold the integrity of the perspectives coming from CMO leaders.

In addition, the criterion sampling model was chosen specifically to offer the study perspectives on an executive leadership position in a CMO. The perspectives helped determine tangible supports administrators applied to better assist school-site leaders. The criterion sample was used to select cases that met some criteria which is useful for quality assurance (Patton, 2002). The CEO was selected based on five criteria: (1) experience, the CEO chosen must have

a minimum of three years of experience in the role, (2) charter management organization, the

CEO must currently operate a CMO in California given the diverse ecological factors that may

surface in the final analysis, (3) years in operation, the CMO must have been in operation at least

10 years, (4) number of school sites, the CMO must operate between 7 to 40 schools, and (5)

urban student population, the CMO must serve at least 80% socio-economic disadvantaged.

I approached the CEO and their executive assistant via their professional emails (see

Appendix A). The initial response was not received within five days, so I attempted a second

email for response before emailing another CEO at random who meets the sampling criteria for

the study. Yet, the CEO of this individual case study did consent to participate in the study after

the follow-up email. The California Charter Schools Association (CCSA) provided me with a

list of charter management organizations to help identify CMOs who operated 7 to 40 schools. It

was important to me and the study that the CEO did not feel their participation was coerced, but

saw their participation as a contribution to instructional leadership and charter school research.

Data Collection

The methods used provided data needed to answer the research questions of the

dissertation data collection occurred over a duration of six weeks (November 2018-December

2018). Prior to data collection, I addressed the challenges of access to CEOs. In the following

section, I explain how experiences and artifacts were captured with qualitative research methods.

Access. Identifying CEOs who met the criteria and were willing to participate in the

study was an initial challenge. The existing literature suggests the role of the chief executive

office is a demanding position that expects the utmost will and effort of an individual to oversee

an entire organization. Thus, time posed the utmost challenge to access the CEO. As a working

educational professional myself, I rearranged my schedule to be flexible for data collection.

Two entry events occurred when onboarding participants in the study. First, I established rapport and professionalism among participants with an email including an information sheet that explained the study's purpose and demographic survey (see Appendix D) to the CEO prior to the first in-person meeting. This is with the confirmation that they are a participant in the dissertation. Second, I was perceived as a positive presence and form a relationship with participants at the first in-person meeting. After reviewing the dissertation's goals and methods, I encouraged the chief executives to ask questions. This process extended to secondary interviews as well. If prospective secondary interviewees chose to participate, I explained the consent forms to them as well (see Appendices B & C).

All participants reviewed the consent forms prior to the first interview. Interview participants were given an alias to uphold anonymity. Individual's identities have been stricken on any documents analyzed in the process of data collection and analysis. No participants received compensation or amenities for their participation in the study.

Methods. The study took six weeks (November 2018-December 2018) using three primary methods of data collection: Interviews, document analysis (Creswell, 2013), and online identity (Hallett & Barber, 2014). Interviews were directly focused on how the CEO perceives their roles specific to leadership, impacting student achievement, operation of a CMO, and clarifying document analysis and online spaces data collection. Historically, researchers lean predominantly on the *natural sociology* of participant observations (Burawoy, 1991). Participants may intentionally omit specific details they view insignificant or protection of the CEO, the CMO, and/or other leaders. The sections that follow provide a more detailed description of each method used in the study.

Table 4: Data Collected from Participants

Participant	Interview	Document Analysis	Online Spaces
Chief Executive Officer	Two individual interviews	Organization charts Strategic plan	CEO bio Speech from CEO Organization Social media
Vice President of Schools	One individual interview	Learning cycles Student achievement data	VP of Schools bio Organization Social media
Assistant Principal	One individual interview	School-wide corrective action plan	Assistant Principal bio Organization Social media

Interviews. In-depth interviews provided explicit evidence from the individuals' lived experiences and perspectives. Interviews get used frequently in qualitative research; however, they can also be used quantitatively. This method was used qualitatively to analyze inconsistencies that exist between perceptions and actions. There are a variety of ways scholars have used interview formats, which include speaking over the phone and/or email, individual in-person interviews, and focus groups (Fontana & Frey, 2005; Hallett, 2009). Participants were interviewed individually due to the geographical challenges and the nature of time will be different with each participant.

The CEO participated in two semi-structured interviews (see Appendix E). Interviews were no more than 60-minutes based on the participants' schedule and were digitally audio recorded at the meeting location. The first interview prefaced a synopsis of the study. The initial interview protocol focused on the demographic and educational backgrounds of the CEO, executive and instructional leadership in a CMO, and CMO academic emphasis. A semi-structured interview was employed as it is most commonly used in the social sciences. I created

a list of questions to facilitate a response that does not bound me, the researcher, to using the exact phrasing or order the questions appear. I asked follow-up questions to responses on any emerging ideas when applicable. Even though the interview protocol addressed general questions, themes surfaced across interviews in specific words and phrases. The semi-structured interview format was not used as a conversational platform. The interview protocol guided the researcher and participant to answer the study's research question.

I had three goals for the second interview. The second interview (1) reviewed specific ideas and points, (2) obtained clarification from the participants based on initial interview transcripts, and (3) allowed for follow-up questions by the researcher based on the first interview. A summary of ideas, words, and phrases from the first interview was emailed to the participants a week prior to their second interview for review.

Secondary interviews will be conducted in efforts to use multiple methods in data collection and to triangulate data points for reliability and trustworthiness. The secondary interviews offered additional support to the responses of CEO, the primary interviewee. Those individuals who served as secondary interviewee were an instructional leader position in the CEO's executive cabinet and an assistant principal in order to obtain a school leader perspective. I attempted to conduct secondary interviews the same day as the CEO's primary interview for convenience. The purpose of the secondary interviewee was to give another perspective of the CMO and to learn about the role of CEO and their impact on student achievement. These individuals were given the same protocol as the primary interview protocol with the flexibility to ask follow-up questions using the semi-structured model. Secondary interview participants were based on the participation of their CEO and consisted of one 60-minute interview. Overall, most qualitative researchers utilize interviewing as a prominent tool to collect data (Hallett, 2009).

Documents analysis. As the study was conducted, I requested access to various documents that offered clarification on data collected from other methods. These documents are exclusive resources to the organization that included senior leadership meeting agenda and notes, organization charts, strategic plans – operational policy and procedural next steps, and instructional tools. A document was described or discussed during an interview. The commentary on a documents function was transcribed and served as evidence in the analysis. The CEO or other participants were not be excluded from the study if they denied access or the requested documents do not exist. The CEO had the opportunity to discuss the central tenets of the requested documents in the follow-up interview. Each participant has the right not to answer any question in the interview protocol.

With my experience having served in a CMO, I was mindful in objectively stating and referencing the evidence in each document. For example, I reviewed a text from a news site covering education in The 74 titled *The Founders* (2016) written by Richard Whitmire*,* which gave insight into the context and decision-making of those founding CEOs of charter schools across the United States. The review of this document offered background on many CMOs across the nation including California's first CMO, Aspire Public Schools, one in which Don Shalvey was the co-founder and CEO. Any questions I have on the documents were asked in the follow-up interview with the CEO.

The mentioned documents above provided tangible evidence in answering the research question of the dissertation. I reviewed published articles in various local newspapers, such as the *Los Angeles Times,* six months prior to the study for context on the current landscape of charter schools and educational issues in their region of California. The document analysis offered interpretations on the significance of CMOs in the educational landscape.

Online spaces. Scholars have come to realize how data can be gathered from online spaces to help understand how people live and understand life. Initially, researchers exploring online spaces were looking at how a small number of individuals would create alternative identities online to escape the realities of life (Hallett & Barber, 2014). While this still happens, the vast majority of online interactions are connected to offline relationships (Garcia et al., 2009; Gatson & Zweerink, 2004; Lewis & Fabos, 2005; Miller & Slater, 2000; Williams, 2006). For example, a business or school that posts a website cannot have that information be completely false without customers or parents calling out any inaccuracies. Similarly, social media interactions often have offline relationships that also support those interactions (Hallett, 2017b). When people post information on Facebook or Instagram, their friends and family can check the accuracy of what is displayed through other interactions.

As a result, data can be gathered from online spaces to support studies that are primarily designed as offline data collection. For example, if you are studying a school, you probably should include a review of the school's website to get a sense of how the school and administrators present themselves. Some teachers have individual websites on the school page and even may have class websites (Hallett, 2017b). This dissertation explored the online spaces of the CMO and participant communication present on organization online spaces. Some online spaces included their biography on the organization website, speech from the CEO on the organization website, blog, and digital-print newspaper articles where they are present or the organization is present, and the CEO's organization social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter). These were valuable sources of data. Personal online spaces of the CEO and other participants were not used for data collection in this study due to those spaces not being directly related to the research question.

Data Analysis

There are many different methods to analyze qualitative case study data (Merriam, 1998).

I used a qualitative data analysis software program in Dedoose to arrange and categorize. The

main data analyses were derived from the researcher, yet Dedoose was a supplementary tool to

assist in the organization of data. A Constant Comparative Method allowed me to

simultaneously collect and analyze data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Comparison across

participants transpired once data from each individual were analyzed. Analysis generated

answers to the dissertation's research question. As themes emerged, they were tested and

adapted as data continued to be collected. This process attained conceptual saturation and

confidence (Hallett, 2009) when the following criteria is achieved. These steps were to ensure a

clear strategy was in place before data was collected (Boeije, 2002). The strategy consisted of

five stages that included information from analysis activities, aim, questions, and results. Table

5 offers a clear depiction of the Constant Comparative Method.

Three criteria were applied to meet the fulfillment of conceptual saturation on

transformational, instructional, and executive. The criteria were constructed based on the

existing literature on leadership and CMOs: 1) a description of the primary participant, including

demographics, educational history, 2) sufficient evidence collected to inform academia about the

themes that exist in the role of chief executive officer in CMOs, and 3) attend a place where

there are no more emerging themes in the data. A significant nuance to leadership theories was

to understand the interactions and relationships participants have with a variety of individuals in

and outside the organization.

Table 5: Stages of Constant Comparative Method

Comparison Type	Analysis Activities	Aim	Questions	Results
Comparison within a single interview	Open coding and summarizing core of interview	Develop categories and understanding of participant	What is the core message of the interview? Is it consistent? What do fragments with the same code have in common?	Summary of interview, provisional codes, conceptual profile, and extended memos
Comparison within observations of one participant	Open coding and summarizing core of observations	Develop categories and understanding of participant	What is the core message of the observation? Is it consistent? What do fragments with the same code have in common?	Summary of observations, provisional codes, conceptual profile, and extended memos
Comparison between interviews and observations of one participant	Triangulating data sources	Complete picture of participant	Are data consistent between interviews and observations? What themes are present during observations, but absent in interviews (and vice versa)? How does comparing findings refine codes?	Verification of provisional knowledge, extended memos, emerging themes
Comparison between interviews/ observations of participant and others involved in his/her life	Triangulating data sources	Compare participant's perceptions to those in his/her social network	Are data consistent between the participant and his/her social network? What new information is present? How do these perspectives shape codes and themes?	More complete profile of participant, extended memos, inventory of central themes
Comparing data collected for all three participants	Finding criteria to compare participants; hypothesizing about patterns; and building theory	Find criteria for comparison and produce a typology	What are the differences between participants? On which criteria are they compared? What patterns exist?	Criteria for comparing participants and typology of youth

Note. Adapted from "A Purposeful Approach to Constant Comparative Method in Analysis of Qualitative Interviews" by H. Boeije, 2002, *Quality and Quantity, 36*, 391-409. Copyright (2002) by Kluwer Academic Publishers.

As mentioned, procedures entailed Constant Comparative Analysis by the researcher to offer a more detailed interpretation. Glaser and Strauss (1967) uses qualitative Constant Comparative Analysis aims to systematically describe the meaning specified from the research questions. Dedoose facilitated a Constant Comparative Analysis to assist the researcher in bracketing (or epoche) the data to remove all preconceived notions to best understand respondent experiences (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). The software program also assisted in deductive coding as an invariant structure to highlight themes throughout interview transcriptions to reduce text from participant experiences. Once a theme had been identified as essential and coded, there was multiple reads to review if any evidence remained on that specific theme. This process reoccurred as each theme was identified and coded. The analysis and interpretation of the data was referenced by participant experiences in vignettes using clusters of meanings to remove any overlap or repetitive statements (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994).

As qualitative writing occurred throughout the dissertation from consistent data collection, I used a reflexive journal to chart my evidence and the deductive reasoning that matches (see Appendix G). Our work as researchers in learning about humans is endless, and tracking our reactions and emotions are key when avoiding potential biases. A summary was written at the end of each stage of the study to synthesize data collection (Hallett, 2009).

Researcher Positionality

My emerging perspective as a researcher leaned on my experiences as a secondary and early college English teacher in a CMO. As an early career teacher in a CMO, I found ample supports on how to increase my effectiveness as a teacher serving inner city students and their families who were chronically underserved and underrepresented. My recent professional endeavors have led me to assist in the development of a charter school that has aspirations in

becoming a CMO in the breadth of expansion and scaling-up their model. My positionality

relies on framing an academic emphasis from the classroom-level to the organization-level when

raising the expectations for students, families, and educators.

This study offered me great insight on the work of executive leaders in CMOs and their

perspectives and navigation on creating and sustaining an academic emphasis to raise student

achievement. Even though my bias cites the effectiveness of CMOs, I provided opposing charter

school literature specific to CMOs. Research in Chapter Two unpacked the discord between

charter and traditional district education, and primarily focused on the flexibility and autonomy

charter schools/organizations have when developing an academic emphasis. The purpose of this

position is to spotlight the reform, not the contention.

Epistemology

An epistemological lens of interpretivism was used to understand and interpret the CEO's

interview responses on their background, and its relationship to accountability and student

achievement in education. Interpretivism allowed the CEO's voice to drive the findings of the

research. The theory acknowledged the natural and organic lived experiences within the

narrative of the CEO's background and its implications on their organization's future. The aim

was to interpret data to understand the prerogatives in opinions executive leadership hold when

facilitating mission-alignment to school leaders and educators.

The interpretivism paradigm allowed me, the researcher, the autonomy to build a lens

founded on reasoning and analytical perspectives of logic presented in studies. The paradigm

offered a broader framework, as shown in Table 6 below, for researchers to interpret data and

build more connections to impact the epistemological field. The interpretivist lens proposed a

"worldview…in an objective world" (Ferguson, 1993) as readers critically view a naturalistic

approach to locating "why" the data is pertinent to a specific epistemology and "how" the research will impact the educational arena.

Table 6: Paradigm Chart

Interpretivism Paradigm	
Purpose	To understand
Ontology	"Reality is subjective and constructed"
Axiology	Values the lived experiences of the individual
Epistemology	Multiple-truths
Methodology	Participant
	Observation
Methods	Interview(s)
	Observations
	Analyzing document(s)

Note. Adapted from "Paradigm proliferation as a good thing to think with: teaching research in education as a wild profusion," by P. Lather, 2006, 19(1), p. 35-57. Copyright (2006) by Taylor & Francis.

Guba (1996) offers an insightful example of this paradigm by incorporating metaphorical prose as a form of reasoning the process of attaining an interpretivist lens. The author uses the symbolism of a "little green man" and Apostle Paul's travels in the New Testament "the road to Damascus" as an analogy to explain the trials and tribulations ones' mind must face in order to reach true analytics in the interpretivism paradigm. Merriam, Courtenay, and Baumgartner (2003) prove that findings from qualitative interview responses can be rationalized and shift the onus of academic prose on the researcher as the data is itemized. The article is structured where it specifically weaves participant quotes from interviews along with research explanation, which gives context and visceral reasoning to the Wiccan learning community. The "Analysis of Findings" section of the article offers the most in-depth analysis and interpretation of the topic.

Interpretivism asks for action researchers to "turn on" their right brain and explore the various paths of reasoning one can take to interpret the data. Why take it for what it is?

Trustworthiness

As a qualitative dissertation, it is necessary for the study to obtain trustworthiness by meeting validity, credibility, and reliability assessed by academia and research participants (Harrison, MacGibbon, & Morton, 2001). Early qualitative theorists attempted to re-conceptualize how to think about validity, reliability and generalizability in ways that made sense to qualitative research. While some qualitative researchers still utilize these approaches, most have given up on trying to force qualitative research to meet quantitative standards (Hallett, 2017a). The latter is where quantitative studies measure standard errors and run tests to convince readers of the significance of their findings. In qualitative studies, researchers persuade readers to acknowledge and accept the findings by using a variety of strategies. I discussed three techniques that will be employed to establish trustworthiness: 1) triangulation, 2) member checking, and 3) thick description.

Mathison (1988) describes triangulation vetting process that uses "multiple methods, data sources, and researchers to enhance the validity of research findings" (p. 13). Using multiple methods in data collection allows for juxtaposition across consistent evaluation of responses. The limited inclusion of others will narrow biases as a data point (Burawoy, 1991). Three types of triangulation are frequently conducted: data, researcher, and methodological (Denzin, 1978). My dissertation gleans from the methodological triangulation due to the number of techniques that will be employed to collect data (i.e., interviews, document analysis, and online spaces). The triangulation of data consisted of a convergence of perspectives: the CEO perspective, executive school leader (colleague) perspective, and the researcher perspective.

Member checking is a critical aspect to establishing trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As data was collected, the CEO and participants had opportunities to reply to transcriptions and analysis of the data. Member checks commonly occur in casual conversation. For example, the research may inquire on an aspect of their life (e.g., Why a career in education?) or include their feedback on a theme that is emerging (Hallett, 2009). The opportunity of member checking allowed participants to correct errors and incorporate their voice on how the interpretation of their perspectives were articulated. The process was as follows: 1) participants read and edit a summary of ideas, words, and/or phrases from interview transcripts; 2) participants read and edit preliminary themes with no transcript (half page/full page); 3) participants read and edit the narrative, followed with participant feedback; and 4) participants read and edit the findings (themes/patterns), followed by participant feedback. There were no corrections that needed to be made after member checking. I suspected participants thoroughly reviewed the data collected and addressed anything that could be harmful to them or their organization.

As a researcher, my goal was to present data and methods as transparently as possible to avoid any questions of trustworthiness. A "thick description" in qualitative research allowed me to offer texture to depict the details of the participant's narrative. Whereas, the reader would have to infer the trustworthiness in the findings without thick description (Hallett, 2009; Payne & Williams, 2005). The detailed description offered context and in-depth depictions of conversations and observations. Any conclusions of the data has included thick description of participants who were involved in the study. The CEO's voices and perspectives were integrated throughout the data collection process to support these conclusions.

There are some possible risks involved for participants. The risks associated with participating in this interview are as follows: 1) Psychological – Participants may feel somewhat reserved to discuss participant leadership style and their perspective of leadership impact on stakeholders. 2) Sociological – Participants may feel self-conscious about leadership decisions and other perceptions of those decisions. Furthermore, they may feel their perspectives on leadership is not appropriate and may feel reluctant to make it known publicly. 3) Loss of confidentiality – There is a possibility that my laptop and audio recording could be breached.

However, I do have safeguards to protect the participant from these risks: 1) Psychological – Participants will have the option to refrain from any questions throughout the interview. Participants may end the interview at any time you would like. 2) Sociological – Participants will be reassured that I remained judgement free throughout the entire interview process. I kept their information secure in my password encrypted laptop. 3) Loss of confidentiality – All audio recorded files will be immediately deleted after it has been transcribed. All digital data that may link participants to this research was password protected. The consent forms which contains participant names was kept in a locked cabinet in my home. This safeguard makes it highly unlikely and difficult for a breach of participant information.

I used my iPhone to audio record participants during the interview. Pictures were also taken on my iPhone for those documents that were later analyzed. I requested permission from participants before taking a picture of any document. There were no pictures taken of any participants. I took notes of the interview on my personal laptop while I asked questions. I personally transcribed the audio recorded data. My iPhone and personal laptop are protected by passwords. Copies were made of paper copies of documents and kept in a locked filing cabinet in my house that will be destroyed three years after the study is completed.

Any information obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with the participant has remained confidential and has been disclosed only with participant permission. My dissertation chair and I have been the only two individuals to access the data collected. I am the primary researcher, and my chair's access to the data has been only to provide guidance and support. The study provided participants with pseudonyms for their names and institutions and avoid any other identifiable information. The measures taken to ensure participation confidentiality are as follows: The audio recorded file was kept on my password protected iPhone. The transcribed file was kept in my password protected laptop. The data obtained was maintained in a safe, locked location and will be destroyed after a period of three years after the study is completed.

Overall, there are many benefits to this research. One benefit would be for aspiring school leaders and their exposure to an executive officer's thoughts around improving student achievement. The study highlighted the CEO's perspectives that may help other current organizational leaders with their own practices and perceptions around instructional leadership. Moreover, participants were able to speak and reflect on their own professional lived experiences as an executive officer. Participants will benefit by being able to speak about their experiences to a researcher who is obliged to remain objective.

In prior chapters, I have discussed the existing gap in executive leadership in education. This section has outlined how the study design sought to understand a CEO through the development of trust on behalf of the researcher and dissertation findings. Trustworthiness has emerged as the most common approach to evaluating quality in qualitative research. Trustworthiness is an umbrella concept that has many different strategies (Hallett, 2017a). The following sections give light to the limitations specific to the study.

Limitations of the Study

The dissertation employed various methods of data collection within the CMO. The interviews with the CEO and the relationship they have on student achievement was my main priority as a researcher. The limitations of the study may not be able to fill gaps in the literature due to the high-profile role of the CEO. The amount of data is not sufficient enough to understand explicitly how the CEO in a CMO approaches raising student achievement. School sites have many factors outside the purview of the study that contribute to student achievement; yet, the transfer of CEO responses to site and classroom environments are limited in this study as observations or interviews with teachers and staff are not being conducted. My hopes are that this study inspire others' curiosities around executive leadership in the educational arena to continue the exploration.

The time of the school year that interviews were conducted can be another limitation as responses may minimally reflect or not reflect at all the rhetoric of CEO interviews. The online spaces must be strategically timed to view a holistic snapshot of the organization and any influence by the CEO that is current or has on-going impact.

An additional limitation was to frame the interview protocol for secondary interviews so the executive leader colleague to the CEO feels they cannot express their thoughts in full detail due to the risk of future repercussions and/or challenges in the workplace. In order for the colleague to feel safe to share their perspective, they must have rapport and confidence in anonymity from the researcher. This concept applied to the CEO as primary interviews as well. The CEO was used to drive the narrative of their organization and how they are perceived. The study aimed to avoid the generalizability of those such narratives by asking details seeking questions in the interview protocols.

As a researcher, I influence the data collection process and the act of interpreting the data. As a white male, who is straight and married, a former Christian Baptist, an ex-football coach, and seeking a doctoral degree, I find myself obliged to state my lens in analyzing the data is one perspective. This rings truth as many CEOs of CMOs are woman whose narratives of being an executive leader in education need to be heard. It is without a doubt listening to their perspectives has impacted my perceptions on leadership; however, I will not be taking the stance as an insider. In efforts to validate the limitations, participants have had the opportunity to review vignettes in Chapter Four and be able to offer feedback on the data, which includes verbatim transcripts from interviews and observations.

Chapter Summary

In the prior chapter, I reviewed the existing gap in instructional leadership and the CEO role within CMOs. With this concept comes the additional research in understanding operational aspects of CMOs. The design of the study has been outlined above to understand the perspective of the CEO in a CMO, and the beliefs these individuals possess to influence student achievement. The next chapter presents the findings before themes are analyzed in the data.

Chapter Four: The Education Executive

In this chapter, the various data collected from the chief executive officer and the charter management organization are described. The data collected consist of interviews, document analysis, and online spaces. Through the course of the dissertation a variety of findings emerged as themes that I categorized into five major areas: organization beliefs and governance model, shared leadership, data-driven decisions, leadership development, and asset-based teaching approach. The themes are described briefly in this chapter and will go into greater depth in Chapter Five.

The results in this chapter are drawn from participants' thoughts, feelings, and perceptions on instructional leadership. The interviews yielded data from the work life of a woman CEO and fellow leaders in her organization. As an interpretivist researcher, I recognize that the results of this study are constructed, inferred, and interpreted by me and that they, too, can be interpreted. I acknowledge that the participants, myself, and educators in general are continually positioning and re-positioning themselves within research on instructional leadership pas it is an ever-evolving framework in the educational arena. I will always be open to additional interpretations and meanings.

The findings have been organized for readability in order to have meaning related to the study's research question. In this chapter, I begin introducing the participants in the study. The second section presents the findings that align to the CEO, CMO, and other participants. The third section addresses themes that do not explicitly relate to the research question, yet emerge from the data. All participants speak for themselves. The names of people and places have been changed. All quotations from participants are actual statements taken from interview transcripts.

Research Question

The purpose of the study's research question is to serve as an open-ended and overarching inquiry to the chief executive officer's perception on the impact instructional leadership has on student achievement. The data are filtered through the lens of instructional leadership framework in the following section. The following question frames the study: How does the chief executive officer of a charter management organization think about instructional leadership to improve student achievement?

Charter Management Organization

As I parked my car and began walking to the Home Support Office (HSO) of Gran Mundo Charter Schools (GMCS), I began noticing the proximity in how close the HSO is to one of the high school academies the CMO operates. GMCS brand and insignia become more apparent as I stepped closer as well as notice of large window on the second floor seeming to overlook the students and community it serves. It would be only minutes later after the front door unlatches from my buzzing-in that I find out the window on the second floor actually belongs to the person who has committed to operating this network of schools that serve the community and their most prized possession – their youth.

Mission and values. GMCS website clearly states their mission, goals, and values. The items provide insights into the academic optimism GMCS foresees for the students, families, and employees of the organization. The following includes website contents:

Mission. The CMO's mission is to provide a college preparatory educational experience for students to be independent problem solvers, critical thinkers, and literate agents of social justice able to live with empathy for the world around them.

GMCS goals. The CMO's stated goals strive to remain realistic, yet rigorous, by equipping 2,000 graduates with the knowledge, skills, and worldview to be literate, critical thinkers and independent problem solvers by 2022. GMCS aims for 90% of students will be accepted, 80% to attend, and 60% to graduate from a four-year college within six years.

GMCS values. The CMO believes in five core values: excellence, equity, community, innovation, and joy. GMCS believes all teammates have the responsibility to provide consistent high-quality teaching and learning that produces results as they strive for excellence. The term "teammates" refers to organization leaders, school leaders, certificated teaching faculty, and classified staff members – any GMCS employee. The organization recognizes the value in each individual's genuine social, emotional, psychological, and academic need to be met through equitable systems. The CMO is deeply rooted in the community's rich culture where stakeholders live. GMCS believes that their learning experiences must continue to evolve and innovate to meet the needs of families and students. The organization strives to create a learning environment that fosters sustained happiness across students, staff, and families.

Demographics. GMCS operates seven to ten independent charter schools in Southern California. The schools qualify for Title I, which indicates the high percentage of students come from a low socio-economic background. GMCS serves over 3,500 students where between 88-95% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch, which serves as the classification for low-income for all California schools. Of the 3,500 students, 40-50% of them are English language learners. With a high percentage of English language learners, the academic emphasis of the organization is critical to serving specific sub-group's needs.

The region GMCS serves has the highest percentage of severe overcrowding in the city, the greatest concentration of single parent households (50-88%, over twice the city average),

highest non-fluency in English (40-66% speak English "not well" or "not at all"), and the lowest availability of automobiles (housing units with no vehicle available ranges from 46-90%-- over three times the city average). Sixty-one percent of residents are foreign-born, compared with 11% in the United States. At home, 91% families speak Spanish as the dominant language, 7% speak English, and 1% speak Filipino or Korean. The annual income within this city district is the lowest in Los Angeles; The median income is $11,475. The poverty rate in the area is 35%, compared with a citywide rate of 18%. 82% of housing units in the neighborhood are rentals versus 34% nationally.[1]

Organization reporting structure. The organizational hierarchy document is created by senior leadership and disseminated to organizational teams and site leaders in summer professional development. The hierarchy allows teams, individuals, and roles in the organization and on school sites to acknowledge specific people who can support them in specific area expertise. GMCS has an organizational hierarchy and each principal is to submit their own school site hierarchy. The hierarchy's aim for this organization is also to create a transparent reporting structure that allows information and resources to support the mission and goals for the direction while creating a sustainable feedback and input communication pathway from support staff, teachers, and school leaders. The CEO affirms by noting, "We have our organizational goals – those are set at the executive level, and then our Chief Learning Officer create the strategic plan based on those goals, and then the Content Team gets their sliver and that has to map on and align, and then it goes on to the school site. That's how we are keeping the work moving in one direction."

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[1] Demographic data from LA County Children's Planning Council, based on US Bureau of Census, 2000.

Strategic planning. The CEO spoke to four levers the organization did some work around a couple of years ago that allowed clarity to mission-alignment while establishing realistic goals for the organization. The four levers are used as a strategic plan framework. The levers are not the strategic plan, only the frame in which strategic plans across the CMO are created. The CEO explains the work as "The four levers have to do with our success equation; 'So in order for us to reach our success, what are the four levers we need to focus on'? We have four ingredients or levers that was the core work." As noted in the above section, it is the Chief Learning Officer's role to operationalize this across the organization with specific teams. The teams then create resources and supports for the levers to be implemented, executed, and fostered on each school site.

In discussing the first lever (Lever A), the CEO addressed the meaning of each content matter for the student, "The first being the academic, to have rigor in all these areas – not only in ELA and math, science and social studies, and the arts." The CEO continued to discuss how background knowledge for our students provides them with the building blocks to develop the skills they will need to work with their communities.

The second lever acknowledges systems of supports students and families may need. "The second lever was the safety nets and support systems for kids to access the academic program. Our belief is that if we don't support those needs, then it doesn't matter how good our program is because our kids won't be able to access it," the CEO explains knowing the heart of a student must feel safe before the mind can process cognitively. She expands on the second lever by noting a specific type of learning the GMCS is developing:

> We have place-based learning in Lever B, in that second one, in the wrap-around services. This is where we really look at every school community on its own. While we are [Gran Mundo], we know not all our school communities the same – you could go one-mile in one direction and it's a different community. So, we have the commitment in

getting to know the community and getting to work with the uniqueness of every school community and really be about the place that we hold in that neighborhood, that community. Also, all of our schools are connected with local partners and we try to break through being a school that is placed in a community to being a school within a community.

Place-based learning focuses on learning experiences in the community and how one can grow into being an asset for the community. Along the continuum of putting people and community first, the CEO takes an unapologetic position with the third lever (Lever C):

The third lever is the people – who do we have as school leaders, what is the teacher profile that we have? We never got down to defining what an effective teacher was back then, we are doing more work around that right now, but in that category for me and us then and now it was more around mission-alignment and people coming to [Gran Mundo] qualified, competent, and prepared to serve our communities. We have very unique opportunities and challenges that are outside of our control that anyone who comes to our organization to embrace and accept. I have this belief that a great teacher isn't always a great teacher at [Gran Mundo].

Table 7: Gran Mundo Charter Schools Strategic Plan Framework

Lever	Lever Description
A	With the utmost emphasis on literacy and mathematics, the student profile interacts with rigorous and relevant critical thinking, communication, reading, writing, and mathematical reasoning
B	Apply a place-based approach to guide emotional intelligence development and integrate critical perspectives
C	Attain and develop high quality teachers and leaders who are committed to the "[GMCS] way"
D	Secure organizational long-term human capital and fiscal management

Note. Adapted from Gran Mundo Charter Schools website.

The fourth lever is to ensure the organization is healthy fiscally for years to come. This lever also keeps resource allocation in the forefront as the first three levers will need specific resources for implementation and execution. The CEO approaches this lever (Lever D) with the following question, "The fourth lever was organizational sustainability – How do we

manage our money? How we manage our operational pieces of the organization, and how they

are approached in a sustainable way. They cannot be approached in a short-term way. We need

to make sure we are monitoring ourselves on that front." The levers are further unpacked

throughout the next section. The four levers directly correlate with the mission and core values

of the organization; whereas, nuances from the levers can been found within Dr. Viviane

Robinson's *Instructional Leadership* theoretical framework as well.

Participants

The primary participant in this study is a Latina who represents a range of experience in

her path to the office of chief executive officer. Secondary participants consist of a supporting

organization leader and school leader who spoke to instructional leadership within Gran Mundo

Charter Schools. Names and any proprietary information have been removed or altered to secure

anonymity. Participant biographies from online spaces are below:

> Amy Espino, Chief Executive Officer
> Dr. Espino is dedicated to opening and operating high quality educational options for students and families in a community in Southern California. Her leadership at Gran Mundo Charter Schools has earned recognition for excellence in academics including raising achievement for Latino English language learners, a Title 1 Academic Achievement award, the California Association of Bilingual Education Seal of Excellence, and the California Distinguished Schools award. A prestigious business magazine even named Amy one of the top seven most powerful educators in the world.
>
> Dr. Espino was a member of Teach for America corps and taught for three years in a Southern California district. Her commitment has been to close achievement and opportunity gaps for low-income minority students. She opened one of the first independent charter schools in California and taught for seven years before joining Gran Mundo in the early 2000s. At GMCS, she found herself working with families in the neighborhood where she grew up, investing them and their children in being *College Ready, College Bound*.
>
> Amy holds a master's degree in bilingual-bicultural education, and a second master's degree as well. She also earned a doctorate in educational leadership. A veteran of the charter schools movement in California, she serves on several boards and committees.

John Crawford, Vice President of Schools
Mr. Crawford served students and families as a founding principal of a K-5 school and then later was the founding principal for a secondary academy in Sacramento County before joining Gran Mundo. John taught eighth-grade language arts on the east coast through Teach for America. His bachelor's degree is in English Language and Literature while his master's degree is in Educational Leadership.

Laura Freitas, Assistant Principal
Ms. Freitas is responsible for teacher evaluation, instructional coaching, and the implementation of bilingual education on the Equinox Academy campus. In her role as assistant principal, Ms. Freitas strives to empower low-income, immigrant children to pursue their dreams and ensure that college is a real possibility in their lives. In her time as multiple subject teacher for nine years she gleaned from evidence-based practices such as, bilingual education, conceptual math, workshop model, and restorative practices to increase engagement and improve student achievement. Ms. Freitas has a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree in elementary and bilingual education.

The GMCS organization chart for hierarchical reporting structures provides a frame for governance in the CMO. The following table presents the organization chart:

Table 8: Gran Mundo Charter Schools Organization Hierarchy Chart

Chief Executive Officer

Chief Operations and Strategy Officer	Chief Financial Officer	Chief Learning Officer

Vice President of Human Resource
- Senior Director of Talent
  ↪ Director of Recruitment
  ↪ Credentials Analyst
- Senior Director of Human Resources
  ↪ Director of Inclusion
- Director of Communications and Public Affairs

Vice President of Operations
- Director of Operations
  ↪ Facilities Director
- Director of Development
- Director of Information Technology
  ↪ IT Specialist

- Director of Finance & Compliance
  ↪ Business Managers
- Staff Accountant Analyst
  ↪ Accounts Payable and Purchasing Coordinator
- Payroll Manager
- Clerks

Vice President of Schools
- Principal
  ↪ Assistant Principal
  ↪ Dean
  ↪ Teachers
  ↪ School Operations Manager
  ↪ Support Staff

Vice President of Curriculum and Instruction
- Director of Special Education
- Director of Math Instruction
- Director of Literacy
- Director of Language
- Director of Science and Technology
- Director of Innovation
  ↪ Experiential Learning Specialist

Vice President of Programs
- Director of Student Support Services
  ↪ Student and Family Service Coordinator
- Director of College Success
  ↪ Internship Coordinator
- Director of Parent Engagement and Advocacy

In this study, the CEO establishes the vision and framing for initiatives and practices in the CMO. The chief and vice president roles create and codify systems, structures, and resources for practices to be implemented across schools and/or classrooms. Content teams and school leadership teams (principals, assistant principals, deans) are to ensure the implementation and execution of those initiatives and practices through progress monitoring.

Chief Executive Officer

I entered the GMCS Home Support Office and one the first things I noticed as I walk down the ramp are the pictures and architecture designs of each school hung up alongside the wall. It was if the walls were glowing with pride as each school's infrastructure was the same three colors as GMCS. I inferred that the schools utilizing the same colors as the organization unified what it meant to be working in GMCS. I approached the receptionist to introduce myself and make her aware I was here for an appointment with the Dr. Espino. The receptionist reached for the phone to call up stairs to relay I was present, she hung up the phone, turned and said, "Please have a seat, she will be right down."

The chief executive officer, the person. I was not sitting long until I am greeted with smile by Dr. Espino while holding a rice cake with what must have been peanut butter. After an initial introduction and a handshake in the front lobby, she bursts into laughter covering her mouth with her free hand and says, "Well, how about this for a first impression. I am having a snack between meetings, and you just happen to be the lucky one catching me stuffing my face." My working assumption was that 1) I would not be met by the CEO in the main lobby, let alone 2) share such a sincere human moment with her in the first minute of meeting her.

As we began walking to her office we spoke about my travels to GMCS, a team meeting she waved and said "Hello" to while we passed, my wife and her occupation, Thanksgiving

celebrations, and the smoke caused by the wildfires in Northern and Southern California. The walk had to only be 2-3 minutes. She was able to navigate and probe a conversation with a complete stranger about their life and was still able to show her presence with one of her teams in that time frame. We arrived at her office and sat at the small squared shaped conference table adjacent from her desk where we did not break conversation. Dr. Espino continued telling me about a story where her and her young son were at the park across where they noticed the smoke from a nearby wildfire was thickening, so much so the young boy asked his mother about the piece of ash that had landed on a leave he held. She continued by describing how they went back to their house, and how an adult's body is much more resilient than a young child's body when faced with those conditions. I realized from the beginning that the CEO had a grace to her that allowed emotional intelligence to foster dispositions in relationship building while impacting human capital. Her grace allowed for the human connection to be present throughout our entire conversation as she spoke to the "GMCS Way" and their students.

Dr. Espino offered her narrative, her *why*, in a recent speech she gave to state policy leaders. Her speech provided *why* human connection is institutionalized in her leadership and into the "GMCS Way". The following is summarized content of her speech: Dr. Espino's family moved to America from Mexico when she was four. It wasn't uncommon for her parents not to have a formal education. Her parents grew up in rural Mexico where there was no expectation to attend middle school. Both parents did not learn how to read or write. Dr. Espino's mother signed her name X. Her parents were hardworking – her father was a dishwasher and mother made extra money washing, ironing, and babysitting for neighbors. Her parents were loving and wanted a better future for her siblings and her; however, they did not see education as a tangible

mode in delivering that brighter future. The schools Dr. Espino attended did not see any value in engaging parent like hers. She was on her own; left to navigate the education system by herself.

Dr. Espino was the lowest in reading when she was in the third grade in her school. She was not provided the supports to improve her language skills and would need to be held back in the sixth grade because her English was not developed. She didn't know college was even an option until seventh grade. Her parents were not receptive to her stating her intent to go to high school instead of working. They would only let her go to high school if Dr. Espino wanted to go to high school. She worked as a cashier to pay her tuition to go to a private high school. She moved across the country to go to college on scholarship against her parents' wishes. She had a challenging transition to college and felt unprepared compared to peers and felt out of place as one of the only students of color.

She graduated through perseverance and uncovered a passion for providing others access to good education. Education served as a path of opportunity and she wanted to create pathways for other kids who were like me. Dr. Espino knew that she could not accept the status quo if kids were going to succeed like she did.

Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership theory (also known as student-centered leadership) has gained traction in recent years as Dr. Viviane Robinson has built on existing literature and defined the five dimensions of the theory in greater depth. In the following sections, the case study will express findings from participant perspectives on instructional leadership and how they align to Dr. Robinson's framework.
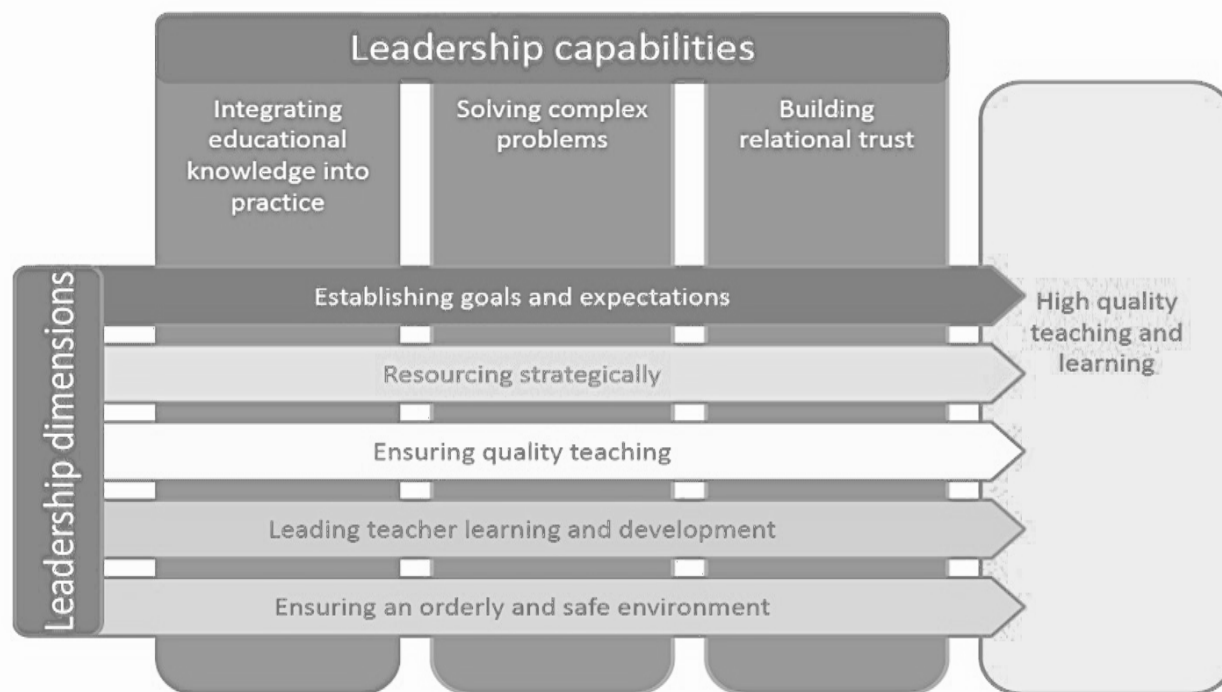
Figure 1: Instructional Leadership Framework from *Student-Centered Leadership* (143-148), by V.M.J. Robinson, 2011, Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass. Copyright [2011] by John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Leadership capabilities. There are three leadership capabilities that serve as competencies to frame the leadership dimensions or indicators. The three capabilities consist of 1) integrating educational knowledge into practice, 2) solving complex problems, and 3) building relational trust. These capabilities stretch broadly in the role of the CEO; for example, when the CEO was asked how often she interacts with the instructional program she responded:

> Directly, not much. Directly, I would say I am in constant contact with the direction, the data, but I'm not doing that work directly. So, it trickles down to the Chief Learning Officer, the content teams, and the school sites. Indirectly, a lot. I would say probably half the time I'm talking about the instructional program with board members, with funders, with external entities like authorizers. There's a lot of other indirect ways where I am amerced with the instructional emphasis of the organization.

The instructional program is integrated in every corner of the organization as the CEO constantly discusses the CMO's program and impacts on student achievement across many stakeholders.

The findings in the following section surfaced from leader perceptions on how they engage with the CMO's academic emphasis as well as how they view their role plays a part in improving student achievement.

     Integrating educational knowledge into practice. The capability of *integrating educational knowledge into practice* begins with identifying learning goals for the organization and then recognizing the pedagogical shift required from those learning goals for your teachers and leaders. Once the pedagogical shifts have been framed the organization can work on the administrative shifts required to support those teaching and learning shifts (Robinson & Emstad, 2011). GMCS is cognizant on how instructional priorities influence each school site, states the CEO, "While our organizational priorities are a comprehensive snapshot, they translate to what is right for the schools based on where they are." Dr. Espino and GMCS decided to restructure their organizational administrative teams in order to support pedagogical shifts more specifically, "So the way we reorganized is that everything that has to do with student and adult learning into the Learning Group, and everything that has to do with strategy, operations, and development in the Strategy Operations Group."

     Dr. Espino commented that GMCS "…finally have a framework that guides the instructional model and program," and feels confident that the CMO Through the strategic plan of the four levers noted in the above section. In the bifurcation of the learning group and strategy operations group, "…content team that also provides resources and tools to school leaders at the sites in order to do their work" to support and execute the instructional model. An example of this is GMCS' adoption of math curriculum across their schools to establish continuity and common language from school-site to school-site. The content teams along with site leadership are the roles who are codifying the nuances of the instructional model to make it efficient and

effective. Dr. Espino notes codifying can be a challenge when disseminating information and resources:

> We just brought on a STEM Specialist to codify our approach to STEM education, but again it is one person that came in and pulled up their sleeves and wants to get things going at the school sites. I don't know if their doing a good job at capturing everything that [they] are doing and the lessons learned and using that because you want to be in the work. It is important; especially, for replicating.

An aspect of codifying the implementation and execution of educational knowledge into practice is leveraging the site leaders. Dr. Espino unpacks instructional leadership and how the organization should support these skills, "Instructional leadership is very much focused at the school sites with the school leaders, and I would say from the CMO perspective is to equip our school leaders with the skills to be the best instructional leaders that they can be. It is not our job to lead for them, but it's our job to support them and develop them to be the best." These skills will be described further in the following sections.

In my interview with Gran Mundo's Vice President of Schools, John Crawford, we discussed the same topics and questions in the interview protocol with Dr. Espino. Mr. Crawford offered his insight and provided affirmation to Dr. Espino's responses through practical applications throughout the organization. Mr. Crawford responds to what comes to mind when he hears the phrase "instructional leadership":

> We're trying to ensure that our school leaders when they hear the term 'instructional leader' that they are thinking 1) my major priority is to ensure high quality instruction for all students is happening in every classroom, every day, every minute of every day if possible, and 2) every aspect of schooling that quality of instruction is happening for students and all students needs are being met as well as teachers and staff's capacity is being built to provide that instruction for all students in every period.

Mr. Crawford outlines the approach school leaders need to take when thinking instruction at GMCS. He also supports school leaders; specifically, the principal role. The principal at each GMCS school site has the onus on decision-making for school operations and instruction. These

decisions are aligned with the mission and vision of GMCS and there are supports in place for the principal such as, Mr. Crawford.

Solving complex problems. GMCS has recognized systems and roles are needed to address complex problem solving. Organization leaders arguably find that principals and their team of educators are faced with the most complex challenges at the site-level. Dr. Espino notes a role used to support the school leaders, "We have a VP of Schools, his bucket is to be the principal support, manager and everything the principal position entails. He is the mentor and guide." The VP of Schools among other organizational roles are designed to discern relevant barriers, modify, and integrate solutions to complex problem solving. An example, Dr. Espino described her approach to solving a complex problem with a principal:

> Yeah, and one silly thing early on, was that we have an Open-Door Policy to parents. Parents don't have qualms about showing up and telling me about problems they have with their schools either. We got a lot of emails about their school site and their principal who was unavailable. So, I reached out to the principal and said 'Hey, just checking in. I want to make sure we have an Open-Door Policy.' And she replied, 'Yup, my door is always open.' I was like 'Ok. Well, parents want to meet with you and it seems like there are challenges.' The principal replied, 'Yeah, well I have a sign-up sheet on my door and they can always sign-up and I'll follow-up with them.' I said, 'Ok, what an Open-Door Policy means that parents have access to you, how are creating that access to you? Or are you actually creating a barrier to you. The physical aspect of your door being open does not make people feel welcome or make them feel that you are accessible. You have to make people feel welcomed and then you are accessible.'

Another example of solving complex problems is when GMCS decided to scale-up and operate more schools. This anecdote is from Dr. Espino on the process of replication and what is needed to lessen the complexities:

> So, we replicated and this is what we were like, this is what we do in this school, and brought the new principal over and did joint PD, here is the curriculum; but we didn't have a framework that codified all of our practices and core beliefs around curriculum and instruction, and when we started to do that we realized we needed to get that from different perspectives that it's not just someone form the home support office, it's someone from the home support office having meetings with teams including principals

and other leadership team meeting, and that takes time. You need to invest that time for that to happen.

After the last reorganization in GMCS with the Learning Group and the Strategy Operations Group, Dr. Espino recognizes there is a need for further collaboration between the two teams for deeper alignment to organizational goals, "Now we have to get better at the cross-functional alignments that bring the operational side that aligns with the instructional side – we're big [seven to ten schools], on the smaller side of a CMO, but organizationally it's large." The complexity of organizing people goes beyond the structure. Dr. Espino expanded on solving complex problems specifically in aligning the instructional program across GMCS:

> I think with a charter management organization, you have to embed it in everything – in our Senior Leadership meetings – what are the things we are focused on? What are topics we are covering? It's not just the content team, it has to be everyone when you look at the CMO. You have to integrate it in all aspects of the CMO otherwise it gets very silo'd and it doesn't inform all the other critical pieces necessary to operate a school, so what is the connection to my VP of HR to instruction program? They can't just be HR, they have to have a purpose and a connection to why they are doing the work they are doing. The VP of Operations have to feel like the fact that the ACs work has an impact on instruction. So, it's the meeting structures, topics, the information and how we bring to the board, the data meetings.

GMCS has identified systems and roles to be proactive in approaching problem solving where systems and people act as fail safes when someone or something needs support.

As the VP of Schools, Mr. Crawford not only "focuses on the primary pieces such as instruction and the capacity of folks who are delivering it, but also how are school leaders managing the other pieces of their job in order to focus on instruction." Mr. Crawford's role is to support principals in solving complex problems on school sites and being able to coach the principals on how to anticipate these problems. An example he described was such earlier that week:

> I get a lot of ad-hoc coaching opportunities for leaders; a leader will call me on the phone, like this morning I got this phone call a kid brought some Xanax to school, it's his

second time, I reached out to this other support and they were unavailable so what do I do. So, I am not just the first responder, but I am also the responder if they reached out to another leader and they did not get a response – maybe the person is unavailable or on vacation, and they need an answer right now, so I can be that person as well for leaders to call on and say ok if the person responsible to answer this question is unavailable is gone, then [John] can answer this question or he can point in the right direction. So that type of thing as well.

Mr. Crawford also makes himself available for "putting out fires whether it's with personnel, instruction, facilities, or even coaching leaders on how to put out fires on their campus so they can focus on instruction." During the interview with Mr. Crawford, it grew apparent that his position is to mentor principals through how to remove barriers, so school leaders can focus on teaching and learning. He expressed his position further with a series of questions for school leaders using instructional leadership as the frame:

> So, when leaders are talking about instructional leadership, I'm like 'so when are you going to do it?' That's question number one – When are you going to do it?' Is it on your agenda? The people you are going to do it with, do they have it on their agenda? Like, when are you going to do it. What's the structure going to look like, and what spaces are you talking about instruction in? How? What's the focus? Where's the data that's informing the instruction? Are you looking at an individual level, school-wide level, class level, or organizational level? And then, what structures are you doing that in? How consistent are doing them? All of those layers of instructional leadership are what I think of when I think of instructional leadership.

The organization leader calls this out to assure the complexity and onus of teaching and learning is placed on the principal role. As the lead advisor for principals, Mr. Crawford uses the following outline to solve complex challenges on a school site:

> How do I create the conditions for people to be able to 1) identify what's the challenge, 2) then to be able to identify whether or not there is an individual or collective learning opportunity there, and then 3) determine what is that going to look like in order to meet the challenge? That's why I stay in it because it's not me delivering any curriculum or like saying it's this one way or you have to do this or that to have a high performing school. It's saying what do you need to do to reach that vision to meet a high performing school that you want to do? Is that something you need to do individually? Or something you need to lead so the collective can do it? So, it's a passion of mine [with great exasperation]. It's definitely a passion of mine seeing people become the best version of themselves just makes me happen.

Mr. Crawford's aim for providing principals with this outline is gradual release leaders in solving more complex challenges independently, yet under the organization guidelines created by him. This is an example of codifying what it means to be a leader under the "GMCS Way".

    Building relational trust. Dr. Espino acknowledges and understands that in order to accomplish any goals that relationships with people come first. The leader alludes to trust being built through interpersonal respect and regard for others:

> Development is always hanging over because it is about relationships, you know, it's not about a task necessarily, but it's did I communicate with so and so or should I follow-up with this with so and so, so that takes time and headspace, and making the rounds, saying hello to people. I was on the phone with my board chair on things that are happening and the holidays are coming. And then I am meeting with you, this afternoon with a Thanksgiving Potluck and I am scheduled to be on a few phone calls this afternoon.

Dr. Espino recognizes that "…following up with a couple of pending things with people around development" will elevate morale and impact human capital in each individual role to better outcomes for the organization.

    The following examples from Dr. Espino accentuates her personal integrity and competency in the role to establish and maintain positive rapport among her teammates. When asked about a typical day as CEO, she responded:

> When people ask my son what I do, he says that I am in meetings and on conference calls, but basically that is what we do in this role because a lot of it has to do with the relationships that are forged and having time with people either in person or on the phone, and in this role one of your primary functions is that the ability to be able to move things, and you move things by being able to influence people and in order to influence people you have to have relationships with people.

In the same breath speaking to moving people and the organization forward, the CEO notes the importance of building trust amongst the community and stakeholders. The following quote explains how CMO educators need to build relationships with our community:

> I know that is sort of nuanced language, but I think if we set that mindset in our leaders that you have no entitlement here, you are as much a community member as the people that leave in that apartment building or the non-profit that is down the street. That's how our schools have to co-exist.

The quote sets the expectations for leaders and teachers when working in the community that attends and surrounds each GMCS school site.

One system that Mr. Crawford implements is scheduling check-ins with his principal caseload ahead of time. He uses this space to build trust and capacity between him and school leaders:

> Yeah, that's why I set my calendar up for the year, so I can then go back and put in my prep time, my travel time, and then also look at things that may be coming up on the horizon where I may need to cancel them because I already know what is on the leader's plate for that week. I do that at the beginning at the year, so that way I know, they know, and we're ready to engage and they can show up in those spaces and be ready to focus on what they do. Because really that space is for their learning and growth, that is the space where sometimes we're not even talking about anything that is going on in the school if I noticed the real barrier is an individual capacity barrier. It's like, oh, this person needs to do some learning on their own; for example, around emotional intelligence.

Mr. Crawford is aware his leaders sometimes need facetime with him to his support. These check-ins are not always driven by an agenda, but to see how a person is doing. In some regards, an agenda may emerge and need discussed based on present contexts to help develop a leadership practice. Mr. Crawford continues by providing an example:

> If I'm walking into a room and I'm crying, and I'm responding and I'm not managing the emotions and then whatever is coming out of my mouth after that is falling on deaf ears because you're managing your emotions, you're not managing the other crowd etcetera. So sometimes when I am in those spaces its really about building the capacity of the individual I'm in front of so they can go out and do the work with their group or I might be coaching them on how to build capacity in one of their leaders to do the same type of work that they naturally do – that nuance comes across too – a lot of leaders know how to do a lot of stuff, but they don't always seem to know how to build capacity in another leader to do that stuff.

Mr. Crawford uses the practice of building capacity in a leader as a growth opportunity and/or to check-in on the leader as a person.

Leadership dimensions. Dr. Robinson's *instructional leadership* framework outlines

five dimensions: 1) establishing goals and expectations, 2) resourcing strategically, 3) ensuring

quality teaching, 4) leading teacher learning and development, and 5) ensuring an orderly and

safe environment. These five dimensions are based on more leader focus' on their relationships,

their work, and their learning on the core business of teaching and learning the greater their

influence on student outcomes. The following findings come from data collection from the

participants and CMO of study. The findings in the following section surfaced from leader

perceptions on the terms "instructional leadership" and "academic emphasis" within the

interview protocol.

Establishing goals and expectations. Goals with clarity and consensus are equipped

with three items 1) setting, 2) communicating, and 3) involving. The setting establishes the

importance and measurability of the learning goal, communication needs to be clearly to all

stakeholders, and all staff and community members need to be involved in the process (Robinson

& Emstad, 2011). When asked about their thoughts when they hear the phrase "instructional

leadership," Dr. Espino responded, "Instructional leadership means to me that everything you do

is guided by a vision that is outcome-based and very clear priorities, sort of that guiding North

Star that influence all the decisions that have to be made from the big ones to the little ones that

have to made." With booming laughter, Dr. Espino discussed how GMCS prioritizes

instructional leadership with data:

> Where does [instructional leadership] fall on our priorities? At the top! We're a school.
> Our first priority is 10% increase in ELA and 12% in math, and that 70% of their
> professional development supports their growth. So, having everybody go back to it and
> say this is our priority number one and other things fall under that. We're trying to
> validate all the people, professional development, capacity building, wellness, and all the
> other pieces that contribute to happy, engaged, motivated teachers and leaders to get to a
> goal.

Dr. Espino continued by unpacking the meaning of the phrase of "academic emphasis" to them,

"We call [our academic emphasis] out in our vision, we start with we want our students to go

through a college-preparatory program and so that's our academic emphasis. And then have all

these other skills – the problem solving, the critical thinking." Academic emphasis serves as the

frame for goals while instructional leadership is a mode to achieve goals in GMCS. The tables

below capture student achievement results on the California Assessment of Student Performance

and Progress (CAASPP) in English/Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics.

Table 9: Overall CAASPP Achievement Results & Targets

Year	English/Language Arts	Mathematics
2015-2016	47-50%	29-32%
2016-2017	46-48%	25-27%
2017-2018	40-45%	20-24%
2018-2019 Target	51%	32%

Table 9 represents overall achievement results in ELA and Mathematics for all tested

grade-levels across schools in the Gran Mundo Charter Schools CMO. Dr. Espino and her team

have established growth targets for their CMO with the understanding that the target is the goal,

but not the *how*. Dr. Espino and the other participants in this study will acknowledge *how* the

organization designs instructional leadership to reach their targets.

Dr. Espino and her team understands CAASPP results are one piece of the puzzle;

however, a significant puzzle piece that is used to compare charter schools to surrounding

traditional district schools. The state summative assessment is often used to question the

existence of charter schools if they are underperforming compared to any schools in the

surrounding unified school district.

The organization leans on "Our Chief Learning Officer's role is to identify the North Star

– what are our organizational priorities that our instructional leadership need to focus on?" noted

the CEO, "Even though the Chief Learning Officer is the steward for priorities, a lot of

alignment is needed; we have been working on that for the past three years and we've done a

pretty good job." The Chief Learning Officer and teammates of the Learning Group organize

and operationalize data meetings at all layers of the organization for 'north star' alignment:

> We have been doing data meetings for a long time with our schools but the process has
> become more sophisticated with more people participating in the data meetings so we
> could really get a better feel on the contributing factors to whatever challenges or gaps
> the data is showing. And then things that are visible, organizational priorities, the
> strategic plan – things you interact with regularly that brings that focus back to an
> academic emphasis. Everything we do has to map onto that.

An example of alignment would be when "we went from growth strategy to more wrap around

strategies, to figuring out our arts strategy and direction is going to be; our big thing right now is

how do we co-create an ethnic studies curriculum Pre-K-12 with all of our teachers," stated Dr.

Espino. This statement aligns specifically to the first two levers of the organization's strategic

plan. Another example for Dr. Espino and GMCS placing action while keeping the end in mind

would be their elevation of graduation requirements for all future graduates:

> We just changed [the graduation requirements], and some people would say they were
> probably more rigorous, but less requirements than a traditional district would have. So
> basically, the core of our graduation requirements are that students complete an a-g
> curriculum with a C or better. In addition to that students need to complete an internship
> and complete 50 service hours over their four years. They have to take iConnect class
> and pass three out of the four years with a "C" or better. We do not have a PE
> requirement or a number of electives they have to take. The core of it is meeting the a-g
> requirements.

The graduation requirements defined above surpasses the state minimum requirements and places an academic emphasis on high-quality teaching and learning across subject matters with a-g courses while giving back to the community through service hours.

When Mr. Crawford was asked on what comes to mind when he hears "academic emphasis," he responded with the following:

> That sounds like, depending if you are coming from an individual or grade-level or K-5 because they cover all the contents, an academic emphasis would be a focus on math or a focus on literacy or a focus on language. So, those are our academic emphasis in grades K-5 and at 6-12 it's even more content specific because then we have the specific teachers teaching by content. Whereas, K-5 they are teaching all contents. So, that academic emphasis really becomes about the grade-level you're talking about. Yeah, language, literacy, math, humanities, science.

As the organization leader dives-deeper on academic emphasis by orating GMCS' instructional program and the graduation requirements for their current high school students. Mr. Crawford asks a series of question as he ties the graduation requirements into GMCS' academic emphasis:

> So, starting with the idea around preparing our kids for the 21st century, what academic emphasis do we need to focus on and ensure our kids have access to or are prepared to engage post-secondary is our focus? That's where we started. We actually did revamp with one of our charter renewals last year, we revamped the graduation requirements in both of our high schools to ensure our students are leaving having access and being prepared to engage in post-secondary education. When you dig down deeper how many math courses we expect them to take, how many science courses we expect them to take, which ones, is Physics and Calculus a part of that? Which languages are we offering? How many volunteer hours are we requiring? When we look at, not just the K-12/post-secondary perspective, 'what do we want them to be able to do in order to do well there?' We're also looking at 'what are those institutions looking for'? How do we prepare our students to meet or exceed the expectations of those post-secondary academic institutions? That too, influences our academic emphasis.

GMCS' north star sets goals and expectations that every child deserves a robust and diverse instructional program that provides them the access and opportunity needed for post-secondary success in college or the career of their choice.

Ms. Freitas, an assistant principal who is supported by Mr. Crawford, emphasizes the role

of an instructional leader on the site-level. She explains her perceptions of instructional

leadership by describing her beliefs through a school leader's eyes:

> I believe the instructional leader sets or makes sure the school is aligned to the vision for instruction of a school. It means you are using data to drive your decision s to make sure you are using an equitable lens to move all of your students and to drive standards-based instruction.

The assistant principal strives to support teachers in mission-alignment. Ms. Freitas approach to

supporting educators is through the need of students first. She expands on her perception of the

phrase "academic emphasis" and how the phrase actualizes at her school:

> Our mission definitely has an academic focus. But it's not the full purpose of our organization. We believe in order to provide equity for our students, we need to be thinking from the lens of academics because we need to be able to be sure we are setting our students up for success beyond college or career – whatever path they choose. There is definitely a piece of academics that the world expects at schools to provide students for [careers]. I do believe that's the lens we take, but that's not the only part of the puzzle when we're talking about a life, a human being, we need to look at other parts of that puzzle.

Ms. Freitas and her team takes a whole-child approach improving outcomes for each learner.

GMCS supports this approach with one of their core values being to bring equity to every child's

educational experience.

Resourcing strategically. Resources can come in the form of people, money, and time.

These resources consist of within-school expertise and external expertise to reach goals

(Robinson & Emstad, 2011). Dr. Espino discussed her outlook on resource allocation, "… we

give autonomy to the principals, but in my position, I get to ask all the questions about the

linking how we are spending money to our outcomes, and questioning what decisions are the

right ones based on our budgets being presented." The CEO's questioning provides clarity on

what is and is not being resourced and why. An example of the resources being allocated

effectively would be the alignment of dual enrollment opportunities students have to enroll in

community college courses while still in high school. This resource aligns with the rigor of the

academic emphasis that frames the graduation requirements, Dr. Espino expands by noting:

> We partner with [a local] Community College, and they come and teach one class a
> semester on our campuses. Some students go to [the community college] to take classes
> on their own. Or the other one's close by is [a trade certification program]. And some
> kids are hearing from peers that they 'have all these community college credits and I'm
> graduating in three years'. They are figuring out they can take their general education
> credits in community college and seeing the benefits of doing that in high school. So, the
> community colleges because of budgeting reasons cannot teach more than one class on a
> high school campus, but we can send our kids to college campuses.

The partnership with the local community colleges is a focused rather than fragmented approach

to school improvement and established expectations for students. Mr. Crawford added by noting

the post-secondary supports GMCS provides as resources for students to access college material:

> We also have a very robust college support – post-secondary support system—we try to
> keep in contact with all our alumni, continue the support beyond, we ask them to come
> back and speak with other students that are about to go into college. When we visit
> colleges, we connect with our alumni and have them lead tours. We support them
> financially when we can or make sure they have resources by connecting them with
> donors, college and career readiness is another academic emphasis as we help them with
> resumes, interviewing, internships – our high school graduates have to do an internship.

He continued by iterating there a lot of buckets that fall under the phrase of "academic emphasis"

– career readiness, college readiness, college support, internships. The VP of Schools tied these

buckets back to GMCS' strategic plan and noted the are currently in a revision process right now

as their team works to bring instruction and academics in closer alignment with one another. Mr.

Crawford prioritized a list of the core academic areas for the organization: "1)

Literacy/Language, 2) Mathematics, 3) Instructional Coaching, and 4) Leadership Management."

He added by stating the wrap around supports listed in Lever B as an example in providing

students' academic support by seeding a student and family services coordinator and a licensed

marriage and family therapist (MFT) at every school to support stakeholders, including parents

and guardians, not just students.

   Ensuring quality teaching. The largest variation in school-based achievement in a focus

on teacher quality. A focus on teaching quality entails two ideas: 1) a coherent teaching program

and 2) effective teaching based on a theory or framework for effective teaching (Robinson &

Emstad, 2011). Dr. Espino described GMCS' teaching quality in light of replication and growth:

> When you replicate it's not just an instructional program, it's like the heart and soul of
> the instructional program. It can be the same instructional program implemented very
> different from organization to organization, district to district, so what are the other
> things that are a part of those frameworks? So, it can be replication not just in practice
> but in spirit too.

A coherent teaching program involves common pedagogical approaches and common

assessments across grade-levels while providing progressions of age-related learning outcomes

that are specific standards in each content. GMCS organizes the nuances of the teaching

program through the Learning Group, specifically the Content Team, "The Content Team does a

lot of the implementation and execution of the academic emphasis." Resources and tools for

each specific core subject funnel from the Content Team to school leaders at the sites "in order to

do the work."

   The combination between the Content Team and school leaders provides explanation on

the *why* behind the "GMCS way" to increase coherence that promotes student learning. Dr.

Espino explains "academic emphasis" deeper:

> I would perceive it as sort of the core work we are doing that we have first of foremost
> providing kids with a strong foundation in the content areas. Then from there how do we
> enrich the foundation and make it more comprehensive, more well-rounded beyond the
> basic skills that's where I would start to tighten in the middle and expand it out.

This leadership continuum aligns to priority areas for increased coherence. The principal and their site-leadership teams are to articulate the tradeoffs between increased coherence and increased collective responsibility to reduce individual teacher autonomy.

A framework or theory for effective teaching needs to maximize time that learners are engaged with successful in the learning of important outcomes. Dr. Espino unpacks her feelings of quality teaching as an educator and as a parent:

> So, there are those nuances, how do you capture that? Now as a parent, my son's kinder teachers, same curriculum. Now these 1st grade teachers, there are no love in that curriculum. They do CGI math and readers and writers workshop – the teachers are very direct and explicit in the reader and writer workshops and like the spirit of a readers and writers workshop are not there, but all the technical aspects of the readers and writers workshop are there.

The spirit of the curriculum came from the pedagogical art of the teacher, which enforces the need for teachers to adapt instruction to the learning needs of their students.

Mr. Crawford works to best systematize how the organization explores, inspects, and assess high-quality teaching and learning. He begins by speaking to the autonomy and empowerment school leaders need to ensure highly effective instruction is occurring in every classroom:

> What I saw work well in my previous organization was that there's one person in charge of those operations [per school] – that those pieces are coming through them and that leader has to have the autonomy and the empowerment to solve those problems, and they also need to be coached by an instructional leader as well so that they are solving those problems with an instructional lens.

Mr. Crawford draws on experiences to ensure instruction is always top of mind for a school leader. He built the systems needed for instruction to remain the number one priority for the leader, so the school leader can distribute operations or student discipline to a role on their school leadership team. Mr. Crawford continues by referencing how this could go awry:

> So, you can't just have a person who just knows operations; and I've seen this done, you take a person from the corporate world, you stick them in a school district or a school building and they try to run it like you would in a corporation, not realizing the products in your organization are not inanimate. The products in a school are people and children and way more people-centered. So, when you do that you have a lot of ramifications because you cannot treat a person like an inanimate object, you can't change things as quickly as you could with an inanimate object. You don't shift mindset with inanimate objects. You can't align intentions and actions as easily.

The people-centered focus provides a complexity that forces the principal to think about teachers and students more to achieve perception of instructional leadership. Mr. Crawford continues by asking questions to support principal thinking around leveraging their site operations teams effectively:

> So, the best thing I've seen is school leaders empowering and coaching an operations leader to do things from the perspective of instructional leadership. Always asking: How is this going to impact the stakeholders on my campus? How is this going to impact the classroom? When are announcements going to be given? – Because we don't want to interrupt instruction. That piece in building that leader's capacity to think that way is huge because operations can seem very non-instructional, but they have a direct impact on the quality of instruction you can provide.

Mr. Crawford completes learning cycles with principals with the aim to remove any barriers for student achievement. The VP of Schools lists the protocol of the learning cycle with each principal: "1) Observing leaders coaching teachers, 2) Observing leaders coaching other school leaders on their site leadership team, 3) Observing leaders stewarding teams in meeting, and 4) Classroom walk-throughs." School leaders convene to observe classrooms based on the Danielson Rubric designed to frame teacher effectiveness. GMCS calls these site observations "Danielson Walk-throughs." Mr. Crawford describes how this process is yet one form of data collection to support informed school site decision-making:

> We have a focus on Domain 1, which is Danielson's focus around lesson planning. So, a learning cycle we have engaged leaders in is we have 7-8 Danielson walk-throughs, and at a Danielson Walk Through, you are going to be at a site, you are going to be with fellow leaders (anyone who is coaching someone) and you're going to speak to a specific aspect of the Danielson rubric and you're going to go out and take some observations

based on the understanding of that rubric. You're going to come back and compare your results with a peer and share out whole group and then norm what we perceive the rubric is asking us to see. So that happens throughout the year, not only at the Danielson Walk-throughs, but we have this in our actual role teams, so it's a continuous thread where everyone is deepening their understanding about what it looks like to lesson plan and write a good objective and other items we are norming as expectations and structures (Danielson walk through, role team, one-on-one coaching with a leader).

With Mr. Crawford supporting all GMCS principals and following this protocol, he sets his calendar up for the year before the school year begins. This system establishes 32 check-ins with principals throughout the school year. This is not including "all of the emergencies, day-to-day operations principal questions…" Announced calendar invitations make principals aware on what aspect of the learning cycle Mr. Crawford will be present and provide feedback on.

School leaders team-up with organization leaders on the Danielson Walk-throughs described above. Ms. Freitas describes an observation of a 3rd grade classroom that meets the expectations of high-quality teaching and learning at GMCS:

> One thing you will see when the class between 8:00-8:05am are students are placing their backpacks on wall hooks, gathering materials, walk at a voice level "0" to their tables. She worked on her 6-week vision of her class at the beginning of the school year, so her students definitely knew her expectations, routines, and procedures. She has really created the community of "we don't have time to waste and we have so much to learn." There is so much excitement around it, it is not like students are fighting her over the urgency or expectations – it's definitely not stressful for the kids. The lessons are more "there's a lot to bring, let's get into it."

The assistant principal goes on to depict the lesson design based on resources the teacher has and how the teacher clearly defines criteria for success with students. Ms. Freitas continues by describing the rigor of the classroom:

> Her lessons integrate technology throughout the day. Her lessons are interactive with the SmartBoard, chart paper, anchor charts, with very clear instructional outcomes in kid-friendly language – she is always looking for ways to increase students' vocabulary, and so she uses the objective to embed academic language needed for the day in them. She uses this language in her own speech as she models it, not only is it in writing. She is very prepared from PowerPoints, videos, to getting students to present in front of the

class to show their work. Students have a very clear sense of what the teacher is looking for [criteria of success] at every moment of the day.

The teacher is prepared and displays effectiveness in instructional planning with appropriate resources to address student needs. The teacher implements ways for students to own and make-meaning of the knowledge through strategic checks for understanding during the lesson:

> She stops for students to think-pair-share. This is her way for her to push students to explain their thinking. When it is her time to do a mini-lesson, she is very clear that "this is my time to model for you" to set expectations that everyone should be looking at the teacher and learning from the teacher. Her lessons are no more than 5 minutes before stopping to ask for clarification or get students to think-pair-share. Once she done with her mini-lesson, she has an activity or task for students. Many times students will work on group tasks for discussions, like a turn and talk. During math lessons, she will have students walking around the room and need to solve equations on chart paper on the walls with different math problems.

The teacher strategically groups students based on proficiency data on a previously taught standard. The students have created criteria based on the learning objective that is derived from a standard:

> The student groupings during this activity will have roles assigned to students – leader, discussion manager, etc. The kids further the math with discussion. The class has created a rubric for discussion where once the question is answered, they go back and provide feedback on a student(s) response. The class has created the criteria for what they are looking for during math, reading, and writing time. Many of the expectations and criteria is developed with the class. Some kids are further along than others and the teacher finds leadership roles for those students in her class through activities.

The teacher incorporates ways for students take ownership of their learning by becoming classroom leaders. The students are always aware of the goal of the task or activity based on the learning objective being written and referred to many times throughout the lesson. Ms. Frietas continues by the narrating her observations of the class:

> Her SmartBoard has explicit steps and/or directions on the behavior she expects to see from students for any given assignment. She has an easel where she has the class' "Recipe Card" where the instructional outcome (learning objective) lives. She has anchor charts that the class builds with the teacher that has the academic language needed for that concept. The anchor chart has models and strategies that they have been learning

together. Sometime they title it after a student like "Michael's Strategy" or the teacher
will use the actual mathematical name or grammar rule for ELA with an example. She
would refer back to the anchor charts throughout the lesson.

The teacher uses space in her classroom wisely as she wants students to feel safe and confident

in the learning environment as well as supported. The classroom also accommodates space for

other educators to support individual student needs:

> The teacher has content vocabulary that she posts on the walls specific to the subject
> matter. There is a student work wall to celebrate all students, not just the high achieving
> students. Her class this year is pretty special. She has a behavior interventionist, a
> student teacher, a teacher's aide – she often times has 3-4 adults in the room. She tries to
> maximize these adults in the room by having them run small groups, she pulls the
> assistant principal in the classroom for student and/or coaching support. She is very
> dynamic and you can see that throughout her classroom even with her walls and the
> history of student learning happening throughout the school year. She changes it quite
> often to highlight students frequently.

Upon the collection of student work, the teacher assesses the students based on the criteria of

success for that lesson and/or demonstration of learning. The teacher holds conferences with

each student to discuss next steps on the data:

> She has student conference with the kids to show them their data on skills based on the
> standards. The corrective action planning helps the teacher when discussing next steps
> for the students on a specific skill or clusters of items on an assessment that the student
> needs to grow in. At the end of the week, give students a mini-quiz and then share that
> data with students the following week.

Ms. Freitas' observation offers the study a diverse lens into a GMCS classroom where the

conditions for learning are designed by the teacher and her students. The above depiction is one

representation of how a teacher ensures high-quality teaching and learning is accomplished at

GMCS.

   Leading teacher learning and development. Instructional leadership not only promotes

but directly participates with teacher in formal or informal professional learning and

development (Robinson & Emstad, 2011). As alluded to in previous sections, Dr. Espino notes

explicitly the dissemination of approval and information for professional learning, "We have a Chief Learning Officer and then we have Content Teams where the teams give more narrowly focused on talent development, curriculum and instruction versus school leadership." "The most challenging we had in codifying is really finding the time," the CEO explains, "Codifying is not necessarily fun because you want to be in it, but I think that has been the biggest challenge. How do we continue codifying while building pieces?" Codifying the vision and subtle nuances of instruction is established from site and content team professional development, observations, coaching opportunities, and consistent check-ins. The professional development focus on the links between what is taught and what students have learned while ensuring worthwhile evidence-based content. Dr. Espino describes an example on how the Home Support Office leverages professional learning across the organization:

> So, we replicated and this is what we were like this is what we do in this school, and brought the new principal over and did joint PD, here is the curriculum; but we didn't have a framework that codified all of our practices and core beliefs around curriculum and instruction, and when we started to do that we realized we needed to get that from different perspectives that it's not just someone from the home office, it's someone from the home office having meetings with teams including principals and other leadership team meeting, and that takes time. You need to invest that time for that to happen.

Dr. Espino ultimately works to create an environment where "We strive for educators, school leaders to evangelize the GMCS mission and vision, the GMCS way."

Mr. Crawford alluded to all stakeholders taking ownership of high-quality teaching and learning by ensuring every teammate is managing their time effectively and efficiently, he continues, "You got to make sure other leaders have the capacity; your office manager, cafeteria manager, your facility manger, your other instructional leaders." He notes the principal's responsibility is to ensure "instructional leadership is happening, but also the people who need to deliver that instruction actually have the capacity to do it – that they are getting the coaching and

development on a consistent basis in order to actualize high-quality instruction for all students."

This thinking allows leaders to prioritize student learning at all times. As one of the

organization's top instructional leader, himself, he ensures his priorities to support school leaders

are transparent and clear day-by-day:

> Prepping for role team meetings as well where I am facilitating some learning for school leaders, thinking about how to build the capacity of our school leaders and prepping for those time. Role teams, retreats, sitting and either engaging in senior leadership team meetings or prepping for a senior leadership meeting to address challenges or barriers for our leaders to focus on instruction, like surfacing challenges that we can remove for them or we can better support them by addressing.

In this example, he acts as model on how GMCS envisions principal actions for supporting

teachers and students. Mr. Crawford explains how these support transfer in the organization

using the Danielson Rubric as a frame for teacher effectiveness in GMCS. He explains how the

teacher effectiveness rubric is embedded into the professional development schedule for school

sites and how GMCS has begun cross-site professional developments to grow capacity around

instructional practices:

> We have site-level and cross-site level. So depending on the walk-through data, observation data, student achievement data, school leaders will choose an aspect of the rubric to focus like student talk or increasing engagement in task in Domain 3, and so the PD schedule for that site will have a cycle of learning around that concept and then leaders will do observations on that concept, and then also, when they go on these Danielson Walks they will use this concept as a lens to collect data across site so they can interpret what it looks like on this site and this is what it looks like on my site, so they get some of this cross-pollination as well.

Mr. Crawford cites the significance to systematically interpreting student achievement data in

teams. The VP of Schools goes on to describe a new structure of PD the CMO has rolled out for

the 2018-2019 school year:

> In addition, this year we started cross-site PD, so teacher leaders who we have identified with strong practices and who want to be in leadership in some form or fashion, we work with them on learning opportunities for a full day PD where all of K-2 teachers get together, all 4-5 teachers, all history teachers, all math teachers come together across the

organization with a teacher leader who leads them in specific learning within their content and they embed what the rubric asks in their content as well, so like in math they might say students are working together to solve a problem which requires students who are engaged in group learning, so this pertains to Domain 3.a Student Talk because if we set this up right the students will be asking each other critical questions, and challenge each other thinking, and articulating ideas, etc. – the pieces of the rubric. So what we try and do is make the rubric come to life within the context of learning as well, so they can see this is what the rubric is asking for.

The cross-site professional development has many benefits, but the greatest benefit is providing teachers throughout GMCS the space to discuss practices that are aligned to teacher effectiveness the organization believes increases student learning outcomes.

Ms. Freitas speaks to instructional leaders being present during grade-level team professional development. Their support models the facilitation of the professional learning opportunity while codifying the practice and/or action needed by teachers and learners:

Again, it starts with planning, making sure teachers have supports from instructional leaders. This year in particular, leaders are sitting down with teachers during PLC [professional learning community] time – actualizing a lot of that work from the agenda and facilitating that meeting. Some grade-levels are ready to facilitate their meetings more than others, but for some grade-levels I do more hand-holding because that is where they are at in their practice. So making sure we are aligning across grade-levels to ensure the quality of instruction for our kids. So when kids move from one grade-level to the next, it doesn't matter if they were in teachers A, B, C classroom, but there is equity across the grade-levels. We are also starting to align wheat excellence looks like in Tier 1.

Ms. Freitas speaks to the importance of teachers having the space to discuss student needs with peers, so students do not get lost moving from grade-level to grade-level. She continues by noting how this structure is applied through the on-boarding of new curriculum:

For this year in math, we have been making sure we are implementing new curriculum with fidelity, but also starting from the standard – making sure we are unpacking the standards – we understand we need to build teachers capacity to identify what the standards are asking for; specific to the language, the skills, that we are expected to teach regardless of curriculum. And then when we have that understanding, we go into our curriculum and from their looking at the assessments and identifying what students need to demonstrate by the end of this unit to show mastery for those standards and everything in between across lesson knowledge and skills throughout the unit to be successful. So

that's one way we have focused our work here at [Equinox Academy]. In alignment we have to leverage the 1-2 teachers who have been here and been executing the best practices while raising the expectations for all teachers.

The assistant principal testifies that if we are codifying standards-based practices in team meetings, then high quality teaching and learning will occur from grade-level to grade-level in effort to close opportunity gaps with individual students.

Ensuring an orderly and safe environment. One aspect of ensuring an orderly and safe environment are to establish and maintain relationships of mutual trust between leaders, staff, families, and students (Robinson & Emstad, 2011). A core value of GMCS and Dr. Espino's is to create an equitable learning environment for their educators, families, and students. Dr. Espino speaks to nuances of building equity consciousness to grow a safe environment for all stakeholders:

> I believe that it sets that expectation, and at a minimum, you know you come to Gran Mundo, you commit to the place you are going to be working. Little things, like people walking to the corner store. It's really telling, our elementary teachers do home visits and encourage each other to do home visits and get into the community and go to people's homes or meeting wherever they are comfortable meeting with you.

Equity will appear in in the following section as an emergent theme through Dr. Espino's interview. Teachers who talk with their students at a personal level increases their sense of connection to the school and their teachers while knowing a student's culture helps teachers connect abstract academic ideas to students' lives (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Eastin, 2009). GMCS strives to set norms and routines that support cognitive and behavioral engagement, Dr. Espino noted, "It is not our job to lead for them, but it's our job to support them and develop them to be the best." An example of instructional leaders supporting and developing teachers is to protect teaching and learning by reducing external pressures and

interruptions and establishing an orderly and safe environmental both inside and outside

classrooms (Bryk et al., 2009).

Mr. Crawford assures the goal is to get to an 80/20 ratio. He goes on to explain, "Eighty

percent of a school leaders time is focused on instructional leadership, which means 20% of their

time they need to be managing all these other things and with that small amount of time, you

cannot do it all by yourself." Mr. Crawford paints a picture as he uses a series of examples that

focuses on systems to support instructional leaders:

> So if and when a facilities issue, if and when an upset parent, if and when a budgetary issue, if and when any non-instructional issue interrupts a leader's – what I just named – that they have systemized a way to address it so it doesn't usurp on those two major things and that to me is instructional leadership because I can't focus on instruction if I'm not managing these other things well and if I don't have systems in place for not only for me to manage them well but other leaders to manage them well.

Mr. Crawford takes an organization perspective as he looks at individual versus collective

capacity building to ensure orderly and safe environments on each school site. As the leader of

principals, he inquires with a series of questions on how to best support principals and the

complex ecosystems within a school that provides students support, mentoring, and instruction

for a safe environment:

> And then serving as the organizational lens for what is impacting our schools the most: Is it an individual? Is it collective – meaning, is it an individual's capacity to be able to do the work? Or is it a site's leadership team's capacity to be able to do the work? Are either one of them in the way? Or are we in the way – meaning Home Support Office (HSO) – are we in the way? And what can we do better to support that leadership in order for them to actualize the work and better outcomes for our kids?

The purpose behind the questions are to explore tangible next steps to make student outcomes

more accessible through principals being held responsible through mentoring and coaching. As

he noted, there may be systems or structures that serve as berries for a student or subgroups of

students and their families.

Ms. Freitas ensures an orderly and safe learning environment for her school by maintaining balance in her role:

> Instructional leaders need to be very flexible based on what is happening in the school and making sure we have a vision for where we are going and have context of what is happening at the school so we can adapt to changes that are required or need to address culture needs. Instructional leader needs to keep an equal pulse for the academics but also the culture of the school to ensure we are growing together.

The assistant principal wants to ensure the focus of the school is always student first while building a positive school culture that evokes an 'urgency for now' mindset for learning to be the top priority.

Emergent Themes

Throughout data collection there were other emerging findings that aligned with Robinson's instructional leadership framework. The emerging findings can be seen are not exclusive to GMCS, only that their leaders are speaking to these topics and integrating how they implement the following in their organization. Five themes or categories that appear explicitly related to instructional leadership, but present in the study of the participants' truth around the meaning of an equitable education for all – organization beliefs and governance model, institutionalized leadership, data-driven decisions, leadership development, and asset-based teaching – will be discussed in the following section.

Equity consciousness. An emerging theme throughout data collection was the fostering of an equity consciousness in school leaders. This could also be interpreted as building cultural competencies in such leaders and teachers. Dr. Espino discussed the expectation for the cultural competency at GMCS:

> I think if we set that mindset in our leaders that you have no entitlement here, you are as much a community member as the people that live in that apartment building or the non-profit that is down the street. That's how our schools have to co-exist.

In Dr. Espino's recent speech to state policy leaders, she notes that GMCS students, who are low income students of color, live in "complex ecosystems." She goes on to advocate for a more comprehensive and equitable approach to education policy that does not isolate students from the ecosystems they live in. Dr. Espino sees this as 1) taking language barriers seriously and legislating policy that provides English Learners effective teaching and learning and college access, 2) recognizing the disadvantage students of color and low-income students face when they start college unprepared, and 3) advocating for affordable housing and living wage jobs. Low wages and the lack of affordable housing serves as barriers for families living in urban regions. Families have no choice to live in overcrowded conditions when faced with high rents, and low wages push parents to work multiple jobs where they are unable to provide the time, energy, and money to support their children's education.

An aspect of building an equity consciousness in leaders lives in the intangible nuances of the daily work that may come in a variety of forms of communication. Dr. Espino acknowledges that open-door policies lead to equitable conversations that uncover the needs for all stakeholders. Dr. Espino recognizes that she needs to be a model for equity in the organization. Her demonstration of providing families and students access to their school leader is an example of her alignment to GMCS' mission. Developing an equity consciousness extends to the all teammates at GMCS. The CEO puts building an equity consciousness in context for all educators at GMCS:

> But I think it sets an expectation that you cannot just drive in and drive out, and it's the same for our school leaders, I don't think we have anyone… I mean we've had people who drive in and drive out, and have no idea where kids hangout or where they go for Sunday dinners because it's not like there are a lot of restaurants around that they can afford. So, I think all that matters, particularly with the equity piece.

Dr. Espino unpacks how one in GMCS approaches equity further by describing the disposition

an educator to create equitable conditions for learning in their school and/or classroom. The

CEO's explanation provides context on how to stand with students and their families:

> Something else I have learned in my career with equity is that equity really starts when you show up as an educator, as a member of a community, not feeling more than who you are there to serve. Also, not being afraid. If you show up like you know more and you have more, like that's a none starter for an equity approach, and if you are afraid of the kids and parents – how could you ever strive to develop an equitable environment for students to grow? We strive for educators, school leaders to evangelize the GMCS mission and vision, the GMCS way.

> Mr. Crawford spoke to GMCS' commitment to equity throughout the organization with

their partnership with the National Equity Project. He highlights some of the strategies GMCS

uses from the National Equity Project to build capacity for an equity lens among educators:

> We partner with National Equity Project (NEP) a few years back and we actually coaching our leaders in a lot of strategies they use for difficult conversation or coaching conversations and using some of their questioning techniques, role plays in role teams, modeling it, observations and debriefs of leaders actually practicing the skills we learned and a role team, or a central leadership team where all the leaders and their teams are together, doing some literature studies like case analysis, and what we are really trying to do is model the same way we are building the capacity in our leaders, model a way they can do in their leaders. If a leader is showing me in a coaching session that they need to do some adult learning around a specific concept in order to actualizing the skill and getting the results they want.

The VP of Schools continues by referencing the importance of using data to be a guide for

equitable practices in schools. He also refers to educators building their toolkits to be an equity

conscious educator where NEP is only one set of tools at this time:

> When you are doing work like this, it's going to take time. So, we saw incremental growth last year in student achievement, incremental growth in leadership teams functionality, incremental growth around various learning opportunities. I would say the third year, we're seeing more work where adults are questioning their practice, in a way that is safe and also being able to do that at a school where you simulate learning opportunities in leadership meetings and then principals simulate the same thing at their sites. Using similar slides, school leaders asking for slides, and notes and presentations. Leaders are taking up this work where we have shifted the conversation about everybody learning and growing in our organization.

The challenge resides with implementing the knowledge NEP resources provides into tangible

practices among teammates. Mr. Crawford uses data as an entry point to build capacity for

inclusion, fairness, and diversity to occur:

> People know when we are asking questions or looking at data – it's not an evaluation of your practice. We want to learn and grow, ok let's look at this from a learning and growth perspective, what did you learn from that situation? What areas a surfaced that are good areas to grow in? And using language like that is not always focused on poor practice because that's a barrier to learning and growing. If we're just engaging people and the result are people are feeling ashamed or dismayed because we're addressing poor performance. But taking a learning stance across our whole organization and saying "Hey, we've noticed this across our sites, and we've gathered data through observations and achievement, and we have all these metrics to affirm we need to work on this." Then that means we are all working on and around this, we are all practicing these moves.

Mr. Crawford takes a growth approach to help move people in the direction of the CMO mission

and vision. He leans on protocols, tools, and resources as guidance to transform mindsets in the

organization:

> So, when we are asking questions or following up that's the stance we're taking as an organization and what is transferred the most. Then it could be NEP, or any organization with a great tool as opposed to saying we have to do everything NEP says to do. That's not what we're saying. We're saying NEP has some tools to facilitate some learning and growth to meet our objective and outcomes, etc. NEP is the starting point for us and they have specific tools and strategies that we are diving deeply into – stages of team development, change management, problem of practice, listening as a leadership strategy—at the same time, what we've been able to do is as we are learning and growing and people are seeing the benefits then they want to learn and grow more. We're approaching it from "Here's an offering, let's try it on, model it, practice it" because we already have data on things that haven't been working and we continue to surface that as well. So, let's try this and lean in, and it's not about evaluation if you don't get it perfect, so let's try it and learn and grow around it to see what impacts it has on our students.

The organization devotes people and resources to using these strategies in creating conditions for

equitable learning environments where all students can strive and see themselves in the

instruction. Ms. Freitas discusses the resources and strategies to ensure equity is always leading

improvement in teaching and learning:

> Starting with planning – I believe for us to provide an equitable instruction for our students we have to teach the standards and aligning our lesson plans, or tasks, the way we are designing assessments – all of that to match the rigor of the standards, so we are truly setting students up for success. The first word that comes to mind when I think about "equity" is it has the cultural piece and making sure we are being sensitive to student's identity. This is all important, but more and more, I am understanding that equity also means making sure we have a high bar of excellence for our students so we are doing work that will benefit them and prepare them to be successful in life.

Dr. Espino spoke to the work her and her team does at GMCS. She specifically discussed why she continues to lead GMCS:

> I am still in it because I continue to be excited about the work. There is just so many opportunities to engage in different aspects of the work -- we went from growth strategy to more wrap around strategies, to figuring out our arts strategy and direction is going to be; our big thing right now is how do we co-create an ethnic studies curriculum Pre-K-12 with all of our teachers – those are the pieces of the work that keeps me excited.

The people and programs at GMCS provides sustainability for Dr. Espino to be a part of the work and see the many outcomes and benefits being achieved by families and students. Mr. Crawford calls attention to Dr. Espino's background and the impact it has on their organization, "[Amy] grew up in this neighborhood and communities that [Gran Mundo] currently serves. [Amy] tells her story to our team at the start of every year to remind them of why this work is critical. Most of the educators at [Gran Mundo] live in the communities we serve."

Organization beliefs and governance model. A charter management organization provides support to the schools it operates. Dr. Espino speaks to the CMO governance model:

> The CMO work is that we're complex organizations and the work is work in progress all the time. It's always going to be evolving, it's always going to be informed, so definitely not creating vision or expectation of perfection, it should be excellence, always striving to be the best we can be with the resources, the information, and the time that we have.

The CEO was proud to when describing her day thus far. She noted taking a call with a CMO leader on east coast to share ideas, "we sort of believe in sharing when other people want to pick our brains about something and being flexible and available."

Dr. Espino speaks to the complex problem solving of leading CMO operations in the prior sections. "Scaling up a CMO needs to be slow and steady," she continues, an aspect of CMOs scaling up and replication is when organizations decide to operate multi-regional. The CEO believes no matter the state of the organization that "… a great teacher isn't always a great teacher at Gran Mundo." This helps keep the organization focused on instruction and teacher growth.

Mr. Crawford discussed the CEO role and their influence on instruction. He expresses to the weight of a CEO's voice is when speaking to the power of high-quality instruction:

> CEOs must consistently speak about instruction and explicitly say what the focus is and that needs to be instruction, so whatever that focus is they asking the questions and empowering their senior leader, but those people need to be using the same language and then comes the design and redesign what have you. The CEO must be able to stand in front of all stakeholders and state the explicit instructional focus and place it as the number one priority across the organization.

Mr. Crawford draws connections to a past CMO, where he served as principal, and described how ripple effect the CEO can send throughout an organization. He portrays an environment where what he perceived as high-quality instruction was codified from school-to-school within the CMO:

> In a previous organization, I remember there was a point where you can go in any school in the organization and you knew you were in that organization's school. Without a doubt, you saw very similar things. You saw kids meeting the mark the same way, you saw a lot of learning that must have been done across sites, across grade-levels in structured ways for people to deliver quality instruction. So, we have been making that shift here as well.

Mr. Crawford alludes to normative research-based unifying practices that are implemented and executed across an organization. He continued providing an example of how he has seen principals prioritize instruction while scaling-up:

> I've seen it done in two different ways in the two major CMOs that I have worked for. One being huge, and this one being smaller but relative in size. We've just restructured

to figure out how to do that because too many hands were in the operations pot, which was causing more time from the leader to be focused on instruction.

Mr. Crawford notes that GMCS has had many successes and challenges. A major success being able to "push surrounding districts to look at how to serve the whole child with wrap around services," whereas, a challenge has been "staying focused when the community has so many needs." An evolving complex organization will be faced with successes and challenges while scaling-up and replication.

Institutionalized leadership. Gran Mundo's organization chart provides a clear outline to specific roles who share responsibility for the achievement of students, families, and teammates. Dr. Espino distributes leadership responsibilities across all teammates to instill values that all GMCS employees are a part of the community and no entitlement should surface. The leadership team strives to maintains transformational presence and processes among all stakeholders. From Ms. Freitas' perspective, the mindset of distributed leadership transfers to the site leadership teams:

> I believe this work is not done by one person or even two people. There are definitely leaders in the school who support and develop, but it needs to be in conjunction with teachers, staff, and students. When I think about instructional leadership, I think about how it needs to be done with the whole community. I think that my job as an instructional leader is to define best practices and be able to make sure the staff is aligned to that vision. I definitely play a role in that, but I am not the full person who holds the instructional vision or leadership of that for our school.

Ms. Freitas also understands that every person who influences student outcomes needs to have the capacity to navigate the *why* behind actions and behaviors of educator. The vice presidents of the CMO are another example of distributed leadership as they work to build systems of knowledge management for the implementation and execution of effective practices. The following findings are how Mr. Crawford models capacity building in leaders for the processes to codify through the philosophy of shared leadership in the organization.

Building capacity in school leaders. Dr. Espino is committed to supporting school leadership to increase student achievement. One way she does this is by empowering Mr. Crawford to build capacity in school leaders to navigate research-based practices and alignment to the goals of GMCS. Mr. Crawford establishes four pieces to building capacity in school leaders at GMCS:

> …the primary pieces we think of are (1) management versus coaching skills. So specifically, with any of these leaders who manages or coaches anyone, we want to prepare them for both of these avenues because the skills look different. We're also talking about (2) content knowledge. If someone is supporting a teacher a specific content or grade-level – it can be grade-level content. Another thing is (3) building leaders way to think strategically about high leverage moves across the site or with an individual – some strategic thinking as well. We want to develop those skills. And then (4) leadership and team building skills as well – conflict management, team dynamics, team development, managing change --- so we are approaching the work very similarly.

Mr. Crawford notes that it is all about where the person is in their development and what approach you take in meeting the individual where they are. The most challenging piece with building capacity in one person is that you are modeling "how to" build capacity, so that leader will codify the practice(s) with other educators in their schools. Mr. Crawford continues by unpacking this ability:

> When a team goes to meet and experience me – I have my own nuances ways of doing things, but to be able to tell oh we're going to resolve a conflict and use the same language. We want to use similar language when approaching certain concepts – change management, conflict resolution, role teams, building capacity – we all want them to mean something. So, it has to do with adults' ability to learn, like (5) growth mindset, would be another thing to build people capacity in, and the understanding that none of us have arrived and we're definitely dealing with young people who we are trying to get them to learn and grow, and that's what we should be trying to model that as well. So, when we say building ones' capacity we mean growing people capacity in all of those areas.

The five aspects that Mr. Crawford spoke too are established to codify the phrases and words throughout the organization. Each principal and leadership team at the school sites should be using this language in meetings and conversation among peers.

Governing board members. The complexity of leading and operating a CMO grows when serving multiples boards, states Dr. Espino, "The CEO and CMO role is unique in the fact that you work with your own board, but you also work with multiple boards as authorizers of each school site." This is one aspect that is different from traditional school districts. It could be possible that each school in the CMO could operate under the same authorizer; however, the CMO has its own governing board as well.

Dr. Espino offers insight on two things to consider when facilitating board meetings. The following provides board members and other constituents to be aware of the academic emphasis of the CMO through data. The CEO expands:

> We work to have an instructional piece to be present at every board meeting and it could be lost while trying to keep the meeting at 2-4 hours. We put data at the beginning of the meeting to make it a part of the discussion to take it back to the kids, to take it back to instruction.

Student achievement data is a strong representation of school and CMO progress; specifically, if the CMO is requesting funding approval for special programs that is perceived to further enhanced student outcomes. Data needs to be transparent and include all subgroups of student population to succinctly align to the CMO's mission and values. Dr. Espino remains a leader for English language learner populations in Southern California. She explains how her CMO continuously places the subgroup within the purview of her board:

> The other thing that is important is that the board understands the instructional focus and the board understands the unique needs of the students served. I find that very very important because we serve a lot of English Language Learners, and so they need to understand that English Language Learners require a lot of time, and how that impacts our lower grade's test scores – they need to know that and be able to speak to that. I think that it's also important that boards understand data and how to interpret data.

The CMO governing board is guided on how to read the data presented at board meetings and is in constant contact with the CEO on how the CMO plans to better student achievement.

Balcony work: Data-driven decisions. Dr. Espino believes that the topic of instruction should be at the forefront of the CMO's work, "I think in the role of the CEO of a CMO, it is really important for CMOs not to lose the instructional focus over growth strategies or other expansion strategies, but keep it at the top of the list of priorities." Mr. Crawford approaches codifying data-driven principles on two fronts:

> In order to improve student achievement, it goes back to the individual and the collective response. Individually, we have to go to the balcony and look at whether or not we have the right conditions set to improve student achievement. What does the data say on the conditions we already set? What are we going to do in response to that? Then collectively, what commitments are we going to make as an organization and as sites as well? So that individual can become a group of people as well – individual school, or individual leadership team, or individual grade as well collective schools, collective teams, collective grades. We're thinking in both ways to improve student achievement. This is the organization's way (or structure) of codifying the intended vision and goals to be implemented and executed.

The VP of Schools strings together a series of guiding questions followed with systems the organization has moved towards to ensure space for data analysis and next steps among educators. Mr. Crawford includes the questions such as the following:

> Something we have been really working on has been at the end of the summer having school leaders looking over the balcony and the balcony of the organization and asking: Are we creating the conditions to improve student achievement? 1) Let's look at the data: Did we move the needle by the things we did last year? If we didn't, what went wrong? What went well? What can't we expect outcomes from actually right now? Like there are somethings cooking that still need to bake in order for us to see outcomes in a year or two. Being realistic about the goals and the metrics to see that. 2) Also, being at the balcony to see the structures that are in place in a school from grade-level team meetings to PLCs to coaching to organizational meetings for leaders, cross-site collaboration. Like, going to the balcony and saying, "Ok, we want to see improvement in student achievement across the organization, not just in one site. Do we have the structures in place to do that? And what have prioritized to get there?"

After highlighting structures, Mr. Crawford outlines curricular resources that aligns with GMCS' vision on data-driven instruction. He describes the common language on this alignment:

> This past year, for example, we know math is a big challenge in our organization, sure it is in everyone's organization, right? But we need to go to balcony of our organization

and ask, "What are we doing about it? If it's a focus, what have we shifted to say that it's a focus? How have we prioritized it?" So, we looked at, we want alignment across schools, are they using the same curriculum and resources? It's going to be really hard to get people in a room if they're not speaking the same language. So, we got our elementary schools moved to Bridges and our 6-12 schools moved to CPM. That was a big step. That took a year or two, we still have one school coming on next year, so resources, materials, language, content. We got to be steeped in the same stuff.

Balcony work includes taking leaders and teachers to the edge of the organization to understand curricular and instructional decisions impact achievement data.

There are tools teachers use day-by-day to ensure, they too, are "looking over the balcony" of their classroom. Ms. Freitas discusses how teachers use the corrective action plan to address gaps in their classrooms:

So when we're doing all this work and see specific kids who are not mastering the standards that we are creating corrective action plans based on the data that are telling us [the student] is not ready yet. So the first thing in Tier I [of Response to Intervention] is creating action plans from week to week to see if they can raise more kids up to where they need to be. And then we go into Tier II where we would be pulling interventions for students.

The assistant principal monitors student achievement within the Response to Intervention tiers of supports for next step decision-making on how to best support student needs. School leadership, teachers, and support staff work to ensure each class reaches the goal of 75% or above on a standard before moving on:

The corrective action plan is used to track classes and students week to week to identify the key lever standards that they want to see growth. If the key standard isn't met at 75-85%, then the teacher will continue to work on the standard the following week until students are brought up to 75-85%. So teachers create assessments to look at the rigor of the standard and making sure the language are similar – it's not necessarily the same language, but it is similar to ensure students are grasping the concept.

Table 10: Equinox Academy Corrective Action Plan

Equinox Academy, Gran Mundo Charter Schools: School-Wide Corrective Action Plan					
Classroom/ Teachers	Corrective Instruction Re-Assessment			Current Instruction	
	Standard	Previous Data	Post Corrective Data	Standard	Proficiency
2ⁿᵈ Grade Teacher 1	2.OA.1 Represent and solve problems involving addition and subtraction. Use addition and subtraction within 100 to solve one- and two-step word problems involving situations of adding to, taking from, putting together, taking apart, and comparing, with unknowns in all positions...	73%	80%	2.NBT.2 Understand place value.	40%
2ⁿᵈ Grade Teacher 2		45%	65%	Count within 1000; skip-count by 5s, 10s, and 100s.	55%
2ⁿᵈ Grade Teacher 3		67%	86%		55%

The corrective action plan allows teachers to internalize lessons and what each standard is asking of the student to master. Every teacher updates the corrective action plan and it is on a Google Doc that is shared with every school leader and teacher in that school. The process also emphasizes teachers needing to begin with the end in mind as they build formative and summative assessments to continually track student progress and adjust instruction through scaffolding to improved outcomes.

Leading school leadership learning and development. GMCS and Mr. Crawford design systems and structures for principals to be successful instructional leaders based on Dr. Viviane Robinson's framework. The VP of Schools lays out a series of questions that help guide

principals in growing their teams. He also establishes next steps the organization is taking to

support teacher and leader learning. Mr. Crawford explains these structures and supports:

> In what structures are the adults going to be doing the learning and growth to be able to
> deliver the instruction we want to see? We got to look at our structures across the
> organization, and then we challenge our leaders to look at the structures within sites. One
> of the things we noticed is that leaders have structured time in the calendar or in the
> master schedule for a grade-level meeting to happen or maybe they didn't. If they did,
> who was the supervising that [meeting]? Who was supporting that [learning]? Was it
> their grade-level leader? Did that leader have the capacity to support the vision by the
> instructional leader? You put the 3rd grade team in a room and there's no leader there,
> there's no plan, then they're going to do some lesson planning, they're going to talk shop,
> they're going to talk vacation. Who knows what they might do, but that was a place
> when we took leaders to the balcony and asked to look at their own site and our
> organization, we said 'We're not doing enough cross-site collaboration by grade-level
> and by content.'

The balcony work allows teams within each school site establish and build capacity within their

own unique ecosystem. Educators are also brought to the balcony in other structures as well

such as the cross-site collaboration days. This allows the organization to remain united when

analyzing and creating next steps based on the data:

> This year we started a cross-site collaboration by grade-level and by content. We also
> said, 'Leaders, we noticed that grade-level team meetings are not being leveraged to
> deepen the learning for teachers who are walking into classrooms to deliver instruction.'
> So we started focusing on standards-based development in all of these spaces, not only in
> the grade-level, but also in the cross-site collaboration. So, now we have two spaces
> where the intention is to focus on standards based instruction -- at the organizational level
> across sites and at the grade level within our schools.

Mr. Crawford describes his typical day to gain more insight on how he supports leadership

growth, "1) getting to my office early, 2) checking my agenda and prepping for any coaching

sessions I have with leaders, and/or 3) following up with a coaching session on the next steps I

need to provide with a leader." He continues by describing a check-in with a leader while

placing student learning first:

> Check-ins last about an hour, I really try to limit my time. I really try to maximize my
> time with leaders and it's limited by the nature of the beast, they just can't sit down with

me, nor should they be sitting with me more than an hour if we're not in classrooms. That reinforces the focus on instruction, like I'm not coming here to usurp what you have to do in your schedule – my coaching sessions are scheduled for the year, same time, and if for example I had a role team with my principals this week where I had them for a day and leaders were like can we not have our coaching session – absolutely I already thought 'I'm going to give you back some time, if I have to take more time than I'm already guaranteed, then I'm going to give you back some time – maybe I will shoot you an email or touch base with me as necessary etc. Most of my leaders I meet with at least once a week, so I'm at every site once a week. I have one site I am at bi-weekly, but I have another site where I am the senior leader who supports that site, so I have tabs on it, but that's the major part of my day.

An aspect of Mr. Crawford's role is identifying how to create the principal role sustainable as the complex position calls for consistency in leadership. One way Mr. Crawford maintains consistent learning for his principals is through "Role Teams." He describes the significance of role teams and the principal's role in them:

Our role teams are the learning structure of leadership team members and that's their learning space and reflection space on practice. We try to do some cycles of learning with them throughout the year to deep dive in a few things that are high leveraged to increase their practice. Also, in concert with the strategic learning goals across the organization. Instructional coaching is a big piece right now, coaching teachers. In my role teams, I always have a coaching component and/or a problem of practice, so definitely that group think so we are all approaching solving problems the same way. So, the role team is a space for every leader on the leadership team has some role alike time with their peers and some role specific learning and reflection.

Mr. Crawford spoke to always placing student learning first as teacher development needs to be a priority in his role team meetings. He continues by explaining the other roles that exist on school site who have their own role team meetings:

School office manager, Dean, APs. The APs one is more content specific, so if an AP coaches K-2 then their role team will be around that or if their area is content-based like ELA or math, then they will have a role team around that. Site leadership have these role teams. Student and Family Service Coordinator, they also have a role team, because they offer similar workshops across the network. We are sharing resources – we highlight what worked at another site and share that with other leaders.

The role teams serve as a way to sustain leadership capacity building while codify information, practices, and/or skills needed on school sites to support various stakeholders.

These practices and skills extend to organization leaders as well. Mr. Crawford describes how GMCS leaders try to set the example for school leaders, their leadership teams, and teachers:

> We try to model that in a way where they would take that up with a leader that they are coaching and try to unpack it too – "did you notice what we did?" try to be more metacognitive so folks understand 'oh yeah you did that with me.' So our leaders know what is going on amongst our leaders not only the people they coach. The other thing is, this year we have put together a coaching cycle and an adult learning cycle. This actually has become a realization for leaders that they are doing the coaching cycle, but within the coaching cycle you might experience that a person needs to do some adult learning around a specific concept/strategy/idea that would greatly impact their work and the results they are getting. And definitely something we need to work on is a leader's ability to recognize when adult learning cycle needs to kick-in as opposed to a coaching cycle. For example, if I'm coaching a leader and they are struggling with managing their emotions in the space then I might say "I noticed this… could you tell me a little bit more about that? I noticed it in an observation, and I'm wondering what you are thinking or feeling about that." That helps me can insight on whether that person needs to do some adult learning on around specific thing to better prep them for this space, this activity, this skill they required. We actually see leaders struggling to (1) identify what somebody who they're coaching needs adult learning, and then (2) facilitating adult learning, we don't people to tell people they need to do it this way or that way, we want leaders to facilitate questions that allow people to arrive to next steps themselves.

This example provides insight on how a coaching cycle and an adult learning cycle co-exist and feed from one another. The school leader's interaction with Mr. Crawford becomes the glue in drawing parallels in the leader's growth in skillset. Mr. Crawford notes the importance in identifying patterns in a leader's attribute development. He continues by describing a process where he or the leader has an opportunity to hold the mirror up and reflect on their practices:

> When you are coaching adults and engaging adults, you will pick up on patterns. When you observe, look at a student achievement data, recommend meeting structure. As a coach, you are always gathering data on what a leader can do efficiently and effectively etc., and I think one of the hardest thing to do as a leader/coach is to ask the question "what are going to do with it?" It's the same question we would as a teacher about intel on a student or class, "what are you going to do with it?" The question comes up for a leader when we get what we call "pings in the system" data; an example, a leader on a site leadership team reaches out to me on a challenge their principal is having, a conflict on their leadership team, a parent upset with a leader on the leadership team, discipline issues on the site that were not resolved.

Mr. Crawford notes that no matter your role as a leader it is essential to observe these pings in

the system and address with urgency. Once the ping has been addressed, then reflection can

occur by the leader or facilitator using an organization-wide NEP protocol:

> As a coach, you are picking up these pings, and in your opportunities to coach these
> things are surfacing in ways like questioning, some of the [National Equity Project]
> moves, looking at data, and closing questions like "what does this data mean to you?" I
> as a coach, need to be aware of my coaching, and when I notice a pattern, I have to make
> sure I have created a relationship with this person, I have enough credible data, I have
> engaged this person in celebration, so I can ultimately address any patterns that are areas
> of growth. I need all of that in order to do that. I need to have the relationship, leverage
> encouragement, had to have done some learning side-by-side with them, observations,
> some debrief. I need credibility in my ability to coach them. When that happens then I
> have the ability, the credits, I have made enough deposits to make a withdrawal around
> something that is challenging for them to hear or for them to grapple with.

Mr. Crawford instills the lesson that leaders are coaches. He sets a framework for those he

coaches to do mirror work with him or individually in order to solve problems. He adds by

speaking to an example of mirror work with one of his leaders:

> So, with one leader I have been talking to them about conflict management and conflict
> resolution, they initially avoided it like the plague, but now we have had conversations, I
> have permission to name it and unpack it when I see it. For example, I noticed an email
> that should have been a conversation. I replied to the leader, "Hey can we discuss this
> email?" The principal already knew by me asking them about it that they need to reflect
> about what they said in the email. So, they went back and looked at the email, then by
> the time we had a conversation I was posed to ask some questions like "Hey, I gather the
> purpose of the email, but tell me a little bit about why you used email to communicate
> that information." Like really unpack what is contributing to their successes and their
> challenges.

The example displays the trust between Mr. Crawford and the school leader. The leader accepts

ownership and accountability prior to the two meeting to discuss the challenge. This trust and

accountability takes time and consistency:

> It's not the easiest thing to do, but because I've done it with this leader multiple times by
> the time I spoke with this leader and asked a couple of questions this person had already
> done the reflection I needed to happen but what I'm trying to get them to do is to do this
> reflection before they send that email. So, know you've recognized it, what are you

going to do going forward? And really try and bring it back to practical application, now we've unpacked it, you understand it, I challenged you a little bit or surfaced some patterns. Like in the future what you might you do? And then how will we follow-up on this? So that's kind of an example on how I would hold-up the mirror or surface the challenge or patterns of behavior that could be contributing to their successes or challenges.

GMCS uses this frame to hold organization leaders, such as Mr. Crawford, and principals responsible and accountable for teacher and student outcomes. The conversations and development in the described mirror work is one key in a leader's development at GMCS that transfers to holding expectations around student achievement at the forefront.

Asset-based teaching: Students, families, and communities. In an educational context, educators who view stakeholders in the community as assets experience greater outcomes among students. In Dr. Espino's speech to state policy leaders, she noted that Gran Mundo's care for kids does not and cannot stop at the schoolhouse door. She reflects on the poet Audrey Lorde, "There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single issue lives." Dr. Espino continues by describing that we all care about educating the next generation.

Mr. Crawford speaks to school leaders at GMCS who exhaust all efforts and care with the thinking of optimism will carry individuals the CMO serves to express the same grace to further an asset-based cycle. He continues by expressing the investment educators make to an asset-based teaching approach:

> We need to look at our students, families, and community as assets in complex organizational setting. We cannot operate as a corporate structure. We cannot look at our assets as inanimate objects, but as people. Everything we do needs to have an instructional focus in front to elevate the asset's outcomes with the design students will return the investment as they elevate the next community as they grow and mature years after they graduate [GMCS].

Asset-based thinking considers a level of care of educators and the mindfulness to include stakeholders into the school community so all voices are included.

Sequence of supports. Gran Mundo establishes a Sequence of Supports framework to approach to ensure every student is "healthy, supported, engaged, and challenged." The continuum highlights four areas for a comprehensive system of support for long-term student success: early childhood education, high-quality K-12 instructional programs, college-preparatory academic program, and family engagement. The table below spotlights the four areas of the GMCS Sequence of Supports.

Table 11: Gran Mundo Charter Schools Sequence of Supports

Stage of Student	Supports
Pre-Kindergarten Education	Bilingual Program
	Language and Literacy Emphasis
	Library Book Exchanges
	Parenting Workshops
	Play-Based Focus
High-Quality K-12 Teaching and Learning	Standards-Based Instruction
	English Language Development
	Bilingual Program Opportunities
	Experiential Learning
	After-School and Summer Programs
College & Career Readiness	College Preparatory Instructional Program
	College Academic Counseling
	College Transition & Alumni Support
Student & Family Engagement	Parent Advocacy Development
	Wellness Center
	Student & Family Services Coordinators

Note. Adapted from Gran Mundo Charter Schools website.

The Sequence of Supports use a place-based approach to ensure all stakeholders are acknowledged in the unique context of each school site. A place-based approach is expanded through experiential learning in five elements within the Pre-K-12 continuum.

Table 12: Gran Mundo Charter Schools Experiential Learning

Element	Learning Events
Community Engagement	Community Service
	Job Shadowing, Internships, & Apprenticeships
	Service Learning Projects
Culture and Arts Immersion	Music & Dance Initiative
	Cultural Expeditions
	Visual & Graphic Arts
Community Exposure	Summer Enrichments
	Field Work & Field Trips
College & Career Readiness	College & Career Exploration
	College Planning & Scholarships
	College Match
Wellness	Health & Nutrition Education
	Social Emotional Learning

Note. Adapted from Gran Mundo Charter Schools website.

The Sequence of Supports serves as the framework for the GMCS graduate profile. The opportunities above consist of a variety of required and optional items students are exposed to in their Pre-K-12 academic career at GMCS. For example, the programs on one of GMCS' K-5 school sites include: bilingual program, after school program, family clinic, dance, summer camp, youth leadership center, reading is fundamental, healthy choices, and student marathon training. In addition, the school provides integrated support service partners for students and families: dental program, blind foundation, nursing consultants, vision to learn, mental health services, child and development center, young men's group and women and youth supporting each other. These programs supports GMCS' Lever B in their strategic plan to ensure students have the supports to achieve.

Ethnic studies for all. Gran Mundo Charter Schools has placed an emphasis Ethnic Studies being embedded in their curriculum. The emphasis aligns with the CMO's their

instructional program and their mission to be rooted in their community's rich culture. GMCS

defines *Ethnic Studies for All* as found on their website:

> Ethnic Studies incorporates culturally relevant, social justice, community responsive and other pedagogical approaches with a focus on literacy and critical thinking skills. A growing body of research from education scholars shows that an ethnic studies pedagogy has proven to have positive academic and social benefits to students of all races and ethnicities.

GMCS' ethnic studies coordinator speaks to how the organization is building the spirit of Ethnic

Studies curriculum:

> The Ethnic Studies For All Initiative at GMCS has spent the 2017-18 school year implementing Ethnic Studies curriculum in grades K-12 in all academic disciplines. Led by a cross-campus Ethnic Studies Task Force, 40 participating teachers and administrators from 6 campuses have collaborated closely with participating teachers and engaged in professional development led by expert scholars. The participating teachers have created Ethnic Studies units and lessons in their classrooms which will be compiled so that they are available for all teachers. We are moving into year two of our five-year strategic action plan and we hope to expand our program to more participating teachers next year. In five years, every student at GMCS will have access to this rigorous, empowering curriculum.

Dr. Espino extended an invitation for more teachers to join the initiative with this statement,

"This is a gift that will stay with all of our kids... It matters that we teach our students how

beautiful and wonderful their backgrounds and their stories are so that they know who they are."

Any teachers who join the GMCS initiative will receive additional training and support in

developing ethnic studies units and lesson plans. GMCS looks to grow from 40 participants to

80 participants next year.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I described the chief executive officer's role and their approach to

instructional leadership at Gran Mundo Charter Schools. Dr. Espino's perspective was expressed

through primary and secondary interviews, follow-up interviews, document analysis, and online

spaces. After describing the characteristics of Dr. Espino's approach to instructional leadership,

I identify the themes that emerge from the instructional leadership theoretical framework discussed in Chapter Two. In the following chapter, I will describe each of these elements in further detail and use data from my study to support interpretations of the themes that guide organizational school leaders to improve student achievement across large systems and networks.

Chapter Five: Analysis of Findings

Chapter Five provides an exposition of the data collected on how a chief executive officer of a charter management organization thinks about instructional leadership to improve student achievement. The charter management organization studied serves primarily underrepresented low-income Latino, Latina, Latinx community in more than seven charter schools. All schools are public, tuition-free, Title I independent charter schools.

The dissertation called for interviews, analysis of documents, and analysis of online sources. I examined a wide variety of documents including family and student handbooks, newsletters, and an organization hierarchy chart. I also interpreted online sources such as online biographies, speeches, website pages. I submerged myself in the spirit of the CEO and the CMO as much as possible to try and understand how the charter network organizes and facilitates their perceptions of instructional leadership in efforts to elevate student achievement. The CMO has specific roles to organize and facilitate systems to support the development of instructional leadership model in their CMO.

In this chapter, present findings in three sections framed by revisiting the study's research question and the limitations of the study. Second, I will discuss findings in Dr. Viviane Robinson's (2011) instructional leadership theoretical framework. Lastly, I will unpack five emergent themes that surfaced under a proposed new leadership capability in Dr. Robinson's framework.

Research Question

The purpose of the study's sole research question is to serve as an open-ended and overarching inquiry to the chief executive officer's perception on the impact instructional leadership has on student achievement. The data collection tools used in this study (interviews,

document analysis, online spaces) will be filtered through the lens of instructional leadership

framework in the following section. The following question frames the study: How does the

chief executive officer of a charter management organization think about instructional leadership

to improve student achievement?

Instructional Leadership

Dr. Viviane Robinson's instructional leadership theoretical framework guides essential

capabilities and dimensions of an instructional leader to ensure high quality teaching and

learning. When I first interpreted the instructional leadership framework figure, my initial

wonder was 'where are the individual indicators where each capability intersects with a

dimension?' For example, the theoretical framework does not explicitly state indicators for

when *building relational trust* intersects with *establishing goals and expectations.* An

interpretation of the example intersection would be what core values insinuate that the CMO

values relationship building or the human connection in their organization. These additional

questions can help surface this specific intersections of capability and dimension: How is

relational trust embedded in goals? Or how is relational trust symbolized through the goal and/or

expectations of the CMO? I unpack the theoretical framework further under the two primary

headings in the following section.

Figure 1: Instructional Leadership Framework from *Student-Centered Leadership* (p. 143-148), by V.M.J. Robinson, 2011, Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass. Copyright [2011] by John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Leadership capabilities. The three leadership capabilities in the instructional leadership framework equip educational leaders with integrating educational knowledge into practice, solving complex problems, and building relational trust (Robinson, 2011). The capabilities build a collective belief around the disposition needed by leaders to accomplish desired outcomes (Pajares, 2002). The three capabilities can elevate the collective efficacy among teammates.

Dr. Espino and GMCS believe integrating educational knowledge into practice begins with developments from the Learning Group, and specifically, the content specialist role. Content specialists codify curriculum and instructional practices to site leadership including the principal. This allows the principal to prioritize the developments from the Learning Group and evaluate student learning and the pedagogical content knowledge being delivered by the teacher (Nelson & Sassi, 2005).

The framework equips school leaders with the ability to solve complex problems. Mr. Crawford models the conditions to solve complex problems by providing principals with a three-step frame: 1) identify the challenge, 2) identify whether it is an individual or collective learning opportunity, and the 3) determine what the outcome looks like when the challenge is solved. This three-step frame also allows school leaders to activate an emotional intelligence by offering an emotional balance in self-management to the situational context of the challenge (Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995).

Ultimately, building relational trust is stemmed from transformation leadership. Mr. Crawford used scheduled one-on-one check-ins with principals to build relational trust through supporting the school leader with site challenges, upcoming activities, or next steps in development. Sometimes this could involve the VP of Schools integrating educational knowledge into leaders practice or how to problem solve a challenges on the school site (Robinson, 2011). The combination of all three capabilities may lead to codifying social cognitive theory through cognitive, environmental, and behavior influences of organizational actions – this influence would surface a high sense of collective efficacy of teammates belief in the organization and the vision of organization leaders (Bandura, 1991). In essence, teammates would perceive their work is for something greater than themselves. Dr. Espino believes in the collective as she views the development of GMCS as ongoing and fluid. Her grace is established in her disposition and her approach to learning people for the greater good to move the organization forward.

Leadership dimensions. The five leadership dimensions in the instructional leadership framework equips educational leaders with the skillset needed to establish goals and expectations, resource strategically, ensure quality teaching, lead teacher learning and

development, and ensure an orderly and safe environment. The dimensions allow leaders to develop their skills while focused on developing the skills of others. Equally important, the dimensions have the ability to establish and/or codify normative environments to support the academic emphasis within an organization or school (Goddard, 2000).

The ability to establish goals and expectations is essential as an instructional leader. Dr. Espino and her senior leadership team creates a five-year strategic plan with the four levers as described in Chapter Four. However, the next step GMCS to hold teammates responsible was create student achievement targets that align with the strategic plan. This process could align to any plan organization-wide or school-wide (i.e., Local Control Accountability Plan). Without the plan, these targets hold empty weight among teammates. An instructional leader who sets goals and expectations also upholds the academic emphasis of the organization; specifically, the GMCS graduation requirements are elevated expectations compared to surrounding school districts and state standards. GMCS approaches preparing students for their graduation requirements by thinking about them as "beginning with the end in mind" as the expectations serve as the graduate profile or product of GMCS.

Dr. Espino and her team believe resourcing strategically means that every student at a GMCS school is provided a sense of care specific to their needs. A student and family services coordinator is positioned at every school wo support students and families. Every school site is equipped with an MFT who is there to support students, but also parents who have their own needs tended to. Resourcing strategically can be the selection of certain positions needed. The skill can also be seeking to ensure every student have access to college classes with the nearby community college or trade school. Students who begin the dual enrollment pathway will need post-secondary supports. GMCS sets the conditions to support each student navigate their

individual college pathway. Gran Mundo uses their alumni network to present and mentor current students and families.

GMCS has layers to the many structures and systems to ensure quality teaching. Dr. Espino and her team use Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching, a rubric, used for teacher evaluation. This rubric allows for school leaders as evaluators to be calibrated on the scoring of teachers per each domain and indicator. One way GMCS calibrates is through conducting Danielson Learning Walks to assess and inspect whether instructional practices are being executed. A system Mr. Crawford has established to ensure principals are continually putting classrooms and students first is completing and repeating learning cycles. A learning cycle is complete with a walk through, a role team professional development, and one-on-one coaching with the leader. He models this cycle with principals, so the school leader can take it back to their site and perform learning cycles with their faculties. Ensuring quality instruction does not stop with systems, it is also about training your operations team on each school site how to place student learning ahead daily contexts that may disrupt instruction. Dr. Espino and Mr. Crawford gracefully noted that learners are "not inanimate objects" and teaching and learning has a spirit that uplifts individuals to their full potential.

Gran Mundo is committed to teacher professional growth. The CMO builds capacity for teacher learning and development by the principals facilitating professional development based on a Danielson indicator(s), information coming from Content Teams, and/or information from their role team. Principals see this as a place to utilize their teacher leaders in a specific content or grade-level to facilitate PD. Dr. Espino and the Learning Group has also moved towards a cross-site professional development format where teachers in alike contents and/or grade-levels can collaborate and discuss curriculum or student supports. This allows the CMO of more than

seven schools to still share what their organization deems best practices across the network. The cross-site PD also provides a familial presence for teachers that they can lean on supports from the Home Supports Office when it comes to certain personnel expertise or resources to elevate instruction.

As the CMO strives to build instructional leaders, these school leaders also need to be equipped to ensure an orderly and safe environment for all. Dr. Espino advocates for all GMCS educators to learn who your students are outside the classroom in order to have more intel inside the classroom. This stance will also help teachers and school leaders keep a pulse trends in a student's behaviors in order to be proactive and support the student. Dr. Espino carries an unapologetic disposition when speaking to student needs – the student comes first always. The CEO strives for equity for student learning as precedent for her staff. Overall, GMCS has an 80/20 goal for all principals. Eighty percent of the time principals are focused on instruction or supporting teaching and learning in the classroom; whereas, 20% is spent on operations and non-instructional priorities. Principals are pushed toward a distributive leadership model to lean on and train their operations team to run school logistics. The CMO believes that this will maintain teacher and student engagement in learning being the top priority in their schools.

Emergent Leadership Capability: Seeding an Equity Consciousness

As transformational and educational leadership collide in Dr. Robinson's current instructional leadership framework, the capability that is not explicitly presented is the ability for school leaders to build capacity for equity consciousness in all teammates in their organization and/or school. The findings from this study suggest that a fourth leadership capability is emerging in Dr. Robinson's framework. There is a critical need for organization and school leaders to be equipped with the skills to seed an equity consciousness across teammates and

other stakeholders. "Educational equity" is defined as a measure of achievement, fairness, and opportunity in education. Equity in education is refer to fairness and inclusion as two factors in impacting the quality of life for individuals and communities who are chronically underserved and/or marginalized due to socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, gender, and/or disability (Slattery, 2013). The term "seeding" is defined as a process in which a particular kind of seed is produced by a plant that reproduces itself by means of its own seeds. The act of seeding an equity consciousness requires organization and school leaders to analyze existing pipelines in their complex education systems and have the courage to disrupted the status quo to make change for specific subgroups of students and families who are chronically underserved. Some may say that charter schools in California must be equipped with an equity lens to serve marginalized and underrepresented student populations.
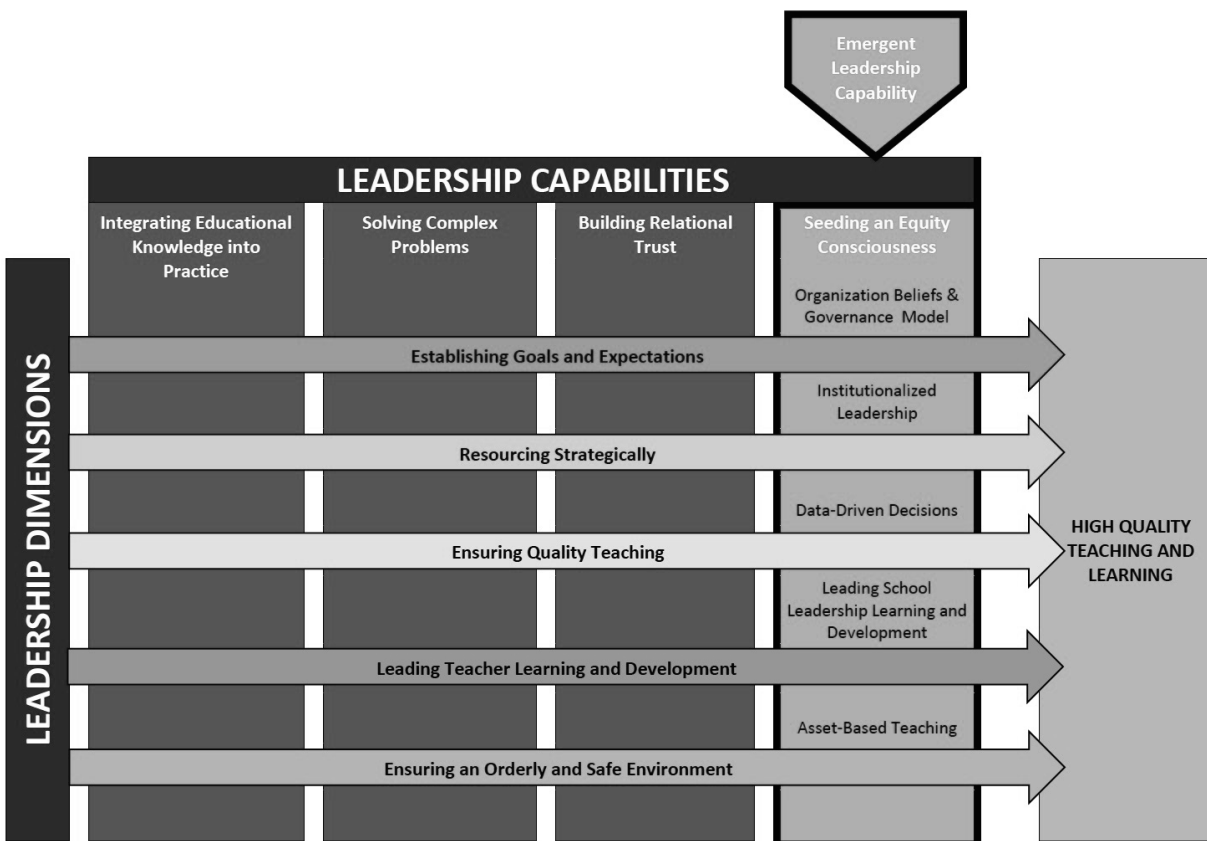
Figure 2: Proposed Instructional Leadership Framework with Equity Consciousness. Adapted from *Student-Centered Leadership* (p. 143-148), by V. M. J. Robinson, 2011, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. Copyright [2011] by John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

The following section offers five areas an organizational and/school leader can seed an equity consciousness while promoting and improving student achievement. The section unpacks five areas that will support an instructional leader in an organization or school leader role: organization beliefs and governance model, institutionalized leadership, data-driven decisions, leading leadership learning and development, and asset-based teaching approach. The insights from Dr. Espino has helped shape this section for considerations in how the chief executive officer of a network of schools should build capacity in instructional leaders to improve student achievement.

Organization beliefs and governance model. Most Charter Management Organizations in California operate seven schools or less. A small network of schools ensures the agility to adapt policy and systems to meet individual student and family needs. Some would say that this agility raises the quality of education for students attending charter schools. GMCS five core values are excellence, equity, community, innovation, and joy. The CMO believes that these core values will help navigate educational policies and reimagine existing pipelines as equitable pathways for individual student outcomes. Dr. Espino and GMCS designs their schools to remain small in school population to be more flexible (Farrell et al., 2002). The largest school in Gran Mundo Charter Schools enrolls 480 students. GMCS defines small schools as being under 500 students and plans facilities, personnel, and program structures around supporting the student population.

Dr. Espino and her senior leadership team work together to establish an organization chart that reflects mission-alignment priorities through the CMO reporting structure. The organization chart lends itself the agility to support teammates through various roles and means of professional development opportunities (Bolman and Deal, 2017). The CEO leans on the chief learning officer to be the lead on curriculum, instruction, and assessment for the organization. The chief learning officer also drives the learning and development for certificated staff. The relationship between the chief learning officer and Mr. Crawford, the vice president of schools, allows principals and other school leaders to have one point person in their development. The relationship is designed for the chief learning officer to establish the vision for teaching and learning while the vice president of schools executes that vision through school leader development and alleviating "any barriers that may be in the way for teachers and students to achieve." Dr. Espino and GMCS believes in a distributive (decentralized) leadership model

for the organization where all roles have a voice in the development of initiatives, projects, and

decisions that impacts learning. This model ensures that equity exists in the workplace among

colleagues for a transfer of equitable beliefs can take place for the community GMCS serves.

The following questions serve as a guide to a CEO's thinking around organization beliefs

and governance model's impact on the instructional leadership and instructional program:

- How does the CEO and the CMO evaluate our instructional program's alignment to the

    organization mission and vision?

- How does the current organization hierarchy chart impact learning?

    o What is working? Why?

    o What needs changed? Why?

- How does our CMO create the conditions needed for effective communication from the

    Home Supports Office to support school goals and practices?

- How will our size drive how we govern and support schools?

    o What is our definition of a small school?

    o What are the student to staff ratio for specific support personnel at each site? (i.e.,

        Student and Family Services Coordinator)

    o What are the student-to-teacher classroom ratio?

- What external policies can serve as barriers to student learning?

    o What roles will interpret and ensure policy requirements are satisfied?

    o How will the policy not serve as a roadblock to supporting a student's need?

- How do you involve stakeholders in any decision-making process?

    o Are we considering "students first" in all decisions?

Institutionalized leadership. Dr. Espino, the senior leadership team, and the governing board strive to lead by example. Dr. Espino creates the environment for the vision, mission, and core values to be demonstrated and codified by GMCS organization and school leaders. Even though the CEO claimed she had an indirect impact on student achievement, she ensured a cascading messages to the various levels of the reporting structure that aligned to values of the CMO such as, equity. Institutionalized leadership, established by Dr. Espino, surveys three areas from the findings of the study: personalization, alignment and adaptability, and empowering people and systems. The three areas contribute to developing an equitable lens as an instructional leader.

The CEO is committed to students and families seeing themselves as drivers of their own education through a personalized approach. In this line of thought, Dr. Espino and her team are committed to create a *family feel* in each school within the organization. School leaders are expected to have open-door policies and organization leaders work to ensure families have access to all leaders (Leithwood 1994). Dr. Espino sets the expectation that her leaders are here to serve the underserved unapologetically. Her team subscribes to servant leadership in order to transform and move people – educators, students, board members, etc. This notion for personalizing a students' educational experience taps into instructional practices and how teachers and leaders are prepared to interact with students on a daily basis.

As mentioned in the above section, Dr. Espino is cognizant on implications of the structures across GMCS. The findings suggest that she subscribes to a decentralized leadership model that calls for systems designed to promote autonomy, stimulate innovation, and support decision-making at all levels (Timperley, 2011). GMCS leans on teachers input through survey data to make informed decisions and ensure adaptability on next steps for school, educator, and

student outcomes. This distributive leadership approach ensures that all teammates have ownership towards getting GMCS scholars *College Ready, College Bound.*

Leaders throughout the GMCS are empowered to make decisions consistent with organization strategy. The empowering of people and systems requires transparency from school sites and holding teammate's responsible for their commitment to change student trajectories (Pajares, 2002; Rorrer et al., 2008). Educators have the autonomy with the freedom to fail as long as it is within the frame of the organization's mission to get 90% college acceptance rate by the year 2022. This expectation is backed by the system that every student will need the supports to access college resources (e.g., FAFSA workshops, college application completion, personal statement writing, etc.). Adults at GMCS are empowered in order to empower the students and families at GMCS.

The following questions serve as a guide to a CEO's thinking around institutionalized leadership's impact on the instructional leadership and instructional program:

- In what ways are a school's goals and practice aligned with the CMO's mission and vision?

- How will the CEO demonstrate and lead people in the CMO to lead with a transformative lens in raising student achievement?

- How will organization systems and structures ensure leaders are consistently exposed to leadership expectations in the CMO?

- How does the CMO sustain a culture of family on each school site?

    o How is this ensured as a CMO scales-up and replicates?

- How will the CMO measure a student's personalized educational experience?

    o Who facilitates, collects, and disseminates this measurement on each school site?

o How many times is this measured per year? When?

Balcony work: Data-driven decisions. In many ways data-driven instruction has become the way of education in the 21st century. Organization leaders, school leaders, and teachers use achievement and behavior data to inform next steps in decision-making. The same rings true for GMCS and Dr. Espino's senior leadership team. Mr. Crawford has designed systems that place data in front of GMCS educators frequent and often.

Leadership systems and protocols. The system that Mr. Crawford has established begins with intensive line of questioning that forces organization and school leaders to reflect on current practices. Mr. Crawford deems this practice as taking leaders to the balcony and looking over the organization all practice implications. The following questions are asked to GMCS leaders, "What does the data say on the conditions we already set? What are we going to do in response to that? Then collectively, what commitments are we going to make as an organization and as sites as well?" GMCS remain diligent in investigating the best conditions in schools and classrooms for learning to occur. The conditions relate to leadership dimension previously mentioned; however, places data as a lens to make realistic goals for teachers and students (Peyser, 2011, Rorrer et al., 2008). The next protocol Mr. Crawford demonstrates with his leaders is a two part process that allows leaders to embrace the outcomes without room for excuses, but to own a sense of collective responsibility for student outcome data:

> Are we creating the conditions to improve student achievement? 1) Let's look at the data: Did we move the needle by the things we did last year? If we didn't, what went wrong? What went well? What can't we expect outcomes from actually right now? Like there are somethings cooking that still need to bake in order for us to see outcomes in a year or two.

The VP of Schools second step is to put this protocol into practice as teachers join cross-site counterparts in a professional learning community to discuss next steps in content, activities, and

usage of the same academic language across the organization. The second part is as follows: "Being realistic about the goals and the metrics to see that. 2) Also, being at the balcony to see the structures that are in place in a school from grade-level team meetings to PLCs to coaching to organizational meetings for leaders, cross-site collaboration." The data may indicate different needs for specific subgroups year after year or month-by-month as teachers gauge student learning through formative assessment and checks in the classroom (Peyser, 2011).

From data points, questioning, and teacher learning opportunities, the CMO is able to make informed decisions on the curriculum and student supports to increase achievement outcomes inside and outside the classroom (Wohlstetter, Smith, & Farrell, 2015). As Mr. Crawford had noted in Chapter Four, the GMCS used data and stakeholder input to build capacity around rigorous math curriculum for their K-5 and 6-12 classrooms. Data also allow the CMO to identify the areas where they can innovate frameworks, programs, and processes for their students and families. This innovation is highlighted in the sections to follow with GMCS' asset-based teaching approach.

The following questions serve as a guide to a CEO's thinking around the impact data-driven decisions has on instructional leadership:

- How does the CEO and their teams identify data that will be useful to make decisions?
- What is the data specific to each organization team that can be disseminated to school sites?
- Who is responsible for facilitating the collection of the data? Who disseminates the data? How and when?
- What tools and/or processes are utilized for leaders to reflect on next steps needed to impact student achievement?

- What are the metrics used to evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum, instruction, and assessment in the CMO?

Leading school leadership learning and development. Dr. Espino and Gran Mundo strives to build capacity in organization and school leaders throughout the CMO. With agility, comes change and iterations for the organization to adapt and evolve with students' needs (Bolman & Deal, 2017). This calls for learning and constant growth around change management and social awareness and how instructional leaders see themselves serving their constituents. Mr. Crawford lists five foci in change management for leaders: (1) management versus coaching skills, (2) content knowledge, (3) strategic high leverage moves, (4) team building skills, and (5) growth mindset. One example on how GMCS has built capacity in leaders is by partnering with the National Equity Project (NEP) to offer leaders and teachers in the organization tools and protocols to enhance partnerships between school, home, and community. Mr. Crawford's views NEP practices as a vessel to learn and move people.

Leadership learning cycles. Mr. Crawford takes a systems approach to leadership development making every opportunity in front of a leader a chance to learn and grow. The VP of Schools lists the protocol of the learning cycle with each principal: "(1) Observing leaders coaching teachers, (2) Observing leaders coaching other school leaders on their site leadership team, (3) Observing leaders stewarding teams in meeting, and (4) Classroom walk-throughs." The learning cycles serve as professional growth opportunities and a chance for Mr. Crawford to perform program inquiries on this leader's development and their school site. The cycle is a form of data collection for Mr. Crawford to gather information and be able to report back on the progress of the school leader and the leader's impact as an instructional leader (Rorrer et al., 2008).

Mirror work. Mr. Crawford has developed an approach he calls "Mirror Work" with principals and other school leaders. Mirror work has three components to ensure effective coaching transfers into a school leaders practice: (1) relationship – the coach must have enough credibility (e.g., learning side by side, observations, debriefs) credits in the bank, (2) data – there must be enough evidence in behavior patterns to warrant probing questions and next steps given to the leader, and (3) celebration – the leader is provided encouragement and praise in successful practices and skills. The three areas of mirror work is used to ensure school leaders are always placing students and instruction first. Adult theory allows the school leaders to hold up the 'mirror' themselves (Hung, Badejo, & Bennett, 2014), or if ownership and accountability does not surface, Mr. Crawford, is there to hold the 'mirror' up for them in their discovery to problem solve challenges.

The following questions serve as a guide to a CEO's thinking about the impact leading school leadership learning and development has on instructional leadership:

- In what ways, will organization and school leaders have opportunity to grow?
    - How will the CMO organize and facilitate internal professional development opportunities?
    - How will the organization vet and leverage external learning opportunities?
- What framework will the CMO use to measure the effectiveness of school leaders?
    - How will school leaders be measured by their instructional leadership effectiveness?
- How do teammates know their career path in the organization?
    - How and when are leaders able to discuss their professional goals?

Asset-based teaching. Children are viewed as assets to our future. The equitable experiences and conditions created for students today will send a ripple effect in their lives and the future lives they fulfill tomorrow. GMCS establishes the value of social emotional and academic skills and understands the cyclical nature that one day these skills will be reciprocated to the world through a student's maturation. Like, many communities, there will be many students who even become educators themselves and be the agent within the cycle to bring these equitable values set by GMCS to the future students, classrooms, schools they serve.

GMCS views this human cycle as an opportunity for the diffusion of innovation to create and develop programs specific to the unique constituents of the organization. The following section highlights the following innovations in learning: sequence of supports, parent engagement, place-based learning, and ethnics study for all. These are the innovative programs described in interview and online space findings, and not limited to other unique programs GMCS are currently developing. The organization selects curriculum resources and instructional practices that are culturally relevant to the student demographic the CMO serves (Wohlstetter, Smith, & Farrell, 2015). There are many nuances in the findings that suggest Dr. Espino has developed and approaches people, programs, and systems with a critical lens doing everything in her purview to provides educational experiences for students of color that will transform their lives and future generations.

Sequence of supports. The sequence of supports at GMCS is upheld by four pillars: early childhood education, high-quality K-12 education, college and career readiness, and family engagement. The pillars provide an organization lens in service to students and families; not only support programs offered, but personnel to help support as well. For example, in the Early Childhood Education pillar, a programmatic approach is play-based cognitive development,

whereas there are personnel who designs and facilitate parent classes as well. The sequence of supports has been developed to prioritize empathy and empowerment for student assets to thrive in and out of the classroom. This agency is developed through experiential learning experiences that supplement the curriculum while students are held to rigorous graduation requirements. GMCS has established graduation requirements that surpass California's state minimum while requiring service learning for students to give back to the community while acquiring workplace experience through internships.

Place-based learning. The term "place-based learning" originated in the business industry through defining economic development when addressing entire community challenges around poor housing, fragmented services, and limited social mobility. GMCS uses the term as a frame to develop and implement experiential learning experiences for students to serve and be exposed to the community (Murphy, 1982). Place-based learning experiences are, but not limited to, community service and internship opportunities, but all service learning projects where students need to demonstrate a social action/justice charge in how they give back to a specific ecosystem within a community.

Parent engagement. Dr. Espino stated in a recent speech that "It is impossible to be a [Gran Mundo] parent and not be involved!" GMCS provide a platform and opportunities to develop voice where there has not been opportunities or a platform for families and students in the past (Gleason, Clark, Tuttle, & Dwyer, 2010). A *because parents are not on our campus knocking on our doors* mentality does not align with the values of an equity consciousness and serves to be reactionary instead of proactively trying to get families involved in their child(ren)'s educational experiences. This mentality is easy to adopt, but GMCS prefers the latter, that is, to

provide an authentic parent engagement experience while providing a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist for family needs as well, not only for the student.

Ethnic studies for all. Gran Mundo moves swiftly to innovate, develop, and implement specialized educational programs and courses PreK-12, not only in small pockets in a school. The revision process is much quicker where teachers feedback is heard and adaptations are made to better student outcomes in said program. The Ethnic Studies For All curriculum provides students with cultural artistic perspectives, social justice historical and modern initiatives, and student advocacy and agency for social change (Lee, 2012; Tucker et al., 2002). The curriculum is designed to be mission-aligned by developing students into agents of social justice (Grossman & Cawn, 2016).

The following questions serve as a guide to a CEO's thinking around an asset-based teaching approach and the effect it has on instructional leadership:

- How does the CEO and/or learning group decide what area of the CMO needs innovation?

- Are instructional programs meeting the needs of the whole child?

    o Does the CMO have a whole child mentality?

- What roles are needed on each school site to address the needs of the whole child?

- How does the CMO assess whether students and families see themselves in curriculum, instruction, and assessment?

- How can we best leverage families to partner in their student's education?

    o What systems and/or people do we need for this cause?

Chapter Summary

This chapter presents an exposition of data collected on the perspectives of organizational leaders in charter management organization. I was able to gain insights on participant perspectives through individual interviews, document analysis, and online spaces. There were particular data that emerged through Dr. Viviane Robinson's instructional leadership theoretical framework: organization beliefs and governance model, institutionalized leadership, data-driven decisions, leadership development, and asset-based teaching approach. This chapter unpacked large themes where there could be more insights on instructional leadership to be interpreted. One common theme I highlighted is the CEO's deep commitment to the current and future success of the students in the CMO. This study focuses on the CEO's perspective of instructional leadership, but the focus on the integration of community, culture, and college were clear inspirations to ensure high quality teaching and learning at GMCS.

In the next chapter, I discuss the implications and recommendations to further study chief executive officers and instructional leadership in charter management organizations. This dissertation adds to the conversation around equitable leadership in our charter management organizations and traditional school districts alike who serve underrepresented low-income students of color. In Chapter Six, I synthesize these findings with my own experiences as a charter school leader and offer recommendations for educational executives who strive for equitable learning experiences for all students.

Chapter Six: Implications and Recommendations

In this closing chapter, I provide three items to stretch the conversation on instructional leadership. First, I provide a brief summary on implications this research has on Dr. Viviane Robinson's current instructional leadership theoretical framework. The following contributes to the work on instructional leadership through the context of the chief executive officer and charter management organization. The final section of this chapter offers recommendations to the academy to stretch research instructional leadership further.

This study explores the perspectives of organizational leadership stakeholders in a charter management organization with a developed instructional program with systems, structures, and people to ensure equitable learning experiences throughout their Pre-Kindergartner through higher education academic career. This study adds to the conversation around ensuring equitable instruction remains a focus for all educational leaders, including the chief executive officers and members of their senior executive leadership members. I am unsure if CEOs will use the findings from this research. However, the findings have generated reflection questions from each indicator on seeding an equity consciousness throughout their organization that may help facilitate conversations among their senior leadership team. The chapter will conclude with connections to my own experiences as a charter school leader in *lessons learned* on instructional leadership.

Implications on Instructional Leadership

Viviane Robinson's instructional leadership theoretical framework is poignant and outlines many attributes a school leader needs in order to be an instructional leader. My study of Gran Mundo Charter Schools, and specifically Dr. Espino, has surfaced questions on the application of the instructional leadership theory in an underserved diverse are that the CMO

serves. The following section describes the challenge to the existing body of work on instructional leadership as well as offers the contributions made by the research and participants in this dissertation.

Challenging the current body of research on instructional leadership. Even though Robinson's research on instructional leadership calls for high quality teaching and learning, there are no practices established within the instructional leadership framework to scaffold the tools needed for school leaders to seed an equity consciousness among their teammates. The current body of research on instructional leadership does not indicate whether or not the theoretical framework applies to organization leaders, school leaders, or both.

The findings of this dissertation suggest that a fourth leadership capability is needed for all leaders in an education system to be deemed instructional leaders in vast diverse backgrounds of teammates and students who are served. The fourth capability proposed is for instructional leaders to have the ability to "Seed an Equity Consciousness" across their organization and/or school. The seeding of the equity consciousness implies that the act of seeding is always needed for the sustainability of mindsets and practices. The study unpacks five areas on how an organization can begin seeding an equity consciousness: (1) organization beliefs and governance model, (2) institutionalized leadership, (3) data-driven decisions, (4) leading school leadership learning and development, and (5) asset-based teaching approach.
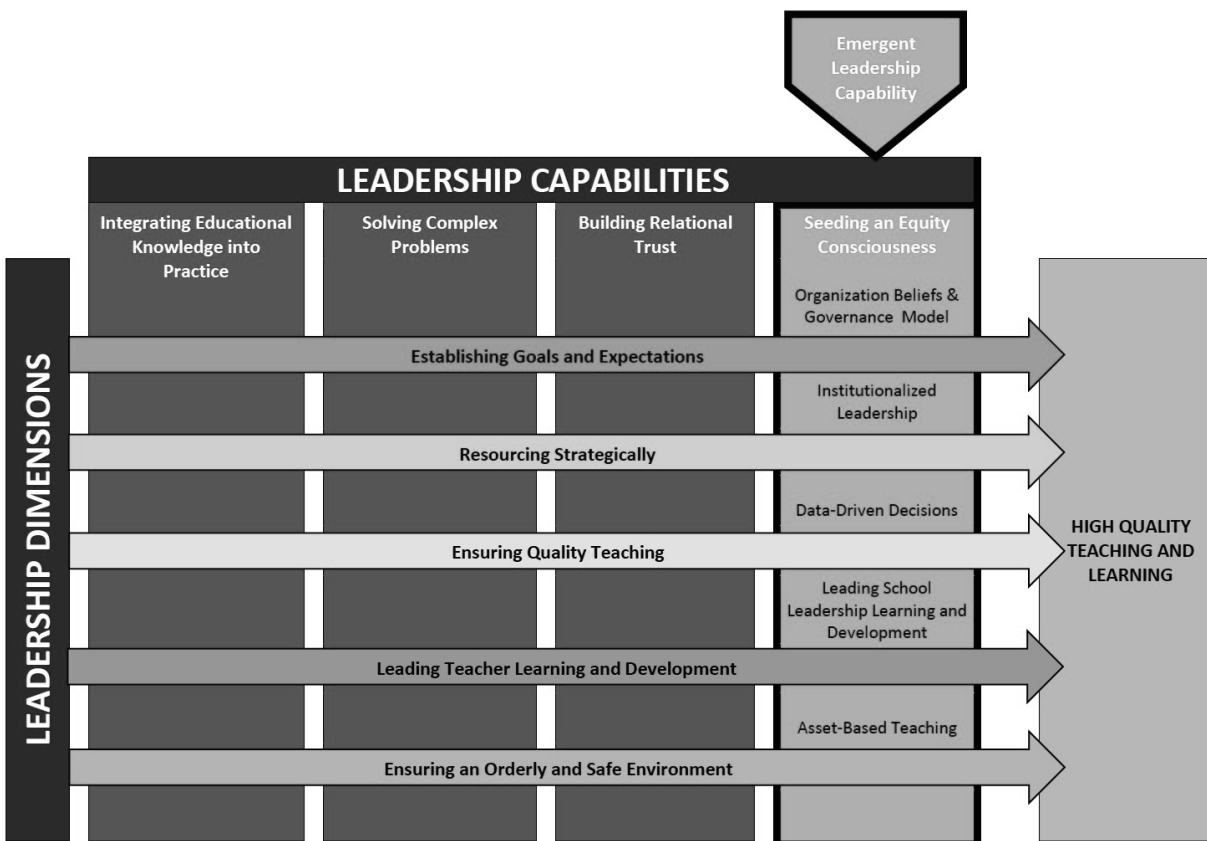
Figure 2: Proposed Instructional Leadership Framework with Equity Consciousness. Adapted from *Student-Centered Leadership* (p. 143-148), by V. M. J. Robinson, 2011, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. Copyright [2011] by John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

The chief executive officer needs to be aware that this fourth capability is a requirement when hiring and ensuring the right people are in the right seats in the organization. This will ensure organization and school leaders have a working definition of 'equity' in the organization and approaching equitable practices with the same language and mindsets. An equity consciousness must be established by the chief executive officer. The education executive must revisit the importance of seeding an equity consciousness through actions and belief statements.

There are other theories that unpack instructional leadership with an equity lens, such as applied critical leadership theory (Santamaria and Santamaria, 2012). However, Robinson's

theory outlines clear elements for instructional leadership where other theories have lacked conciseness. The findings in this study uses Robinson's instructional leadership framework and explicitly applies areas to seed an equity consciousness in teammates across a charter management organization or any education system scaling social justice in their organization.

Contributions toward instructional leadership theory. I embarked on this journey to study the chief executive officer through the lens of instructional leadership because my curiosity of beliefs, systems, and practices kept me up at night. I wanted to know up-close how a CEO in a charter management organization thinks about instructional leadership. As an organization leader of an emerging CMO, I also wanted to learn and explore Gran Mundo's practices and identify how they were using instructional leadership to serve impoverished communities and disrupt the status quo for many underserved families.

The study adds to the growing body of research about charter schools. This study specifically gives insights from the CEO on how instructional leadership is operational in a CMO. In the evolution of the study, the findings add to the conversation of school systems striving for equitable outcomes for every student, every minute of every day. As stated in the above section, "Seeding an Equity Consciousness" provides an additional frame in Robinson's instructional framework to develop leader perceptions and practices around serving individuals and not masses. GMCS provided the findings needed for this fourth leadership capability to emerge. The practices described by participants in the study surfaced the five areas instructional leaders can develop abilities to seed an equity consciousness among teammates. Appendix H offers a reflection guide to help guide CEOs in their decision-making in seeding an equity consciousness through their instructional leaders in efforts to increase student achievement.

The dissertation also adds to emerging research around charter management organizations. Charter management organizations have been researched for the past 25 years, and yet, this study sheds light on specific content on how a CMO has developed an instructional program that embeds cultural, social emotional, and academic into pedagogy while establishing rigorous graduation requirements for students to access college.

Recommendations for Further Research

Although this case study provides valuable insight on the chief executive officer's perspective of instructional leadership to improve student achievement in a charter management organization, there is still much opportunity for further research that would extend research on exploring CEOs, CMOs, and instructional leadership. This was an individual case study of a CEO of a CMO in Southern California. This study demonstrates how a CEO influences schools and schooling within a CMO, which means further research is needed because an individual case study cannot speak to how the impact of a CEO transfers to all schools. It would be valuable to replicate this type of research on an expanded scale as previously intended for the study. The aim would be to conduct a multiple bounded case study with multiple CEOs and their organizations. Researchers interested in conducting a similar case study should begin by identifying the criterion for participants. This dissertation had too narrow of criterion; thus, having to maneuver to an individual case study rather than multiple bounded case study. The perspectives of CEOs in education matter not only to how an organization operates, but to initiatives and practices in classrooms and schools to improve student achievement.

In this study, the CEO establishes the vision and framing for initiatives and practices in the CMO. The chief and vice president roles create and codify systems, structures, and resources for practices to be implemented across schools and/or classrooms. Content teams and school

leadership teams (principals, assistant principals, deans) are to ensure the implementation and execution of those initiatives and practices through progress monitoring. It is difficult to understand the effectiveness of cascade messaging from the CEO in an individual case study. The effectiveness may be the CEO's leadership, the smart people the CEO is surrounded by, and/or the CMO structures including size. The CEO recruits, hires, and on-boards senior leadership, so it could be argued the CEO seeks smart people who align with their individual purpose and CMO vision. The size of the CMO may be a factor as well where it limits bureaucratic structures that can serve as roadblocks in getting practices and/or resources in front of teachers and students. There is further research needed to explore how the CEO and their senior leadership team cascades messaging to align to the CEO and/or the smart people who surround the CEO.

In addition, those researchers interested in this data and seek a study on chief executive officers and/or charter management organizations should consider exploring the following: women CEOs in CMOs, the longevity of the CMO CEO compared to traditional district superintendents, multi-regional CMOs, and the cultural competencies of a CEO in education. Dr. Espino brought a unique perspective to her approach on leadership in Gran Mundo. A study designed to explore women CEOs through a critical feminist theory would help add to existing research on women in educational leadership. Dr. Espino has been in her role as GMCS' CEO for over 15 years. A comparative study designed to explore a CMO CEO's longevity in the position to their traditional district counterparts would help expand existing literature on the demands and retention of the superintendency. There is a hole in the research of charter schooling when it comes to how multi-regional charter management organizations operate. Even though GMCS is currently serving in one region, there are a number of CMOs who operate

where hundreds of miles are between another school within the organization or even schools under the network are in another state. A study is needed to explore how the CEO and/or the CMO operationalizes and supports schools across various network regions. The findings of this study emerged that an equity lens is needed for a CEO and the CMO to embed instructional leadership practices. Research is needed to support the cultural competencies organization leaders possess to effectively lead organizations in urban education settings. The research of more organizations and their leaders is needed to figure out if how much the personality of the CEO makes a difference. In this study, it very well may be the context of the CMO operating in Southern California that allows leadership to be enacted differently. This may take shape of external contexts such as state education laws and policies.

There is future research needed to affirm the findings of this study to complement existing literature on instructional leadership theory. As alluded to in the above section, a future study exploring the intersection of instructional leadership and applied critical leadership with an organization or school leadership role as participants would construct an argument where instructional leaders must be equipped with a critical lens to support leaders, teachers, students, and families of color. The dissertation also leaves room for more research on how to approach equitable practices in the instructional leadership framework. An interested scholar could continue this research and develop the discussion around equity in instructional leadership capabilities. This section provides emerging ideas on how a researcher could continue the work presented in this dissertation and contribute to the gaps in the research around the chief executive officer in education, charter management organizations, and instructional leadership.

Conclusion

In this study, I conducted a case study that examined individual interviews, analyzed documents, and explored online spaces of a chief executive officer's perspective on how instructional leadership improves student achievement in an charter management organization. The purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between academic emphasis and executive leadership from the perspective of a California charter management organization (CMO) chief executive officer (CEO). The findings of the study were clear and lead to emerging themes to help ground new insights in Dr. Viviane Robinson's instructional leadership theoretical framework. The CEO provided insight on how instructional leadership within the CMO they serve. The findings suggest that a fourth leadership capability in the leadership framework is need by organization and school leaders. This fourth capability equips instructional leaders to seed an equity consciousness across an organization or school among teammates. This fourth capability was found by exploring a CEO's perspective on instructional leadership in a CMO.

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APPENDIX A: EMAIL TO PARTICIPANTS

From: Bryce Geigle

To: (Participant's email)

Greetings (Participant's name),

My name is Bryce Geigle and I am conducting dissertation research at the University of the Pacific on the chief executive officer's perspectives of instructional leadership in charter management organizations. The study calls for interviews with chief executive officers of charter management organizations who are willing to speak to instructional leadership and its impact on student achievement. I have attached a copy of the informed consent form on to this email so you can have additional details about this research study. The informed consent has information about the interview length, risks, and safeguards I have in place in case you participate. If you are interested in participating, please reply to my email and we can collaborate on a date and time for the interview that is most convenient for your schedule. I am more than willing to travel to you as I know your time is limited. If you have any additional questions, ask and I will get back to you as soon as possible.

Thank you,

Bryce Geigle

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT (PRIMARY INTERVIEW)

INFORMED CONSENT: PRIMARY INTERVIEW (SUBJECT ONE)
The Chief Executive Officer of Charter Management Organizations and their Perspective on Instructional Leadership to Improve Student Achievement

You are invited to participate in a research study which will involve an interview. My name is Bryce Geigle, and I am an Ed.D. student at the University of the Pacific, Gladys L. Benerd School of Education. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a leader of a charter school network that serves an economically diverse student population, which includes holding the position of chief executive officer (CEO) of a charter management organization (CMO) in California.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the relationship between academic emphasis and executive leadership from the perspective of California charter management organization chief executive officers. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to answer questions in this interview and discuss your perspective on instructional leadership and its impact on student achievement. Your participation in this study will be two interviews. The first interview will be no longer than 60 minutes in duration. You are also being requested to complete a brief demographic survey about yourself and your organization, which is estimated to take approximately 5 minutes to complete. The second (follow-up) interview will be no longer than 30 minutes in duration. For the purpose of Snowball Sampling, you will be asked to identify a Chief Executive Officer of a CMO who may be willing to participate in this study. With your approval, the interview will be audio recorded.

There are some possible risks involved for participants. The risks associated with participating in this interview are as follows: 1) Psychological – While unlikely, you may feel somewhat anxious to discuss your leadership style and your perspective of leadership impact on stakeholders. 2) Sociological – While unlikely, you may feel embarrassment about your leadership decisions and perceptions of those decisions. Furthermore, you may feel that your perspectives on leadership is not appropriate and you may feel reluctant to make it known publicly. 3) Loss of confidentiality – While unlikely, there is a possibility that my laptop and audio recording could be breached. 4) Criminal or Civil Liability – I am a mandated reporter. Due to the possibility of minors being a subject of conversation, while unlikely, issues may possibly arise in regard to any unethical treatment of minors.

However, I do have safeguards to protect you from these risks: 1) Psychological – You will have the option to refrain from any questions throughout the interview. You may end the interview at any time you would like. 2) Sociological – You will be reassured that I will remain judgement free throughout the entire interview process. I want you to know that I will keep your information secure in my password encrypted laptop. 3) Loss of confidentiality – The study will provide participants with pseudonyms for their names and institutions and avoid any other identifiable information. 4) Criminal or Civil Liability – This consent process is a formal notification that I am a mandated reporter and am obligated to report any unethical treatment of minors to the proper authorities. All audio recorded files will be immediately deleted after it has been transcribed. All digital data that may link you to this research will be password protected.

The consent forms which contains your name will be kept in a locked cabinet in my home. This safeguard makes it highly unlikely and difficult for a breach of your information.

There are many benefits to this research. One benefit would be toward aspiring school leaders and their exposure to an executive officer's thoughts around improving student achievement. The study will highlight the chief executive officer's perspectives that may help other current organizational leaders with their own practices and perceptions around instructional leadership. Moreover, you will be able to speak and reflect on your own professional lived experiences as a CEO. You will benefit by being able to speak about your experiences to a researcher who remains objective.

Your participation in this study will help develop emerging literature on perspectives from chief executive officers in education. To insure your confidentiality, your name will not be linked with this research study. Participants will not receive compensation for their participation in the study.

If you have any questions about the research at any time, please call me at (209) 351-2224 or my faculty advisor Dr. Ronald Hallett at (209) 946-2683. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research project please call the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, University of the Pacific (209) 946-7716. In the event of a research-related injury, please contact your regular medical provider and bill through your normal insurance carrier, then contact the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. The measures to insure your confidentiality are as follows: The audio recorded file will be kept on my password protected iPhone. The transcribed file will be kept in my password protected laptop. The data obtained will be maintained in a safe, locked location and will be destroyed after a period of three years after the study is completed.

Your participation is entirely voluntary and your decision whether or not to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you have been afforded the opportunity to ask, and have answered, any questions that you may have, that your participation is completely voluntary, that you understand that you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled, that you will receive a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.

You will be offered a copy of this signed form to keep.

I agree to be audio recorded.
I do not agree to be audio recorded.

_____   _____
Participant (Print Name)   Participant Signature

_____   _____
Investigator's (Print Name)   Investigator's Signature

_____
Date

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT (SECONDARY INTERVIEW)

INFORMED CONSENT: SECONDARY INTERVIEW (SUBJECT TWO)
The Chief Executive Officer of Charter Management Organizations and their Perspective on Instructional Leadership to Improve Student Achievement

You are invited to participate in a research study which will involve an interview. My name is Bryce Geigle, and I am an Ed.D. student at the University of the Pacific, Gladys L. Benerd School of Education. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a leader of a charter school network that serves an economically diverse student population, which includes holding the position of top academic official of a charter management organization (CMO) in California.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the relationship between academic emphasis and executive leadership from the perspective of California charter management organization chief executive officers. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to answer questions in this interview and discuss your perspective on instructional leadership and its impact on student achievement. Your participation in this study will be two interviews. The first interview will be no longer than 60 minutes in duration. The second (follow-up) interview will be no longer than 30 minutes in duration. For the purpose of Snowball Sampling, you will be asked to identify a Chief Executive Officer of a CMO who may be willing to participate in this study. With your approval, the interview will be audio recorded.

There are some possible risks involved for participants. The risks associated with participating in this interview are as follows: 1) Psychological – While unlikely, you may feel somewhat anxious to discuss your leadership style and your perspective of leadership impact on stakeholders. 2) Sociological – While unlikely, you may feel embarrassment about your leadership decisions and perceptions of those decisions. Furthermore, you may feel that your perspectives on leadership is not appropriate and you may feel reluctant to make it known publicly. 3) Loss of confidentiality – While unlikely, there is a possibility that my laptop and audio recording could be breached. 4) Criminal or Civil Liability – I am a mandated reporter. Due to the possibility of minors being a subject of conversation, while unlikely, issues may possibly arise in regard to any unethical treatment of minors.

However, I do have safeguards to protect you from these risks: 1) Psychological – You will have the option to refrain from any questions throughout the interview. You may end the interview at any time you would like. 2) Sociological – You will be reassured that I will remain judgement free throughout the entire interview process. I want you to know that I will keep your information secure in my password encrypted laptop. 3) Loss of confidentiality – The study will provide participants with pseudonyms for their names and institutions and avoid any other identifiable information. 4) Criminal or Civil Liability – This consent process is a formal notification that I am a mandated reporter and am obligated to report any unethical treatment of minors to the proper authorities. All audio recorded files will be immediately deleted after it has been transcribed. All digital data that may link you to this research will be password protected. The consent forms which contains your name will be kept in a locked cabinet in my home. This safeguard makes it highly unlikely and difficult for a breach of your information.

There are many benefits to this research. One benefit would be developing generalizable research for aspiring school leaders and their exposure to an executive officer's thoughts around improving student achievement. The study will highlight the chief executive officer's perspectives that may help other current organizational leaders with their own practices and perceptions around instructional leadership. Moreover, you will be able to speak and reflect on your own professional lived experiences. You will benefit by being able to speak about your experiences to a researcher who is will remain objective and non-judgmental.

Your participation in this study will help develop emerging literature on perspectives from chief executive officers in education. To insure your confidentiality, your name will not be linked with this research study. Participants will not receive compensation for their participation in the study.

If you have any questions about the research at any time, please call me at (209) 351-2224 or my faculty advisor Dr. Ronald Hallett at (209) 946-2683. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research project please call the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, University of the Pacific (209) 946-7716. In the event of a research-related injury, please contact your regular medical provider and bill through your normal insurance carrier, then contact the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. The measures to insure your confidentiality are as follows: The audio recorded file will be kept on my password protected iPhone. The transcribed file will be kept in my password protected laptop. The data obtained will be maintained in a safe, locked location and will be destroyed after a period of three years after the study is completed.

Your participation is entirely voluntary and your decision whether or not to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you have been afforded the opportunity to ask, and have answered, any questions that you may have, that your participation is completely voluntary, that you understand that you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled, that you will receive a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.

You will be offered a copy of this signed form to keep.

    I agree to be audio recorded.
    I do not agree to be audio recorded.

_____   _____
Participant (Print Name)   Participant Signature

_____   _____
Investigator's (Print Name)   Investigator's Signature

_____
Date

APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS SURVEY

1) What gender do you identify with?
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Other. Please specify: _____
2) How many years as a full-time chief executive officer have you completed prior to this year?____
3) What grade-levels does your CMO serve? _____
4) How many schools are operated by your charter management organization (CMO)?
   a. 7-9
   b. 10-15
   c. 16-20
   d. 21-30
   e. 31-40
5) What percent of your student qualify for free/reduced lunch this year? ____%
6) What percent of your students are from traditionally underserved populations this year?
   a. African American: ____%
   b. Hispanic: ____%
   c. Asian American: ____%
   d. Indian American: ____%
   e. More than two races: ____%
   f. Special education: ____%
   g. English language learners: ____%
7) What overall percent of your tested students scored Met or Exceeded Standard on the CAASPP (SBAC state testing in CA) ELA over the past three years?

English/Language Arts		
2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018

8) What overall percent of your tested students scored Met or Exceeded Standard on the CAASPP (SBAC state testing in CA) Mathematics over the past three years?

Mathematics		
2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

OPENING

1) Describe a day as [insert title] of your charter management organization.
2) Why did you take the position? Why do you stay in the position?

CENTRAL

3) How do you perceive the term "instructional leadership"?
   a. Please describe instructional leadership in your organization. Whose roles, if any, are designed to be instructional leaders?
   b. In what ways is instructional leadership operationalized to improve student achievement in your organization?

4) How do you perceive the term "academic emphasis"?
   a. What does academic emphasis look like in your organization?
   b. In what ways does your organization's mission and vision interact with academic emphasis?

5) In what ways do you engage with the academic emphasis across your charter management organization?
   a. How do you assess the academic emphasis? Implementation? Execution?
   b. In addition, where does academic emphasis fall among your priorities? Please rank your top five priorities and explain why the academic emphasis is the ranking it is.
   c. What are the successes and challenges to codifying an academic emphasis in an charter management organization?

6) What role do you play in improving student achievement?
   a. What percentage of the time do you spend working along the continuum of instructional leadership? Why do you think the percentage is what you perceive?
   b. How do you operationalize next steps in improving student achievement?

CLOSING

7) Is there anything you would like to add or any items you would like to go back to before we close?

8) Snowball Sampling: Is there a CEO you would suggest who would possibly be willing to be a participant in this study?

APPENDIX F: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS PROTOCOL

Obtaining Documents
- Ask interview participants and/or gatekeepers
- Look for referenced documents during observations
- Search for documents via CMO website
- Ask for documents from staff

Analyzing Documents
- Skim through document to assess potential value to study.
- Read through thoroughly identifying patterns and themes.
- Highlight important information and transfer direct quotations to spreadsheet.
- Utilize a separate column on the spreadsheet

APPEDIX G: REFLEXIVE JOURNAL

Reflection (Data)	Reflexive (Sense-making)	Next Steps

…

APPEDIX H: REFLECTION GUIDE FOR THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER ON
SEEDING AN EQUITY CONSCIOUSNESS IN INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

The following question guide is to provide chief executive officers a foundation for seeding an
equity consciousness in their organization. The questions are meant to be thought-provoking in
efforts to guide CEOs and their organization to equip leaders with an equity consciousness in
their practices as an instructional leader.

Indicator #1: Organization Beliefs and Governance Model
The following questions serve as a guide to a CEO's thinking around organization beliefs and
governance model's impact on the instructional leadership and instructional program:
- How does the CEO and the CMO evaluate our instructional program's alignment to the
  organization mission and vision?
- How does the current organization hierarchy chart impact learning?
  - What is working? Why?
  - What needs changed? Why?
- How does our CMO create the conditions needed for effective communication from the
  Home Supports Office to support school goals and practices?
- How will our size drive how we govern and support schools?
  - What is our definition of a small school?
  - What are the student to staff ratio for specific support personnel at each site? (i.e.,
    Student and Family Services Coordinator)
  - What are the student-to-teacher classroom ratio?
- What external policies can serve as barriers to student learning?
  - What roles will interpret and ensure policy requirements are satisfied?
  - How will the policy not serve as a roadblock to supporting a student's need?
- How do you involve stakeholders in any decision-making process?
  - Are we considering "students first" in all decisions?

Indicator #2: Institutionalized Leadership
The following questions serve as a guide to a CEO's thinking around institutionalized
leadership's impact on the instructional leadership and instructional program:
- In what ways are a school's goals and practice aligned with the CMO's mission and
  vision?
- How will the CEO demonstrate and lead people in the CMO to lead with a transformative
  lens in raising student achievement?
- How will organization systems and structures ensure leaders are consistently exposed to
  leadership expectations in the CMO?
- How does the CMO sustain a culture of family on each school site?
  - How is this ensured as a CMO scales-up and replicates?
- How will the CMO measure a student's personalized educational experience?
  - Who facilitates, collects, and disseminates this measurement on each school site?
  - How many times is this measured per year? When?

Indicator #3: Data-Driven Decisions

The following questions serve as a guide to a CEO's thinking around the impact data-driven decisions has on instructional leadership:

- How does the CEO and their teams identify data that will be useful to make decisions?
- What is the data specific to each organization team that can be disseminated to school sites?
- Who is responsible for facilitating the collection of the data? Who disseminates the data? How and when?
- What tools and/or processes are utilized for leaders to reflect on next steps needed to impact student achievement?
- What are the metrics used to evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum, instruction, and assessment in the CMO?

Indicator #4: Leading School Leadership Learning and Development

The following questions serve as a guide to a CEO's thinking around the impact leading school leadership learning and development has on instructional leadership:

- In what ways, will organization and school leaders have opportunity to grow?
    - How will the CMO organize and facilitate internal professional development opportunities?
    - How will the organization vet and leverage external learning opportunities?
- What framework will the CMO use to measure the effectiveness of school leaders?
    - How will school leaders be measured by their instructional leadership effectiveness?
- How do teammates know their career path in the organization?
    - How and when are leaders able to discuss their professional goals?

Indicator #5: Asset-Based Teaching

The following questions serve as a guide to a CEO's thinking around an asset-based approach to learning and the effect it has on instructional leadership:

- How does the CEO and/or learning group decide what area of the CMO needs innovation?
- Are instructional programs meeting the needs of the whole child?
    - Does the CMO have a whole child mentality?
- What roles are needed on each school site to address the needs of the whole child?
- How does the CMO assess whether students and families see themselves in curriculum, instruction, and assessment?
- How can we best leverage families to partner in their student's education?
    - What systems and/or people do we need for this cause?