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ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, A PRINCIPAL AS LITERACY LEADER: PROMOTING LITERACY OUTCOMES FOR THIRD-GRADE STUDENTS OF COLOR, by LISA D. THOMPSON, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Philosophy, in the College of Education & Human Development, Georgia State University.

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**A PRINCIPAL AS LITERACY LEADER: PROMOTING LITERACY OUTCOMES FOR
THIRD-GRADE STUDENTS OF COLOR**

by

LISA D. THOMPSON

Under the Direction of Dr. Kristina Brezicha

ABSTRACT

Early literacy is the foundation for students' academic (GPEE, 2019; Murphy, 2004) and future economic success (Carnevale et al., 2013; Frizzell et al., 2017; GPEE, 2019). However, a reading achievement gap continues to exist between low-income children, students of color, and their White and affluent peers (Au, 2007; Fiester, 2013; Hernandez, 2011; Salloum et al., 2017). Because third-grade reading proficiency has been linked to high school graduation (Fiester, 2013), the academic and employment success of students of color is determined by their ability to read. This qualitative, intrinsic case study will examine the literacy leadership practices of a Title I elementary principal in the southeastern United States. Through the lens of instructional leadership for literacy and culturally responsive school leadership for literacy, this study will examine how the principal (1) bolstered the outcomes of third-grade students of color and (2) formed partnerships with the parents and families of third-grade students of color to increase literacy outcomes. Data collection will entail school observations; principal, assistant principal, literacy or instructional coach, media specialist, and parent interviews; a teacher focus group; and document reviews. Data analysis will be conducted through an iterative process of reviewing, pattern-seeking, and regrouping (Stake, 1995). Methodological triangulation, member checking, and iterative

questioning will confirm interpretations from the data collection process (Stake, 1995). The findings will report how the principal used literacy leadership practices to close the reading achievement gap for students of color in a Title I school.

INDEX WORDS: literacy leadership, instructional leadership, culturally responsible school leadership, reading proficiency, students of color

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THIRD-GRADE STUDENTS OF COLOR

by

LISA THOMPSON

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in

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in

Educational Policy Studies

in

the College of Education & Human Development

Georgia State University

Atlanta, GA

2021

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my late father, Sam Marshall David Jr., and to my mother, Lena Bates David. My parents taught me the value of self-reliance and hardwork. I would not be where I am today without their example and encouragement. Thank you, Daddy and Momma. I cannot forget my loving family. To my dear husband Michael and my wonderful children Lauren, Victoria, Marques, Jessica, and James, I thank you for your love, encouragement, and patience. You are the reason I have worked so hard all these years. I want to leave a lasting legacy for you to follow. Many have gone before us. They were unable to achieve their dreams due to forces beyond their control, paying the ultimate price so that we can be free. Dream. Work hard. Achieve. Give. I pass the torch to you.

“But I make my life an account of nothing precious to myself, so that I may finish my race, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to fully testify to the Good News of the grace of God.” Acts 20:24 (New Heart English Bible)

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When I was a youngster, we sang “No Man is an Island” by Joan Baez on special occasions. “No man is an island, No man stands alone, Each man's joy is joy to me, Each man's grief is my own. We need one another, So I will defend, Each man as my brother, Each man as my friend.”

Earning a doctoral degree is the fulfillment of a fifteen year dream, but I did not accomplish this dream alone. I have many people to thank.

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Table of Contents

LIST OF TABLES	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	v
1 THE PROBLEM.....	1
Research Questions.....	8
Purpose.....	8
Significance of the Study	9
Assumptions and Limitations	9
Overview of the Study	10
2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	11
3 METHODOLOGY	29
Theoretical Framework.....	31
Participants.....	35
Procedures	37
Expectations.....	49
4 FINDINGS.....	51
5 DISCUSSION.....	89
Conclusions.....	89
Implications	101
Suggestions for Further Research	107
REFERENCES.....	109
FOOTNOTES.....	123
APPENDICES	124

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Practices of Instructional Leaders for Literacy.....	15
Table 2 Practices of Culturally Responsive School Leaders for literacy.....	18

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Broad Category and Crosscutting Theme Matrix	53
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1 THE PROBLEM

In *Early Warning*, Fiester (2010) linked early literacy proficiency to student success in and beyond school. In an update of the *Early Warning*, Fiester (2013) drew a correlation between “failure to read proficiently by the end of third grade” with academic difficulties throughout schooling, an increased risk of not graduating from high school, and reduced opportunities for economic success (p. 3). The lack of early reading proficiency produces a reading achievement gap between low-income children, children of color, and their White and affluent peers (Au, 2007; Fiester, 2013; Hernandez, 2011; Salloum et al., 2017). Fiester (2013) termed this reading gap the “poverty/achievement connection” (p. 5). Families who live in poverty lack the resources to provide their children with high-quality schools and supplemental resources, like books (Chesters, 2019; Compton-Lilly & Delbridge, 2018; Fiester, 2013; Salloum et al., 2017). The lack of resources impacts children’s schooling and prospects for future economic success and global competitiveness (Fiester, 2013).

Children from low-income families are disproportionately children of color: Black, Hispanic, and Native American (Fiester, 2013). According to Hernandez (2011), “The combined effect of reading poorly and living in poverty puts these children in double jeopardy” of not graduating from high school (p. 3). Additionally, Hernandez (2011) found that seventeen percent of students who did not demonstrate reading proficiency in third-grade did not graduate from high school on time. Poor Black and Hispanic students experienced the highest rates for failure to graduate. These failure rates were higher than White students with the same reading proficiency (Hernandez, 2011).

Third-grade reading is an essential milestone in a child's education. The Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education (2019) calls third-grade reading proficiency “the great equalizer” because it eliminates reading achievement gaps (p. 17). Hernandez (2011) terms third-grade the “pivot point” stating, as it is “the time when students shift from learning to read and begin reading to learn” (p. 4). Educators once believed that early literacy efforts through third-grade were enough to prepare students for the rigors of secondary education. This belief became known as the “inoculation fallacy” (Snow & Moje, 2010, p. 66) because students who fail to reach the proficiency milestone by fourth grade are more likely to struggle in later grades and drop out of high school (Hernandez, 2011). Therefore, students require literacy instruction through high school due to the loss in literacy knowledge and the increased cognitive load of disciplinary studies as students transition from primary to secondary schools (Crum, 2008; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008; Snow & Moje, 2010; Southern Regional Education Board [SREB], 2003).

According to Shanahan and Shanahan (2008), the development of literacy skills moves from general to more specialized during the span of an educational career. Shanahan and Shanahan (2008) termed this continuum “The Increasing Specialization of Literacy Development” (p. 44). Basic foundational literacy is decoding and knowledge of high-frequency words. From basic literacy, students move to intermediate literacy, which includes strategies for comprehension, vocabulary development, and reading fluency (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). Disciplinary literacy is at the top of the pyramid and reflect the specialized habits of mind specific to a discipline (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2017). For example, the ability to compare multiple accounts of an event from a variety of sources is a skill-specific to social studies but is not characteristic of mathematical thinking.

Tier-one early literacy instruction includes reading and writing instruction for students in grades pre-K to three. Reading skills include alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, decoding words, knowledge of text conventions, fluency, and organizational properties, like list structures (Goldstein, 2011; Paige, 2018; Paige et al., 2019; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). According to Paige et al. (2019), spelling knowledge, word reading, and reading fluency are the foundational skills that promote reading proficiency and comprehension (Paige, 2018; Paige et al., 2019). Students equipped with these foundational skills during tier-one instruction are seven times more likely to be proficient or above on statewide reading assessments (Paige, 2018; Paige et al., 2019). Thus, a high-quality tier-one reading instruction mitigates low reading proficiency (Cuticelli et al., 2016; Paige, 2018). Additionally, effective tier-one instruction reduces the need for tier-two and tier-three interventions (Swanson et al., 2017).

Because reading is the primary focus of early literacy instruction, foundational skills for writing are often neglected (Anderson et al., 2018; Korth et al., 2017). Writing has an interrelated role with reading in literacy development (Anderson et al., 2018; Korth et al., 2017). Writing instruction begins with “spelling development” then develops into “writing development” (Anderson et al., 2018, p. 130). According to Anderson et al. (2018), “there is theoretical evidence that at different stages of literacy development during the primary grades, children build higher-level sentence and text skills in both reading and writing on a foundation of more basic word-level skills” (p. 130). Thus, high-quality tier-one literacy instruction at the early literacy level is vital to helping students learn these complex skills (Korth et al., 2017; Paige, 2018).

As students move from early literacy to adolescent literacy, reading, writing, comprehension, analysis, synthesis, and communication are the skills that define literacy. Students must be able to use those skills in a variety of text and text formats across content areas (International

Reading Association [IRA], 2012; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008; Snow & Moje, 2010; SREB, 2003; Wendt, 2013). Though adolescents require a robust set of literacy skills prior to entering secondary schools, an alarming number of students lack these skills as they enter middle and high school, limiting their success (IRA, 2012; Patterson et al., 2010; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008; Snow & Moje, 2010; SREB, 2003; Wendt, 2013). The rigorous and consistent use of literacy strategies to engage students using a variety of texts, print and digital, across content areas is needed to help students become proficient in career- and college-ready literacy skills (IRA, 2012; SREB, 2003; Wendt, 2013).

Carnevale et al. (2013) call this career- and college-ready literacy skills, *21st-century career competencies* (p. 22). The top five competencies, or highly valued skills, for “high wage, high-growth, high-demand jobs” are active listening, speaking, reading comprehension, critical thinking, and writing (Carnevale et al., 2013, p. 26). Frizzell et al. (2017) listed six learning competencies needed for success in twenty-first century “college, career, and civic life” (p. 1). The six deeper learning competencies are “master core academic content, think critically and solve complex problems, work collaboratively, communicate effectively, learn how to learn, and develop academic mindsets” (Frizzell et al., 2017, p 2). Both career competencies and deeper learning competencies overlap in two skills: critical thinking and communication (Carnevale et al., 2013; Frizzell et al., 2017). Though not stated explicitly by Frizzell et al. (2017), communication skills for higher-wage jobs require oral comprehension and expression, written comprehension and expression, and speech clarity and recognition (Carnevale et al., 2013). This definition of communication encompasses active listening, speaking, reading comprehension, and writing proposed by Carnevale et al. (2013). Both sets of competencies require a strong foundation in literacy instruction.

Those proficient literacy skills are especially important, given that today's high-paying jobs require some form of literacy threshold (Carnevale et al., 2010). Level of education and earning potential are directly correlated, thus earning levels increase as literacy proficiency increases (Carnevale et al., 2010). Students with limited literacy proficiency will likely be left behind, relegated to the decreasing number of low wage jobs in service, sales, clerical, and manual labor industries and "locked out of the middle class" (Carnevale et al., 2010, p. 2). In contrast, opportunities are increasing for occupations that require postsecondary education, which is called "the gatekeeper to the middle class and the upper class" (Carnevale et al., 2010, p. 3).

Given the reading achievement gap between low-income children, children of color, and their White and affluent peers and its impact on students' future success, principals should be equipped to make instructional decisions concerning the literacy needs of diverse students (Carnevale et al., 2010; Dowell et al., 2012; Fiester, 2013; Frizzell et al., 2017; Hernandez, 2011; Saloum et al., 2017; Teale et al., 2020). According to the literature, the principal as literacy leader can reduce reading achievement gaps by uniting cultural epistemologies with literacy instruction (Horsford et al., 2011; Keehne et al., 2018; Khalifa, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016; Riley & Webster, 2016; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2016). A responsive literacy instructional practice was found to be "equitable and effective" (Puzio et al., 2015, p. 135).

The culturally responsive school leader honors students and their families' cultural and linguistic diversity by creating an inclusive, supportive, and welcoming school climate (Horsford et al., 2011; Khalifa, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016; Riley & Webster, 2016). By fostering trustful relationships, the leader facilitates bilateral communication between the school and families (Khalifa, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016; Riley & Webster, 2016; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2016).

Furthermore, the culturally responsive school leader challenges deficit-based dispositions, beliefs, systems and structures that marginalize and oppress diverse students and their communities (Khalifa, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2016). In short, they disrupt status quo beliefs and practices while creating equitable experiences for all students (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2016).

Four behaviors characterize culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL): (a) critical self-reflection, (b) the development of culturally responsive teachers and curricula, (c) the promotion of inclusive contexts, and (d) the engagement of broader community contexts (Khalifa, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016). Critically self-reflective leaders demonstrate an awareness of personal biases that define their perspective of culture and race. When warranted, self-reflective practice leads to changes in policy and practices that promote equitable outcomes for all students (Khalifa et al., 2016). Culturally responsive school leaders model culturally responsive pedagogy by ensuring that teachers know and respond to their students' cultural epistemologies (Khalifa et al., 2016; Madhlangobe and Gordon, 2012). Promoting inclusion within the school context, CRSL opposes exclusionary practices that further marginalize diverse students. Thus, Indigenous culture and social capital are acknowledged, employed, and celebrated (Khalifa et al., 2016). Finally, culturally responsive school leaders form cultural partnerships with students, parents, and community members (Khalifa, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016). Those partnerships extend to advocacy for the communities they serve (Khalifa, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2016). According to Madhlangobe and Gordon (2012), "Cultural responsiveness should be at the center of efforts to improve performance of underachieving groups in multicultural societies; moreover, it is a powerful, persistent, and vitalizing force for improving education for *all* stu-

dents” (p. 180). Thus, the culturally responsive literacy leader is critical to diverse students' literacy success from primary to secondary education (Crum, 2008; Dowell et al., 2012; Riley & Webster, 2016; Townsend et al., 2018).

Definition of Terms

Early literacy defines the letter, word, and sentence-level reading and writing instruction that serve as a foundation for "higher-level sentence and text skills" (Andersen et al., 2018, p. 130). Early literacy takes place from grades pre-kindergarten to third-grade (Weyer & Casares, 2019).

Adolescent literacy defines the ability to read, write, comprehend, analyze, synthesize, and communicate (oral and written) using a variety of text in a variety of formats across content areas in grades 4 through 12 (IRA, 2012; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008; Snow & Moje, 2010; SREB, 2003; Wendt, 2013).

Literacy defines the grade-level proficiency in reading, writing, comprehension, analysis, synthesis, and oral and written communication skills in all text formats needed for success in college, career, and life (Carnevale et al., 2010; Frizzell et al., 2017; IRA, 2012; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008; Snow & Moje, 2010; SREB, 2003; Wendt, 2013).

Principal literacy leadership defines the knowledge, skills, and practices of literacy pedagogy needed to lead teachers and families in literacy experiences that increase student outcomes (Dowell et al., 2012; Hollenbeck & Rieckhoff, 2014; Houck & Novak, 2017; Murphy, 2010; Overholt & Szabocsik, 2013; Stein & Nelson, 2003; Taylor, 2004). The principal literacy leadership practices in this study will integrate instructional leadership practices applied to literacy instruction and CRSL practices that have been proven to increase academic outcomes (Brazer &

Bauer, 2013; Hallinger, 2005; Hallinger, 2009; Horsford et al., 2011; Khalifa et al., 2016; Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2017).

Students of color defines students of minority race and ethnicity in the United States. The minority racial categories include American Indian or Alaskan Native, Hispanic/Latino, Black or African-American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and Asian. The two ethnic categories include Hispanic or Latino and Not Hispanic or Latino (United States Census Bureau, n.d.). For the purpose of this study, students of color will include three racial categories, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Hispanic/Latino, and Black or African-American.

Research Questions

1. How did the principal as literacy leader promote cultural responsiveness in literacy content knowledge and instruction?
2. How did the principal use literacy leadership practices to establish a culturally responsive literacy culture?
3. How did the principal as literacy leader foster literacy collaboration with and among staff, families, and community members?

Purpose

The state of reading instruction in American public education is still in crisis after six decades of warning, reporting, research, and funding (Flesch, 1955; Hernandez, 2011; International Reading Association [IRA], 2012; Jacobs, 2008; Nations Report Card, 2017; Paige, et al., 2019; Snow & Moje, 2010; Southern Regional Education Board [SREB], 2003; Wendt, 2013). As instructional leaders, principals must be trained to lead their schools in literacy instruction (Crum, 2008; Dowell et al., 2012; Hollenbeck & Rieckhoff, 2014; Houck & Novak, 2017; IRA, 2019). Failure to prepare principals to be literacy leaders will foster illiteracy, especially among

the most marginalized students. With this premise in mind, the purpose of this study is two-fold. First, this study seeks to understand the principal literacy leadership practices used to implement a successful literacy plan that bolstered the outcomes of third-grade students of color from multiple perspectives. Second, the study seeks to determine how the principal formed partnerships with the parents and families of third-grade students of color to increase literacy outcomes.

Significance of the Study

Though instructional leadership frameworks for literacy have been proposed within the literature, extant literature does not specifically address the integrated use of instructional leadership and CRSL practices as a means of improving third-grade literacy outcomes for students of color. This study will fill a gap in the literature by providing a case study that examines the integrated literacy practices of a principal in the southeastern United States who raised literacy outcomes for third-grade students of color and engaged students' parents and families. The integration of instructional leadership and CRSL will provide an outline of effective leadership practices and a lens for viewing the principal's actions.

Assumptions and Limitations

Prior to conducting the case study, the researcher held four assumptions of a principal who increased literacy outcomes for students of color in a high-poverty school. First, the principal prioritized literacy instruction in the school. Second, the principal understood the context of the school, its students, and its community. Third, the principal used the school context to adapt the literacy curriculum and instruction to meet the unique needs of the students.

Last, the principal recognized that such an accomplishment could not be achieved without engaging external partners, like parents and the community.

The limitations to this study are the (1) inability to generalize the findings to other contexts due to the small population size and unique context, (2) inability to replicate the study, and (3) researcher bias during data interpretation. These limitations will be mitigated by ensuring trustworthiness during the investigative and analysis process. The researcher will provide readers with a detailed audit trail. The researcher will also ensure accuracy through member checking and methodological triangulation.

Overview of the Study

Five chapters will organize this study. Four chapters will follow this introduction. Chapter two will present the literature review and theoretical framework. Chapter three will explain the methodology. Chapter four will present the findings. Chapter five will present the conclusions, discussion, and future considerations.

2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Early literacy is the foundation for students' academic success (Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education [GPEE], 2019; Murphy, 2004). Additionally, the depth of students' literacy competencies will influence their future quality of life and economic success (Carnevale et al., 2013; Frizzell et al., 2017; GPEE, 2019). However, 60 years after Flesch (2013) wrote *Why Johnny Can't Read: And What You Can Do About It*, low-income students of color in American public schools are still performing below their White peers in reading (Fiester, 2013). Because third-grade reading proficiency has been linked to high school graduation (Fiester, 2013), the academic and economic success of students of color is determined by their ability to read.

As instructional and culturally responsive school leaders, principals are charged with improving literacy instruction and reducing the achievement gap between students of color and their White peers (Crum, 2008; Horsford et al., 2011; Houck & Novak, 2017; Khalifa, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016; Plaatjies, 2019; Murphy, 2004; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2016; Taylor, 2004; Townsend et al., 2018). Principals as instructional and culturally responsive school leaders have a role to play in the literacy leadership of the school (Dowell et al., 2012; Murphy, 2010; Riley & Webster, 2016). By supporting teachers with the implementation of high-quality, evidence-based core reading instruction for all students, known as tier-one reading instruction, the principal as a literacy leader will foster the academic and economic success for students of color (Cuticelli et al., 2016; Goldstein, 2011; Haager et al., 2014; Paige, 2018). This study will view principal literacy leadership from an integration of instructional leadership practices and CRSL practices to assess how an elementary principal increased literacy outcome for third-grade students of color and engaged their families in the literacy process.

The review of literature will begin with a discussion of research on instructional leadership in literacy instruction and CRSL in literacy instruction. Following this introduction into the literature, the term “principal literacy leadership” will be used to describe the integration of instructional and CRSL for literacy instruction. The researcher will then discuss what literacy leaders need to know and do from three perspectives: content knowledge, the promotion of a literacy culture, and the fostering of a collaborative culture. Following the discussion of knowledge and practices, the researcher will discuss the gap in extant literature and the theoretical framework for this study.

Instructional Leadership for Literacy

The concept of a principal as an instructional leader originated during the Effective Schools research of the 1970s (Brazer & Bauer, 2013; Neumerski, 2012). An “effective” principal improved teaching and learning, which resulted in higher student achievement for all students, regardless of income or background (Brazer & Bauer, 2013; Neumerski, 2012; Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2017). Instructional leaders promoted high-quality teaching through their pedagogical content knowledge (Brazer & Bauer, 2013). Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) is the “knowledge base of teaching,” a blend of content and pedagogy (Shulman, 1987, p. 8). From the foundation of PCK, instructional leaders demonstrated a broader and more in-depth understanding of teaching and learning and worked to build teacher capacity for high-quality teaching (Brazer & Bauer, 2013).

Brazer & Bauer (2013) offer this definition of instructional leadership, “Instructional leadership is the effort to improve teaching and learning for PK–12 students by managing effectively, addressing the challenges of diversity, guiding teacher learning, and fostering organiza-

tional learning” (p. 650). Pietsch and Tulowitzki (2017) agree that instructional leadership centered on quality teaching. To achieve that end, researchers have identified instructional leadership behaviors that promote teacher growth and student achievement (Brazer & Bauer, 2013; Hallinger, 2005; Hallinger, 2009; Neumerski, 2012). Hallinger (2005) created a model to identify 50 instructional leadership behaviors within three dimensions: Defining the School’s Mission, Managing the Instructional Program, and Promoting a Positive School Learning Climate. Within the Defining the School’s Mission dimension, the principal frames and communicates the goals of the school. Principal behaviors within the Managing the Instructional Program dimension focus on the supervision, coordination, and monitoring of instruction, curriculum, and student outcomes, respectively (Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016; Hallinger, 2005; Hallinger, 2009; Neumerski, 2012; Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2017). The Promoting a Positive School Climate dimension encompasses a variety of behaviors. Within this dimension, principals protect instructional time, promote professional development, maintain a high visible presence within the school, promote high-expectations, and provide “incentives for teachers and students” (Hallinger, 2005, p. 226; Neumerski, 2012; Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2017). These instructional leadership behaviors can be measured using the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) developed by Phillip Hallinger (Neumerski, 2012).

Principal leadership has an indirect impact on student achievement by promoting high-quality teaching within a positive environment conducive for learning (Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016; Hallinger, 2005; Hallinger, 2009; Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2017). The principal accomplishes this task by considering the context of the school (Brazer & Bauer, 2013; Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016; Hallinger, 2005; Hallinger, 2009; Neumerksi, 2012). About the school's context, Hallinger (2005) states,

The context of the school is a source of constraints, resources, and opportunities that the principal must understand and address in order to lead. Contextual variables of interest to principals include student background, community type, organizational structure, school culture, teacher experience and competence, fiscal resources, school size, and bureaucratic and labor features of the school organization (Bossert et al., 1982; Hallinger & Heck, 1996a, 1996b). (p. 234)

The instructional leader studies the context then makes decisions based on the changing needs of the school (Brazer & Bauer, 2013).

In the literature, proposed frameworks for literacy leadership have coupled instructional leadership with a focus on literacy (Crum, 2008; Houck & Novak, 2017; Plaatjies, 2019; Murphy, 2004; Taylor, 2004; Townsend et al., 2018). The scholars labeled this coupling by several terms, “literacy leadership” (Dowell et al., 2012, Hollenbeck & Rieckhoff, 2014; International Literacy Association [ILA], 2019; Parker, 2008; Riley & Webster, 2016; Taylor, 2004; Townsend et al., 2018), “literacy instructional leadership” (Plaatjies, 2019), and “leadership for literacy” (Murphy, 2004). No unified definition for literacy leadership exists; however, the scholars provide behaviors and practices characteristic of literacy leaders (Crum, 2008; Dowell et al., 2012; Hollenbeck & Rieckhoff, 2014; Houck & Novak, 2017; ILA, 2019; Plaatjies, 2019; Murphy, 2004; Riley & Webster, 2016; Taylor, 2004; Townsend et al., 2018). For example, Plaatjies (2019) defined literacy instructional leadership as the

principals’ knowledge of the literacy curriculum, supervision of the literacy instructional programme, empowerment of literacy teachers through professional development activities, the manner in which principals promote print-rich literacy classrooms, and the importance of principals having a vision and mission for literacy instruction. (p. 140)

The literacy leadership practices in the studies mentioned above incorporate the practices found in the Plaatjies (2019) definition. See Table 1 for a summary of the practices of instructional leaders for literacy.

Table 1

Practices of Instructional Leaders for Literacy

Category	Leadership Practices	References
Content Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possesses literacy content knowledge Ensures age-appropriate literacy pedagogy Identifies effective literacy teaching and learning Supports teachers and staff in literacy instruction Evaluates teachers and provides literacy specific, directive feedback 	Crum, 2008; Dowell et al., 2012; Hollenbeck & Rieckhoff, 2014; Murphy, 2004; Overholt & Szabocsik, 2013; Stein & Nelson, 2003; Taylor, 2004
Literacy Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Casts a literacy vision and shared definition Fosters a learning culture Monitors using qualitative and quantitative data Provides professional development Creates risk-free environments 	Brumley, 2010; Cobb, 2005; Crum, 2008; Houck & Novak, 2017; ILA, 2019; Riley & Webster, 2016; Taylor, 2004
Collaborative Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborates with teachers Provides time and resources for teachers to collaborate Collaborates with peers and district leaders 	Brumley, 2010; Crum, 2008; Houck & Novak, 2017; ILA, 2019; Taylor, 2004

Though many articles describe the effective practices of literacy instructional leadership, few studies have drawn a direct relationship between those practices and increased student achievement in reading. To date, the literature provides one example of middle school principals who used literacy leadership practices to close the achievement gap in the lowest quartile of struggling students (Taylor, 2004). The relationship between principal practice and positive reading achievement is a gap in the literature.

Culturally Responsive School Leadership for Literacy

As with instructional leadership for literacy, CRSL (Khalifa et al., 2016) is represented in the literature by several terms: “culturally relevant leadership” (Horsford et al., 2011), “culturally responsive principals” (Khalifa, 2018), “culturally responsive leadership” (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012), and “culturally sustaining leadership” (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2016). Though the terms vary, the purpose and practices of culturally responsive school leaders are indistinguishable. Culturally responsive school leaders work to ensure an equitable education for marginalized students by meeting their unique cultural, educational, social, and political needs (Horsford et al., 2011; Khalifa, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2016). Marginalized students in the United States include African Americans, Latino, American Indian, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Indigenous peoples (Horsford et al., 2011; Khalifa, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2016). The culturally responsive school leader works to reduce the achievement gaps between ethnic minorities and their White peers (Horsford et al., 2011; Khalifa, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2016).

Culturally responsive, or relevant, school leadership is personal, pedagogical, professional, and political (Horsford et al., 2011; Khalifa, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2016). These leaders are personally self-reflective, examining their cultural proficiency. They have high expectations for all learners; and they engage students’ culture, language, and communities to develop culturally responsive teachers, pedagogy, and curriculum. Culturally responsive school leaders enter into cross-cultural relationships. As professionals, they promote positive, asset-based communication between teachers, students, families, and communities. They incorporate students’ cultural epistemologies into school contexts, thus promoting an inclusive and affirming school culture. As politicians, culturally responsive school leaders advocate

for equity, and they form coalitions to resist all forms of oppression. The literature describes culturally responsive school leaders as “antioppressive,” “anti-racist,” “transformative,” “progressive,” and those who seek “social justice” (Horsford et al., 2011; Khalifa, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2016). They confront deficit-based thinking, exclusionary practices, and inequitable policies within their schools (Horsford et al., 2011; Khalifa, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2016).

Like instructional leaders, culturally responsive school leaders navigate their diverse context to ensure equity for all students (Horsford et al., 2011; Khalifa, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2016). According to Horsford et al. (2011), instructional leaders and culturally relevant leaders recognize the importance of pedagogy in an ethnically diverse context. Likewise, research supports the use of culturally responsive and differentiated teaching and learning for literacy instruction (Keehne et al., 2018; Murphy, 2004; Puzio et al., 2015). Riley and Webster (2016) support the use of cultural literacies of the Indigenous in the literacy instruction, which “link students’ use of language and cultural understandings to literacy instruction” (Riley & Webster, 2016, p. 144). See Table 2 for a summary of the practices of culturally responsive school leaders for literacy.

Table 2*Practices of Culturally Responsive School Leaders for Literacy*

Category	Leadership Practice	Reference
Content Knowledge	Provides culturally responsive pedagogy Prioritizes knowledge of context as well as content Has knowledge of deficit-based thinking and exclusionary practices	Horsford et al., 2011; Khalifa, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2016
Literacy Culture	Provides culturally relevant resources Fosters an inclusive culture Celebrates students' cultural and linguistic diversity	Compton-Lilly & Delbridge, 2018; ILA, 2019; Jones et al., 2019; Murphy, 2004; Puzio et al., 2015; Riley & Webster, 2016
Collaborative Culture	Fosters trust Partners with teachers, families, and the community Establishes bilateral lines of communication Invites stakeholders into the school	Compton-Lilly & Delbridge, 2018; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; ILA, 2019; Khalifa, 2018; Riley & Webster, 2016 Salisbury & McGregor, 2005

Integrated Literacy Leadership Knowledge and Practices

Extant literature is replete with discussions of the knowledge and practices displayed by instructional and culturally responsive school leaders. This section discusses how knowledge and practices are applied to literacy instruction. The discussion will view the integrated leadership knowledge and practices of literacy leaders from three perspectives: content knowledge, literacy culture, and collaborative culture. The perspectives were recurrent themes and points of emphasis throughout literacy leadership publications. Henceforth, a principal as literacy leader is defined as a principal who possesses knowledge of inclusive literacy curriculum, assessment, and

instruction; supervises and assesses culturally responsive and inclusive literacy instructional programs; empowers the instructional staff and stakeholders through professional development activities; promotes a print-rich and culturally diverse literacy learning environment; and develops and advocates a vision and mission of quality literacy instruction for all students (Khalifa, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016; Plaatjies, 2019).

Content Knowledge

Many elementary and secondary principals lack the knowledge needed to integrate effective literacy practices into content (Crum, 2008; Dowell et al., 2012; Overholt & Szabocsik, 2013). “It is impossible to enact any change in a school if the change agent is not familiar with the various nuances of the issue at hand” (Crum, 2008, p. 4). Therefore, principals need specific literacy knowledge and practices to lead literacy initiatives in their buildings and to understand what components define literacy success (Crum, 2008; Dowell et al., 2012). With this knowledge, principals would be better prepared to support teachers and support staff in literacy instruction and increase reading performance in their schools (Crum, 2008; Hollenbeck & Rieckhoff, 2014; IRA, 2019; Townsend et al., 2018).

Reading Content Knowledge. Dowell et al. (2012) posits principals require foundational knowledge in literacy to assume the role of a literacy leader. Scholars have identified five essential components of effective reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension (Hempenstall & Buckingham, 2016; Learning First, 2000; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2000; Riley & Webster, 2016; Rowe, 2006; Teale et al., 2020; Townsend et al., 2018). Scholars agree that the explicit and systematic instruction of these components reduces reading achievement gaps and the need for intervention programs (Hempenstall & Buckingham, 2016; Learning First Alliance [Learning

First], 2000; NICHD, 2000; Rose, 2006; Rowe, 2006; Townsend et al., 2018). Each component is described below, along with additional components posited by reading scholars.

Phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness is the knowledge and ability to manipulate the smallest sound units in oral language (Hempenstall & Buckingham, 2016; Rowe, 2006). Early readers learn that graphemes, printed letters and letter groupings, correspond to specific sounds, called phonemes (Hempenstall & Buckingham, 2016; NICHD, 2000). In short, letters symbols represent sounds (Hempenstall & Buckingham, 2016; Learning First, 2000; NICHD, 2000). In the English language, 41 phonemes have this letter-sound relationship (NICHD, 2000). Phonemic awareness enables the reader to identify, match, segment, and blend sounds while forming syllables and words (Learning First, 2000; NICHD, 2000).

Riley and Webster (2016) and Townsend et al. (2018) replace phonemic awareness with phonological awareness. Phonological awareness encompasses a broader set of skills than phonemic awareness, including rhyming words, syllable segmentation, and phoneme manipulation (Hempenstall & Buckingham, 2016; NICHD, 2000; Teale et al., 2020).

Phonics. The explicit instruction of phonics enables the early reader to learn the relationships and patterns between sounds and letters to decode, or sound out, written words (Hempenstall & Buckingham, 2016; NICHD, 2000; Rowe, 2006). Fluent reading is dependent on phonics knowledge. Proficient readers use phonic knowledge to decode unfamiliar words and ascribe meaning to those words from the word itself and its context (Learning First, 2000). The whole word or whole language reading programs do not teach letter-sound relationships. Compared to the systematic instruction of phonics, meta-analyses reveal that whole language reading programs do not promote the level of reading proficiency provided by phonics reading programs

(NICHD, 2000). Scholars link phonics instruction to writing, spelling, and reading comprehension proficiency (NICHD, 2000). Early literacy programs with a strong foundation in phonics often reduce the need for reading intervention programs (Rowe, 2006).

Fluency. A fluent reader can read text orally accurately, quickly, and expressively (Hempenstall & Buckingham, 2016; NICHD, 2000; Rowe, 2006). Early readers improve fluency by listening to fluent readings and practicing oral reading (Hempenstall & Buckingham, 2016; NICHD, 2000). Oral reading practice promotes automaticity in reading text. Thus, a student who reads 95 percent of a text without labored decoding has reached a level of independent reading (Learning First, 2000). The literature often links fluency with reading comprehension because fluent readers can concentrate on reading for meaning, while students who read slowly concentrate on identifying words (Hempenstall & Buckingham, 2016; Learning First, 2000; NICHD, 2000; Teale et al., 2018). Thus, reading fluency is a predictor of reading problems (NICHD, 2000).

Vocabulary. Proficient readers can recognize word meanings and use words to connect concepts while reading and writing (Hempenstall & Buckingham, 2016; Learning First, 2000; NICHD, 2000; Rowe, 2006). This word recognition is reading vocabulary. Oral vocabulary helps students recognize words used in listening and speaking. Like fluency, vocabulary is critical for proficient reading comprehension and communication (Hempenstall & Buckingham, 2016; Learning First, 2000; NICHD, 2000; Teale et al., 2018).

Text Comprehension. According to Hempenstall and Buckingham (2016), “Reading comprehension is extracting and constructing meaning from written text using knowledge of words, concepts, and ideas” (p. 25). Reading is a complex process requiring the integration of multiple brain regions to support comprehension (Hempenstall & Buckingham, 2016; NICHD,

2000). Comprehension is essential to learning, requiring vocabulary and background knowledge (Learning First, 2000; NICHD, 2000). Teachers build students' background knowledge through the broad reading of narrative and informational texts. Teachers enhance comprehension through questioning and discussion (Learning First, 2000). Fluency and vocabulary development are strong predictors of reading comprehension (Hempenstall & Buckingham, 2016; Learning First, 2000; NICHD, 2000; Teale et al., 2018).

The literature identifies phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension as the foundations of effective, evidence-based reading instruction (Hempenstall & Buckingham, 2016; Learning First, 2000; NICHD, 2000; Rose, 2006; Rowe, 2006). However, some scholars pose other components for an effective reading program. Written expression, oral language, and spelling, assessment, and motivation are discussed below to provide a more comprehensive approach to reading instruction.

Written Expression. Rose (2006), Learning First (2000), and Teale et al. (2020) add written expression as an essential component of reading instruction. Learning First (2000) describes reading and writing as “two sides of the same coin” because each skill supports the other (p. 2). Strong decoding skills predict the development of writing skills (Andersen et al., 2018). In short, one skill predicts the development of the other.

Oral Language. Riley and Webster (2016) and Townsend et al. (2018) add oral language as the sixth essential component of reading instruction. The phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and oral language make up the "BIG 6" of reading instruction (Riley & Webster, 2016, p. 138). Oral language encompasses decoding, oral vocabulary, and oral reading (Hempenstall & Buckingham, 2016; Rowe, 2006).

Spelling, Assessment, and Motivation. Learning First (2000) includes spelling and handwriting, screening and assessment, and motivating students to read in its nine components of effective, research-based reading instruction. According to Learning First (2000), spelling and handwriting are "necessary conventions" that enhance written expression (p. 2). Spelling also predicts decoding and comprehension (Andersen et al., 2018). Screening and assessment inform instruction and target reading weaknesses, which prevents students from falling behind (Learning First, 2000). Students become good readers when they are motivated to read widely (Learning First, 2000).

Although the components of effective reading instruction are well documented, Teale et al. (2018) note that little research has attended to reading instruction for diverse students. This observation is important given the increasing culturally and linguistically diverse demographics of students in United States schools. Improved instruction in early literacy can positively impact an education system regardless of disadvantage sources (Hempenstall & Buckingham, 2016). However, early literacy research has a "limited response" to "issues" of reading instruction related to diverse students (Teale et al., 2018, p. 205). Furthermore, high-quality literacy instruction requires quality professional learning, teacher practices, and school leadership to create the systems and structures needed for high-quality instruction to take place (Teale et al., 2018). Yet Teale et al. (2018) records, "there is remarkably little research focused on the role of leadership in early literacy or strategies for effective early literacy leadership" (pp. 209-210).

Leadership Content Knowledge. In 1986, Lee Shuman posited the pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) construct to demonstrate how a teacher's content knowledge translates to student learning (Stein & Nelson, 2003). Building on the PCK construct, Stein and Nelson (2003) created a leadership content knowledge (LCK) framework to link the principal's understanding

of content with leadership practices. Stein and Nelson (2003) define LCK “as the knowledge of academic subjects that is used by administrators when they function as instructional leaders” (p. 423). In the LCK framework, leaders must (1) know the content, (2) know how students learn and teachers deliver the content, and (3) know how teachers learn to teach the content and how others can assist teachers’ learning (Stein & Nelson, 2003). Overholt and Szabocsik (2013) applied the LCK construct to literacy. Leadership content knowledge for literacy posited that principals have a deep core understanding of literacy content in order to evaluate literacy instruction and provide teachers with explicit, directive feedback (Overholt & Szabocsik, 2013). This new application of LCK encapsulated the principal's knowledge in four categories of understanding: “core understandings of reading, effective teaching behaviors, the supportive context for reading instruction, and motivating and engaging readers” (Overholt & Szabocsik, 2013, p. 55). The categories contained 27 observable descriptors of effective literacy practice (Overholt & Szabocsik, 2013). In short, the LCK categories and descriptors for literacy describe what the principal as a literacy leader knows, understands, and practices.

A principal with LCK for literacy demonstrates several practices. Their in-depth foundational knowledge of literacy enables them to identify effective literacy teaching and learning (Dowell et al., 2012; Hollenbeck & Rieckhoff, 2014; Overholt & Szabocsik, 2013). The principal can make appropriate age and grade-level decisions for curriculum, assessment, and instruction (Dowell et al., 2012; Hollenbeck & Rieckhoff, 2014; Murphy, 2004; Overholt & Szabocsik, 2013; Stein & Nelson, 2003; Taylor, 2004). They can formulate a literacy vision and mission, provide supportive school structures, establish literacy management systems, and formulate monitoring and evaluation systems (Dowell et al., 2012). Finally, LCK for literacy enables the principal to support teachers and staff with professional development, culturally relevant resources,

and time to produce high-quality instruction and interventions using relevant data (Dowell et al., 2012; Hollenbeck & Rieckhoff, 2014; ILA, 2019; Murphy, 2004; Overholt & Szabocsik, 2013; Taylor, 2004).

Literacy Culture

A literacy leader creates a culture for literacy learning (Brumley, 2010). A literacy action plan encapsulates the leader's vision for effective literacy planning and instruction (Brumley, 2010; ILA, 2019; Riley & Webster, 2016; Taylor, 2004). The literacy leader promotes this school-wide vision across all disciplines with a shared definition of literacy expectations, effective instructional practices, and desired student outcomes (Crum, 2008; Houck & Novak, 2017; ILA, 2019; Taylor, 2004). The literacy culture is monitored for fidelity by walkthroughs, learning walks (Cobb, 2005; Crum, 2008; Houck & Novak, 2017; ILA, 2019), and student and observational data analysis (Brumley, 2010; Houck & Novak, 2017).

A literacy culture is a learning culture. To increase the literacy competency of teachers and other instructional staff, the principal leads or participates in job-embedded professional development with teachers and peers (Brumley, 2010; Houck & Novak, 2017; Taylor, 2004). Leader walkthroughs and learning walks also promote teachers' knowledge and growth through descriptive, "specific," and "constructive" feedback (Brumley, 2010; Cobb, 2005, p. 474; Houck & Novak, 2017; ILA, 2019). The literacy leader creates "risk-free environments" for teachers (Cobb, 2005, p. 474). Teachers receive protected collaboration time where teachers are free to discuss what works (Parker, 2008). Additionally, teachers receive protected classroom time and instructional resources to promote student literacy learning (Brumley, 2010; Taylor, 2004).

The literacy culture is an inclusive culture (Compton-Lilly & Delbridge, 2018; ILA, 2019; Jones et al., 2019; Murphy, 2004; Puzio et al., 2015; Riley & Webster, 2016). The culture

celebrates and honors the cultural and linguistic diversity of its students and incorporates their epistemologies into literacy pedagogy and curriculum (Compton-Lilly & Delbridge, 2018; ILA, 2019; Jones et al., 2019; Khalifa, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016; Riley & Webster, 2016). The literacy leader may invite parents and members of the community into the school support literacy learning of its students (Jones et al., 2019; Riley & Webster, 2016). From the perspective of the principal as literacy leader, teachers, parents, and communities have a collective responsibility in the literacy achievement of their students (Jones et al., 2019; Riley & Webster, 2016).

Collaborative Culture

Literacy leaders promote collaborative relationships inside and outside of the school (Brumley, 2010). In schools, principals work collaboratively with teachers to foster “collective agreements” (ILA, 2019, p. 3) on quality literacy instruction where all teachers acknowledge responsibility for student learning (Crum, 2008; ILA, 2019; Taylor, 2004). Outside of the school, district leaders support principals with literacy professional development opportunities to build “literacy leadership capacity” (Crum, 2008; Houck & Novak, 2017, p. 30). According to Houck and Novak (2017), “When district leaders assume responsibility for building capacity through their school leaders, they develop a collaborative culture that supports the application of the model and builds a flourishing literacy environment” (p. 33).

The literacy leader partners with teachers and families to provide resources and incorporate culturally responsive pedagogy to produce the literacy outcomes necessary to help all students achieve success in school, postsecondary options, and life (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2018; Compton-Lilly & Delbridge, 2018; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; International Literacy Association [ILA], 2019; Khalifa, 2018; National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2019; Riley & Webster, 2016; Salisbury & McGregor, 2005). When partnering with parents

and families to improve the literacy outcomes of Indigenous or marginalized students, principals establish "meaningful both-ways relationships" to "establish trust and reciprocity" with stakeholders (Riley & Webster, 2016, p. 152). While working with staff and stakeholders, the principal as lead literacy learner promotes a learning culture around literacy that generates a "collective vision and shared purpose" (ILA, 2019, p. 3).

A New Perspective

Current literature on principal literacy leadership provides information on the frameworks, LCK, and practices needed by literacy leaders to promote evidence-based literacy instruction in their schools (Brumley, 2010; Crum, 2008; Dowell et al., 2012; Houck & Novak, 2017; IRA, 2019; Murphy, 2004; Overholt & Szabocsik, 2013; Riley & Webster, 2016; Townsend et al., 2018). Additionally, researchers have published case studies on the formulation and implementation of principal literacy leadership frameworks internationally. Two of those case studies highlighted the role of the Principals as Literacy Leaders (PALL) and Principals as Literacy Leaders with Indigenous Communities (PALLIC) frameworks in Australia (Riley & Webster, 2016; Townsend et al., 2018). A case study from South Africa reported on the Literacy Leadership Project that focused on a professional development initiative for teachers to improve third-grade literacy outcomes (Makumbila & Rowland, 2016). However, the literature is silent on the application of an integrated instructional literacy leadership and CRSL framework in the United States.

An examination of a principal's instructional literacy leadership and CRSL knowledge and practices will help fill a gap in the literature. Given the lack of reading proficiency among low-income students of color (Hernandez, 2011), principals and other educational leaders will learn from the experience of a principal who succeeded in increasing literacy achievement in

third-grade students of color. Additionally, principals will benefit from evidence-based practices which lead to increased parental and family engagement in the literacy development of their children. Consistent application of principal literacy leadership knowledge and culturally responsive practices will empower principals to help all students develop literacy success, including students of color (Crum, 2008; Dowell et al., 2012; ILA, 2019). According to Brumley (2010), “successful school literacy efforts are vital to lifetime success and require capable and concerned leaders who are tirelessly committed to literacy education” (p. 209).

Summary

Public schools in the United States are culturally and linguistically diverse (Horsford et al., 2011; Murphy, 2004; Puzio et al., 2015; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2016). Although children from different racial and income levels have similar cognitive abilities up to age one, “a gap between students according to race exists in practically every measure and evaluation of academic achievement” (Horsford et al., 2011, p. 595). Ethnic minorities, like African American and Latino students, perform “worse on nearly every educational measure valued” by schools in the United States (Khalifa et al., 2016, p. 1279). With this in mind, effective literacy leaders are needed to lead diverse schools and recruit and retain culturally responsive teachers to improve literacy outcomes for students of color (Horsford et al., 2011; Khalifa et al., 2016). The relationship between instructional and CRSL practice and positive reading achievement for third-grade students of color is a gap in the literature.

3 METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is two-fold. The first purpose is to understand the principal literacy leadership practices used to implement a successful literacy plan that bolstered the outcomes of third-grade students of color. The second purpose is to determine how the principal formed partnerships with the parents and families of third-grade students of color to increase literacy outcomes.

This study employed a qualitative research design. The qualitative methodology is holistic, empirical, interpretive, and emphatic (Stake, 1995, pp. 47-48). The holistic characteristic of qualitative research allowed the researcher to view the interrelationships between the principal, the school, and the community. The study's empirical nature grounded the investigation within its natural habitat, the school. As an interpreter, the researcher viewed verbal and non-verbal communication through the biases of my impressions, experiences, and training. The researcher mitigated those biases by filtering the data through a constant comparative process, member checking, and triangulation to confirm new interpretations and new knowledge from "researcher-subject interactions" (Stake, 1995, p. 47). The representation of data was subjective. The researcher used inductive and deductive logic to frame emergent themes using my own cultural, social, and historical experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Through the emphatic characteristic of qualitative research, the researcher reflected on the "vicarious experiences" of the principal as she led literacy instruction within the school (Stake, 1995, p. 47).

This qualitative design used the intrinsic case study approach (Stake, 1995). The intrinsic case study presents a case with "an unusual or unique situation" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 99). The focus of the intrinsic case study is the case rather than issues surrounding the case (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1995). Thus, this case study approach focused on the unique actions of a

principal who has successfully led the school in reducing the reading achievement gap for students of color. Conversely, the instrumental case study was inappropriate for this study because it uses the case to understand the issue (Stake, 1995). The problem in this case was the reading achievement gap of third-grade students of color. Therefore, the researcher focused on the principal's behaviors and viewed any problems as a way of understanding the principal literacy leadership practices. The researcher chose the case study approach over the other qualitative approaches to aggregate an in-depth understanding of the principal as a literacy leader from multiple perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1995).

The researcher chose the Stake (1995) case study approach over the Yin (2016) and Merriam (Yazan, 2015) case study approaches. The Yin (2016) approach was eliminated because of its positivist epistemological stance. Positivism is a logical, cause-and-effect-oriented approach to research (Boblin et al., 2013; Creswell, & Poth, 2018). Rather than uncovering universal truths, the research questions enabled the researcher to uncover how the principal constructed literacy leadership knowledge and practices through social interactions with educators and community partners. Thus, constructivism was the epistemological stance of this research. Constructivism as an interpretivist stance allowed the researcher to seek understanding from the experiences of the participants (Boblin et al., 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, the researcher sought to understand the experiences of a principal in addition to how third-grade teachers and a parent of color viewed the literacy leadership of the principal. From a constructivist stance, the researcher viewed these experiences in a variety of contexts and complex perspectives (Boblin et al., 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Though Merriam (Yazan, 2015) and Stake (1995) use the constructivist epistemology, Merriam's (Yazan, 2015) case study approach did not allow for flexible

design. Conversely, the Stake (1995) case study approach allowed for flexible design and “progressive focusing” (p. 9). Progressive focusing allowed the researcher to gradually refine research questions and meanings as the study progressed (Stake, 1995; Stake, 2010).

The research questions guided the selection of the research design. Because the research questions do not lend themselves to objectively quantifying observations, no survey ascertained the perceptions of the participants on the principal's behaviors and interactions. The research questions were open-ended and sought to disclose the experiences that have been created by the principal, which resulted in increased literacy outcomes for third-grade students of color. The stories, the context, the interactions, the behaviors, and the experiences disclosed from the research questions were of greater interest to the researcher than generalized facts surrounding the increased outcomes. The research questions enabled the researcher to summarize, categorize, and interpret experiences from in-depth data collection. The research questions do not lend themselves to the confirmation of theories or hypotheses using statistical analysis. Because the qualitative methodology is more suitable for gathering insight from stories, context, interactions, behaviors, and experiences, the researcher did not utilize the quantitative research methodology for this inquiry (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study employed an integrated framework of instructional leadership and CRSL for literacy. Both frameworks have been positively linked to student academic outcomes (Hallinger, 2005; Hallinger, 2009; Khalifa et al., 2016; Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2017). Instructional leadership reflects an evolution in the responsibilities of building-level administrators. In addition to managing resources and processes, the instructional leader improves student outcomes by fostering quality teaching and learning (Brazer & Bauer, 2013; Day,

Gu, & Sammons, 2016; Hallinger, 2005; Hallinger, 2009; Neumerski, 2012; Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2017). Instructional leadership has been applied to literacy instruction (Dowell, Bickmore, & Hoewing, 2012; Murphy, 2004), creating a subset termed “literacy leadership” (Dowell et al., 2012, p. 7). Culturally responsive school leaders attempt to meet the needs of nondominant students who have been marginalized because of their race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, religion, language, and other factors (Horsford, Grosland, & Gunn, 2011; Khalifa, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016). Culturally responsive school leaders are “antioppressive, transformative, social justice leaders” who challenge exclusionary teaching and environments by celebrating students’ cultures and establishing relationships with students, families, and communities (Khalifa et al., 2016, p. 1278). Khalifa, Gooden, and Davis (2016) support the integration of instructional leadership with cultural responsiveness to improve student outcomes and reduce gaps for low-income students of color. Effective principal literacy leaders are needed to lead diverse schools and recruit and retain culturally responsive teachers to improve literacy outcomes for students of color (Horsford et al., 2011; Khalifa et al., 2016). Consequently, the role of the principal as a literacy leader is critical to the literacy success of all students from primary to postsecondary education (Crum, 2008).

Statement of Positionality

The researcher spent the first 15 years in education as a high school science teacher. During that time, the researcher encountered many students who read far below grade level. The students’ inability to read and comprehend complex texts impacted their ability to succeed in the classroom. Student illiteracy inspired the researcher to seek professional development to increase literacy content knowledge. Numerous courses on literacy led to a K-12 Reading Endorsement and the implementation of a literacy plan within the science content during the researcher’s term

as a content chairperson. After years of focus on adolescent literacy, the researcher attended to early literacy as a means to understand the reason for literacy gaps that plague students entering secondary education. Early literacy is the academic foundation for all learning. Without this foundation, students, especially impoverished students and students of color, are relegated to an on-going cycle of poverty and decreased opportunities for educational and career advancement. The researcher's quest to understand K -12 principal literacy leadership is driven by a desire to urge principals to increase their literacy leadership capacity. Principal literacy leadership would equip principals to make effective instructional decisions concerning literacy, thus opening the gates of educational and economic opportunity for all students.

Case/site selection

This case is a bounded system that studied a principal of an elementary school in the southeastern United States who made progress in improving student reading performance for students of color over a two-year period, from Fall 2017 to Spring 2019. The researcher used criterion sampling to identify elementary schools for this investigation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Criterion sampling seeks cases that meet a predetermined criterion for quality assurance (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The selection criteria were three-fold. First, the school was identified as a Title I school that maintained increased student reading outcomes for two years. Second, the student of color population in the school was 90 percent or greater. Finally, the percentage of third-grade students scoring at or above grade level in reading on the Spring 2019 state assessment was 55 percent or greater. While examining the Spring 2019 reading assessment data for the elementary schools that met the first two criteria, 55 percent was chosen as the minimum percentage for reading proficiency to reflect that the majority of third-grade students demonstrated reading proficiency on the state assessment.

After examining 2019-2020 Title I school data and the 2019 state reading assessment data, the researcher found seven elementary schools within a Southeastern state that met the selection criteria. From the list of seven eligible schools, the researcher chose an elementary school within her school district. This selection afforded the researcher insider membership status, which increased the likelihood of the district Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval and school principal consent. Insider research status refers to the research conducted within a population in which the researcher shares “an identity, language, and experiential base with the study participants” (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 58). Insider membership status automatically afforded the researcher “a level of trust and openness” that would not be readily available to an outsider (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 58). Dwyer and Buckle (2009) stated,

The complete membership role gives researchers a certain amount of legitimacy and/or stigma (Adler & Adler, 1987). This insider role status frequently allows researchers more rapid and more complete acceptance by their participants. Therefore, participants are typically more open with researchers so that there may be a greater depth to the data gathered. (p. 58)

According to state data, Pinecrest is an urban Title I elementary school with a population of 523 students. Students of color made up 98.5 of the school population. Within the students of color population, 93.9 percent were African American, 2.7 percent were Hispanic/Latino, 0.2 percent were American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 1.7 percent were multiracial. To protect the school, the researcher removed specific citations to the state and the school. Citations to state documents are available upon request.

Prior to introducing the research to the principal of Pinecrest, JoAnna Howard (a pseudonym), the researcher sent a letter that explained the research to the school district's IRB committee. The researcher requested permission to research within the district and the school. After receiving school district and university IRB approvals (see Appendix A), the researcher sent Principal Howard an email invitation to participate in the study. After the principal accepted the invitation, a confirmation email was sent to her with tentative dates for school-based observations and interviews. After email and cell phone communications, Principal Howard requested virtual interviews and document reviews due to COVID-19 pandemic protocols. Thus, the university proposal document was amended to remove in-person observations, interviews, and document reviews due to the school district precautions. Because the school district IRB document did not require the same degree of specificity, no amendment was required. Dates and times for the introductory meeting and interviews were adjusted to accommodate the schedules of the principal and her staff.

Participant selection

A purposive sample was used to select subgroups of educators for multiple perspectives and comparisons (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Seven educators were selected for the study. In addition to interviewing Principal Howard, the researcher invited the assistant principal, academic coach, the media specialist, and three third-grade teachers to participate in the study. Educator interviews helped the researcher determine the perceived extent to which the principal's literacy leadership influenced student literacy success at the school. Using methodological triangulation, response comparisons between the principal and the other educators will serve to validate the perception of different stakeholders of the principal's actions (Stake, 1995).

At the introductory meeting, the researcher explained the study to educators using the informed consent form and answered questions. Then, the educators who agreed to participate in the study signed the informed consent (see Appendix B). Educators also completed a demographic survey (see Appendix E). The signed educator informed consent forms were emailed to the researcher in Portable Document Format (PDF). The educator demographic survey was completed using a Microsoft (MS) Form. The MS Form results were downloaded on a MS Excel spreadsheet. The demographic survey indicated that five of the seven participants have spent more than 10 years in their current position. Two participants have spent up to three years in their current position: the media specialist and the academic coach. All participants have advanced degrees in education. Three participants hold a Master's Degree, and four hold an Educational Specialist Degree. Five of the seven participants were African American, and two participants were Caucasian. Three of the participants, two third-grade teachers and the assistant principal, indicated that they had specialized reading training, such as a reading endorsement or Master's Degree. Of the seven participants, the media specialist was the only educator who had received culturally responsive pedagogy training.

Snowball and criterion sampling were used to choose six parents for this study. Snowball sampling "identifies a case of interest from people who know people" who have information regarding the case (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 159). The purpose of the parent or guardian interviews was to ascertain the extent to which the principal engaged parents and families in the literacy instruction of the students, which is a behavior of CRSL. Criterion sampling seeks cases that meet a predetermined criterion for quality assurance (Creswell & Poth, 2018). After completing the survey at the initial meeting, the researcher asked the third-grade teachers to collaborate in choosing six parents of color who met the selection criteria. The parent or guardian must (1)

have a student who scored at or above grade level in reading status on the Spring 2019 state reading assessment; (2) reside in a low-income family; (3) be African-American, Hispanic, or Native American; and (4) represent various levels of engagement in school activities. The researcher asked one teacher to contact the parents to provide continuity in the introduction and explanation of the study. Using the informed consent form for parents as a script, the teacher explained the purpose of the research and gave the parents the researcher's name and contact information (see Appendix C). Though six parents were invited, one parent agreed to participate in the study. Therefore, the parent focus group that was planned became a virtual parent interview. A third-grade teacher sent the parent consent form to the researcher in a PDF format. Then, the researcher asked the teacher to have the parent contact her using the contact information on the informed consent. Once the parent and the researcher were in communication through email, a meeting date and time were set for the researcher to further explain the contents of the informed consent form, answer any questions, and set a date and time for the virtual parent interview (see Appendix H).

Procedures

This case study allowed the researcher to perform an in-depth investigation of the principal as a literacy leader, which resulted in improved third-grade student literacy outcomes. This study utilized an intrinsic case study approach. The intrinsic case study approach fostered an in-depth investigation of the literacy leadership practices of a principal using (1) multiple data sources; (2) a multi-level approach to collect data from the principal, assistant principal, academic coach, three third-grade teachers, and a parent familiar with the principal's practices and modes of family engagement; and (3) data triangulation to confirm emergent themes. The data collection methods included virtual interviews and a document review.

Interviews

Prior to the educator interviews, all educators completed a demographic survey using MS Forms. An interview protocol of eight semi-structured interview questions was used to interview the principal, assistant principal, academic coach, media specialist, and three third-grade teachers. The questions focused on the instructional and culturally responsive practices that define the principal's literacy leadership, and the interview questions were differentiated by the educator's position. Each educator participated in a one-hour interview and member checked the interview transcripts (Stake, 1995; Stake, 2010). The time required for the interview, follow-up questions, and member checking did not exceed two hours over a two-month period. The interview protocols are included in the appendix (see Appendices G and H).

The educator interviews were recorded virtually using MS Teams. Though the interviews were scheduled for one hour, no interview exceeded 32 minutes. During the interviews, the researcher observed body language cues and facial expressions that may hint of the presence of "multiple realities" and "different viewpoints" (Stake, 1995, p. 53). The researcher explored those cues during the interview to ask follow-up questions. Impressions and observations were recorded in a research journal after the interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1995). The educator interviews were transcribed using a MS Stream transcription record. The researcher listened to the original recording of the interviews and corrected the transcription record until an accurate transcription was produced. The transcript also indicated areas where network glitches occurred during the recording. The transcript was submitted to each participant for member checking using MS OneDrive. In MS OneDrive, the document was enabled for editing and shared with the participant. The researcher asked each participant to verify the accuracy of the

interview transcript with a verification statement. The verification statement read, “I, participant’s name, have read the transcript and verify that it reflects my views and opinions.” After typing the verification statement into the interview transcript, participants were asked to initial and date the statement.

After interviewing the educators, the researcher interviewed a third-grade parent of color. The interview was scheduled for one hour; however, the interview lasted less than 30 minutes. The researcher used eight semi-structured questions to determine the degree to which the principal engaged parents, families, and communities in the literacy learning of the students in the school (see Appendix H). The parent was asked to member check the interview transcript. The time required for the interview, follow-up questions, and member checking did not exceed two hours over a two-month period. The perspective provided by the parent of the principal’s literacy leadership aided in triangulating the data.

The parent interview was recorded on a video conferencing platform called Zoom. Though the parent and the researcher had a Gmail account, the Google Hangout conferencing platform did not record the conference. Therefore, Zoom was used to record the interview. The drawback of the Zoom platform was it did not produce a transcript. Thus, the Zoom interview was transcribed using Google Voice Typing. The researcher listened to the original recording of the parent interview and corrected the transcription record until an accurate transcription was produced. The transcript also indicated areas where network glitches occurred during the recording. The transcript was submitted to parent using Google Drive, where the document was enabled for editing and shared with the parent. The parent was also asked to include a verification statement at the end of her edited transcript. Though corrections could be made in Google Drive,

the parent chose to download the transcript, edit it, then return the transcript to the researcher through Gmail. The parent attached two pictures of herself and her student in the email.

Document Reviews

The researcher conducted a document review to assess how the principal engaged families and communities in literacy instruction and support (Jones et al., 2019). Accessing open records from the state department of education website, the researcher obtained the (1) list of 2019-2020 Title I schools, (2) Spring 2019 assessment data for Grade 3 Reading, and (3) school demographics. The public records were used to establish criterion for eligible schools and select a site for study.

The school-based document review entailed a review of online documents, websites, and pictures. To ensure access to these documents, the researcher requested documents in the confirmation email to Principal Howard to define how the documents would inform the study. The principal indicated that all documents were virtual and directed the researcher to the school's website, newsletter, and social media platform. Facebook, YouTube, an online faculty and staff newsletter, the school handbook, and archived Continuous Improvement Plans (CIP) for SY2018 and SY2019 provided information on literacy, cultural responsiveness, and parent, family, and community engagement. The data from the documents were recorded by the researcher in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects could not be readily ascertained directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, the researcher did not contact the subjects, and the researcher did not re-identify subjects. The documents were "used to supplement interviews" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 162). The researcher reviewed the documents, logging communication related to literacy, cultural responsiveness, and parent, family, and community engagement. The researcher downloaded communication artifacts including post descriptions, announcements,

invitations, pictures, video, and information bookmarks. These artifacts were dated and recorded in a digital document review log, which was included in the research notebook and audit trail (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Database

The researcher had exclusive access to all research data. During the data collection period, all digital data was stored on a password-protected internal hard-drive and two online document storage sites: Google Drive and MS OneDrive. A locked file cabinet stored a hard copy of the research journal, interview protocols, and school documents (Cabinet A). A separate locked file cabinet (Cabinet B) housed the informed consent forms. The researcher transcribed all interview data within a day or two after collection. Participants were asked to member check the transcript for accuracy (Stake, 1998; Stake, 2010). Member checking served as an additional validation method (Stake, 1998; Stake, 2010). If identifiable data was inadvertently collected during the data collection period, the researcher did not transcribe that data. The link to any identifiable data will be kept for twelve months following the conclusion of the research.

Data Analysis

The researcher considered three data analysis methods for this case study: Yin (2002), Creswell and Poth (2016), and Stake (1995). The Yin (2002) data analysis method supported a positivist stance, combined evidence from quantitative and qualitative data, and required structured analytic guidelines. Because the Yin (2002) epistemological stance differed from the researcher's stance, the Yin (2002) data analysis methodology was eliminated from consideration. The research questions enabled the researcher to uncover literacy leadership knowledge and practices through social interactions. Thus, the researcher chose a data analysis methodology aligned with the constructivist stance of this study. The Creswell and Poth (2016) data analysis

spiral and the Stake (1995) categorical aggregation were considered for their constructivist data analysis designs for a qualitative case study. However, the data analysis spiral provided more structure than desired. The researcher has career experience recognizing patterns, establishing consistency, and determining connections between data points; therefore, the researcher chose categorical aggregation as the data analysis method for this study. The Stake (1995) data analysis methodology gave “precedence to intuition and impression” over the guidance provided from a structured analysis protocol (Yazan, 2015, p. 145).

The data analysis occurred simultaneously with data collection (Stake, 1998; Stake, 2010). The researcher examined the interview transcripts before conducting the document review due to the time constraints detailed in the IRB. The participants agreed to a timeframe of two hours over two months. Therefore, the researcher prioritized interactions with the participants. The researcher asked the participants member check the interview drafts to increase accuracy and trustworthiness (Stake, 1995; Stake, 2010). After the participants member checked the interview transcripts, the researcher began the first round of analysis.

Coding Guide and Data Spreadsheet. During round one of analysis, the researcher read the interview transcripts looking for references related to literacy and cultural responsiveness in content knowledge, school culture, and collaborative culture. The researcher constructed a coding guide with the pre-established codes, code descriptions, examples of indicators to ensure consistent identification of codes across all data sources (See Appendix I). The researcher generated the codes from the emergent themes found in Dowell et al. (2012) and Khalifa et al. (2016). The pre-established codes for instructional literacy leadership aligned to effective practice indicators found in the Dowell et al. (2012) study (Stake, 1995). Each instructional literacy leadership theme was assigned a alphabetic code: Content Knowledge of Literacy (CKL), Knowledge

of Best Practices Spanning Developmental Age Ranges and Content Areas (KBP), Provide School Structures to Support Literacy (SSL), Literacy Environment and Management Systems (EMS), and Developing a Literacy Mission (DLM) and Monitoring and Evaluation of Literacy Instruction (MEI) (Dowell et al., 2012, p. 12). The pre-established codes for CRSL aligned to indicators of effective behavior found in the Khalifa et al. (2016) study. The CRSL codes are Critical Self-Reflection (CSR); Develops Culturally Responsive Teachers (CRT); Culturally Responsive/Inclusive School Environment (CRSE), and Engages Students, Parents, and Indigenous Contexts (ESPC) (Khalifa et al., 2016, pp. 1283 – 1284). The codes above served in coding the interview transcripts and the document review. Using the same coding system for each data collection approach helped the researcher organize themes, interpret data, and ensure that the meaning was accurate (Stake, 1995; Stake, 2010). The researcher did not identify additional codes prior to data collection. However, one code emerged during data analysis, Celebration of Literacy Growth (CLG). The code, CLG, captured the prominent role celebration played in the school and community to motivate students to accomplish, or exceed, their literacy goals.

The coding guide was revised during the iterative process to ensure that codes reflected the themes used in the literature, provide descriptions and indicators for all codes based on themes found in the literature, and provide notes that allowed the researcher to understand nuances in meaning between ambiguous themes. First, the researcher changed six codes to reflect the themes used by Dowell et al. (2012) and Khalifa et al. (2016). For example, the code Literacy Mission (LM) changed to Developing a Literacy Mission (DLM); and the code for Engages Students, Parents, and Indigenous Contexts, previously ECRC, was changed to ESPC. The new codes clarified the essence of the code for the researcher. Second, the researcher added code descriptions and indicators to all codes. The descriptions defined the parameters of the code. The

indicators provided observable behaviors of the code. For example, the DLM code description defines the knowledge and skill needed to develop a shared literacy mission. The DLM indicator provides observable behaviors for this code, such as establishing relationships and the ability to work collaboratively to promote the organizational mission. Last, the coding guide was revised to remove ambiguous descriptions. For example, Literacy Environment and Management Systems (EMS) and Knowledge of Best Practices Spanning Developmental Age Ranges and Content Areas (KBP) had an assessment component in the literature. However, EMS referred to the knowledge of formal and informal assessment systems and the knowledge of classroom environmental organization optimized for literacy learning. In contrast, KBP referred to formal and informal assessment data to plan instructional strategies that met student developmental needs (Dowell et al., 2012). The revised coding guide provided a clear outline for coding the data sources' themes (See Appendix I). The researcher referred to the coding guide often during the coding and analysis processes.

Categorical Aggregation. The coding guide also facilitated categorical aggregation. Categorical aggregation categorizes case impressions, instances, and properties of interest to the researcher (Stake, 1995; Stake, 2010). Aggregation of impressions allowed the researcher to categorize the data spreadsheet by theme, ascertain the major themes in the data due to frequency, document patterns and relationships among the themes, and ascribe meaning to impressions of the case (Stake, 1995; Stake, 2010). After the researcher identified impressions in the data sources related to the coding guide descriptions and indicators, the statements were summarized or copied into an MS Excel spreadsheet, which the researcher used to manage and organize the codes. The spreadsheet utilized six headings: “Code,” “Date,” “Data Source,” “Participant,” “Statement/Indicator,” and “Notes.” When the researcher made an entry into the spreadsheet, the

entry was coded and alphabetized by code. After alphabetizing the codes, the researcher color-blocked the cells unique to each code for easy identification. The “Date” column identified the interview date, date of the document, or date of the social media posting. The dates captured events during the timeframe of interest to this case, from Fall 2017 to Spring 2019, until the present. The “Data Source” column named the source of the impression, whether interview or document source. The “Participant” column of the spreadsheet used the pseudonyms of the educator and parent participants. Document sources did not require a participant. The “Statement/Indicator” column contained impressions, excerpts or summaries from source interviews or documents. Finally, the “Notes” column contained memos or meanings derived from the data. All MS Excel columns were set on a “Filter” mode to allow for sorting.

The researcher sorted the codes alphabetically to facilitate categorical aggregation. Color-blocking allowed the researcher to identify codes, aggregate frequencies, and identify patterns and recurrent themes throughout the data (Stake, 1995). According to Stake (1995), “The search for meaning often is a search for patterns, for consistency, for consistency with certain conditions, which we call ‘correspondence’” (p. 78). The researcher searched for correspondence across data sources through the iterative process of reviewing, sorting, pattern-seeking, and re-grouping (Stake, 1995).

The researcher reviewed interview transcripts and documents during four rounds of analysis. During each round, the researcher read through the data sources and asked reflective questions that fostered data interpretation (Stake, 1995). Reflective questions included,

- “Does this source contain evidence of a particular code?”
- “Is this a behavior of the principal and/or the interviewee?”
- “Does the principal influence this behavior or school practice?”

- “Does this practice indicate the promotion of literacy content knowledge?”
- “Does this practice indicate the establishment of a literacy culture?”
- “Does this practice contribute to a literacy culture?”
- “Does this practice promote collaboration between admin/teachers, admin/parents/community, school/parents/community?”

During each iterative round, the researcher used the data spreadsheet to delete duplicate entries, create new entries for impressions that reflected more than one code, re-code misaligned codes using the coding guide, resort and color-block new codes, and enter memos. The researcher also transferred handwritten memos and impressions from printed copies of the interview transcripts to the data spreadsheet. As interpretations were aggregated and sorted, the researcher looked for emergent themes, patterns, and new categories. One additional theme emerged during categorical aggregation, which was not addressed in the literature on principal literacy leadership: the celebration of literacy growth. The researcher coded Celebration of Literacy Growth, CLG.

Direct Interpretation. Finally, the researcher organized the data visually and thematically to look for interrelational themes. To find additional patterns from single pieces of data or instances, the researcher used the direct interpretation process (Stake, 1995). Direct interpretation pulls apart and puts together meaning within instances, allowing the researcher to create “new meanings” and determine the correspondence between codes among instances (Stake, 1995, p. 74). To accomplish this process, the researcher taped each research question and its observable practices to a wall. The lists of observable practices for integrated principal literacy leadership enabled the researcher to align the data analysis spreadsheet's observable practices to the correct research question. The researcher then added a line of data from the data analysis spreadsheet, along with its code, to individual index cards. The index cards with data and coding were called

"data cards." Using the list of observable practices as a guide, the researcher taped the data cards to the wall under the appropriate research question. The researcher placed the data cards with the same code in columns to determine major themes within each research question. The researcher duplicated data cards when the practice was applicable to more than one research question. Then, the duplicated data cards were placed under all research questions that contained that practice. Under a given research question, some codes appeared more than others. The researcher determined the dominance of the code by the frequency of its appearance. For example, if DLM appeared more frequently under a research question than all other codes, DLM was considered the major code of the research question. When viewing individual data cards, the researcher recorded impressions regarding interrelationships among themes on paper, then transcribed the notes into an MS Word document under the aligned research question. During data analysis, the categorical aggregation process viewed the data for overall themes. Conversely, the direct interpretation process viewed the data from a granular or individual instance without considering multiple instances (Stake, 1995).

Ethical Considerations

During the data collection process, ethical concerns were always considered. Before conducting the study, IRB approval was received. The participants were respected, and their identity was protected by using pseudonyms. The researcher was careful to be forthright in all interactions and communications to avoid deception and avoided being a distraction or sharing personal reflections during data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher's insider status enabled the researcher and the participants to have a relaxed and enjoyable conversation during the interviews. However, the researcher was always mindful of her role as an investigator. All digital data was stored in an internal hard drive and two web-based storage systems: Google Drive and

One Drive (Stake, 1995). To secure the data, the storage systems were password protected. All hard copies of data were stored in a research journal that was stored in a locked file cabinet. This study was deemed to be one of minimal risk to participants and the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research was not greater than any ordinarily encountered in daily life, or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009).

Trustworthiness. Trustworthiness determines the degree of rigor or confidence in a naturalistic study (Connelly, 2016; Shenton, 2004). The researcher established trustworthiness in the study through credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Connelly, 2016; Shenton, 2004). First, credibility demonstrates confidence in the truthfulness of the findings (Connelly, 2016; Shenton, 2004). Methodological triangulation, member checking, and iterative questioning were used to support the credibility of the interpretations in the study (Connelly, 2016; Shenton, 2004; Stake, 1995). The researcher utilized “methodological triangulation” to confirm interpretations obtained from interviews, the focus group, and document reviews (Stake, 1995, p. 114). According to Stake (1995), “With multiple approaches within a single study, we are likely to illuminate or nullify some extraneous influences” (p. 114). Findings that illuminate or nullify meanings will improve the overall quality of the research (Stake, 2010). Member checking was used to triangulate observations made during interviews and their interpretations (Stake, 1995). During member checking participants verified drafts of interviews. As the researcher read through the interview transcripts and documents several times, reflective questions guided the interpretation of data (Stake, 1995; Stake, 2010). Iterative questioning supports credibility (Connelly, 2016; Shenton, 2004). Second, the dependability of the data is its consistency over time (Connelly, 2016; Shenton, 2004). Dependability will allow future researchers to align

the analysis process to “accepted standards” for the intrinsic case study approach (Korsjens & Moser, 2018, p. 122). Dependability was fostered by the detailed description of research actions taken from the start of the study to the completion of the study (Korsjens & Moser, 2018). Dependability in this study was achieved by using overlapping data collection methods and an in-depth journaling of processes (Connelly, 2016; Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Shenton, 2004). The use of interviews and a document review represent overlapping methods. The detailed audit trail provides a future researcher with the information needed to ascertain the transparency of the research process (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Third, confirmability is the confidence that the findings represent the participants’ views rather than the researcher’s biases (Connelly, 2016; Shenton, 2004). The researcher established confirmability by member checking; admitting beliefs and assumptions; acknowledging any limitations in the study; and providing a detailed audit trail with processes, reflections, and memos (Connelly, 2016; Shenton, 2004). Finally, transferability is the applicability of the findings to similar contexts, settings, and participants. The researcher established transferability by providing readers with a detailed description of the context, the location, and the participants. However, the anonymity of the location, school, principal, and other educators was maintained through pseudonyms. The detailed descriptions and accounts will resonate with those with similar inclinations and enable the reader to generalize the interpretations (Connelly, 2016; Shenton, 2004). Transferability will be impeded by the small participant sample size (Shenton, 2004).

Expectations

In the 2019 state assessment data, more than 58.1 percent of the students in Pinecrest Academy scored at or above the established reading proficiency for their grade level stretch band. The researcher expects to find that Principal Howard exhibited principal literacy leadership practices

that combined instructional literacy leadership with CRSL for literacy. Aligned with this integrated framework, the researcher expects to find that Principal Howard (1) is able to make instructional decisions concerning literacy based on her knowledge of literacy curriculum, assessment; (2) develops and advocates a clear vision and mission of quality literacy instruction for all students; (3) supervises and assesses culturally responsive and inclusive literacy instructional programs; (4) empowers the instructional staff and stakeholders through on-going professional development; and (5) promotes a print-rich and culturally diverse literacy learning environment (Khalifa et al., 2016; Plaatjies, 2019). The researcher expects to find that Principal Howard is a “capable and concerned” leader who is “tirelessly committed to literacy education” (Brumley, 2010, p. 209).

4 FINDINGS

United States schools have increased in cultural and linguistic diversity (Horsford et al., 2011; Murphy, 2004; Puzio et al., 2015; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2016; Teale et al., 2018). Yet, the diversity between these students and their dominant peers goes beyond the cultural and linguistic. Children of color, who come from low-income families, disproportionately lag behind their White and affluent peers in reading proficiency (Fiester, 2013; Hernandez, 2011; Salloum et al., 2017). Because high-quality early literacy instruction can mitigate poverty's impact on students of color (Hempenstall & Buckingham, 2016), the role of the principal literacy leader is crucial in reducing reading achievement gaps by linking the language and culture of diverse students to literacy instruction (Fiester, 2013; Horsford et al., 2011; Keehne et al., 2018; Khalifa, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016; Riley & Webster, 2016; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2016). Because research supports the use of culturally responsive and differentiated teaching and learning for literacy instruction (Keehne et al., 2018; Murphy, 2004; Puzio et al., 2015), the equitable and culturally sensitive practices of the culturally responsive school leader will be explored in the case study. The integrated principal literacy leadership framework of this case fuses the teaching and learning focus of instructional leadership, or leadership for learning, with the equitable and inclusive leadership of CRSL (Brazer & Bauer, 2013; Fiester, 2013; Hallinger, 2005; Hallinger, 2009; Horsford et al., 2011; Keehne et al., 2018; Khalifa, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016; Neumerski, 2012; Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2017; Riley & Webster, 2016; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2016).

The findings in this chapter will discuss the integrated principal literacy leadership knowledge and practices of Joanna Howard (a pseudonym), an elementary school principal in the southeastern United States. During the First Cycle coding progress, the researcher assigned ten

pre-established descriptive codes to portions of the data representing the knowledge and practices attributed to principal literacy leaders and CRSL in the literature (Saldaña, 2013). The researcher derived the pre-established codes from the literacy leadership work of Dowell et al. (2012) and the CRSL work of Khalifa et al. (2016). The integrated codes were (1) Developing a Literacy Mission (DLM), (2) Literacy Environment and Management Systems (EMS), (3) Knowledge of Best Practices for Developmental Ages and Content (KBP), (4) Content Knowledge for Literacy (CKL), (5) Monitoring and Evaluation of Literacy Instruction (MEI), (6) School Structures to Support Literacy (SSL), (7) Culturally Responsive/Inclusive School Environment (CRSE), (8) Develops Culturally Responsive Teachers (CRT), (9) Critically Self-Reflects Leadership Behaviors (CSR), and (10) Engages Students, Parents, and Indigenous Contexts (ESPC). One code emerged from the First Cycle coding process: Celebration of Literacy Growth (CLG).

After four rounds of reviewing, reassigning, and reconfiguring the First Cycle codes, four broad categories emerged during the Second Cycle coding process (Saldaña, 2013): Communicating the Vision, Monitoring the Vision, Building Consensus, and Celebrating Growth. The researcher observed three cross-cutting themes within the four broad categories: Fostering Trust, Building Capacity, and Supportive School Structures. Each cross-cutting theme was a contributing factor to the existence of the four broad categories. Additionally, the existence of the four broad categories was dependent on the interdependence of the cross-cutting themes (see Figure 1). The absence of a single cross-cutting theme would fail to produce the desired outcome: positive literacy outcomes for third-grade students of color.

Figure 1*Broad Category and Crosscutting Theme Matrix*

Crosscutting Themes	Broad Categories			
	Communicating the Vision (CV)	Monitoring the Vision (MV)	Building Consensus (BC)	Celebrating Literacy Growth (CLG)
Fostering Trust (FT)	FT + CV	FT + MV	FT + BC	FT + CLG
Building Capacity (BC _{AP})	BC _{AP} + CV	BC _{AP} + MV	BC _{AP} + BC	BC _{AP} + CLG
School Structures (SS)	SS + CV	SS + MV	SS + BC	SS + CLG

Note: Descriptions of practices and provisions intersect the Broad Categories and the Crosscutting Themes of the matrix.

Before describing the knowledge and practices that Principal Howard exhibited within the cross-cutting themes, the researcher will describe Pinecrest Academy's context, provide demographic information on the educators, and provide the background that led to the path to proficiency.

Pinecrest Academy

Pinecrest Academy (a pseudonym), the site of this case study, is an urban Title I elementary school in the southeastern United States. The Academy has over 500 students. Of those students, the student of color population is 98.5 percent: 93.9 percent are African American, 2.7 percent are Hispanic/Latino, 0.2 percent are American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 1.7 percent are multiracial. One hundred percent of the Pinecrest Academy students are economically disadvantaged. In 2020, Pinecrest Academy received a state honor for improving all students' academic performance over two years on the statewide assessment, from Fall 2017 to Spring 2019. In July 2019, the state reported that over 55 percent of the third-grade students at Pinecrest

scored at or above proficiency on the statewide reading assessment. In the five years before 2019, the reading achievement of third-grade students did not exceed 26 percent.¹

Principal Howard and Her Staff

Principal Joanna Howard (a pseudonym) is the subject of this case study. Principal Howard is an African-American female. She has been an educator for 27 years, serving eight years as a teacher, five years as an assistant principal, and 14 years as Pinecrest Academy's principal. Serving as principal of Pinecrest allowed Howard to serve the community in which she grew up.²

Principal Howard's highest degree is a Specialist Degree in Education. She has a background in English Language Arts (ELA), spending eight years as an eighth-grade ELA teacher and earning a National Board Certification in Early Adolescent ELA. Her profile asserts her commitment to children's literacy. Though Principal Howard has a background that would support the instructional dimension of an integrated principal literacy leadership framework, the educator demographic survey indicated that Principal Howard had no specialized training in CRSL that would support the equity dimension of the framework.³

Six Pinecrest Academy educators participated in this case study: an African-American assistant principal, an African-American academic coach, a Caucasian media specialist, three third-grade teachers, two African-American and one Caucasian. Four of the six educators have held their current positions for over ten years. In comparison, two educators are new to the Academy, with less than four years in their current positions: the media specialist and the academic coach. All of the educators hold advanced degrees in education. Three educators hold Master's Degrees, and three hold Specialist Degrees. Three educators have specialized training in reading. Two third-grade teachers have Master's Degrees in Reading, and the assistant principal has a

reading endorsement. Of the seven educators who participated in the case study, only the media specialist has training in culturally responsive pedagogy.

The researcher had planned to use a parent focus group to ascertain their perspective on the principal's family engagement practices. Although a teacher invited six parents who met the selection criteria, only one parent consented to participate in the study. This parent was an African-American female whose daughter was in the third-grade. Thus, the parental views reflected in this case study represent her perspective and not the consensus of a parent focus group.

Planning the Path to Proficiency

In 2014, only 25.8 percent of the third-grade students at Pinecrest Academy scored proficient, with a Lexile of 650 or above, on the state assessment.⁴ The path to reading proficiency was outlined in the Academy's continuous improvement plans (CIPs). In a study that examined policy and practice for literacy leadership, Murphy (2004) observed that effective schools set reading as a priority in their CIPs. The researcher examined three available CIPs from Pinecrest Academy. Because the researcher had insider status, she was familiar with the school district's school improvement planning process. The researcher also knew that each principal is intimately involved in CIP formulation, monitoring, and reporting. Thus, Principal Howard led the CIP process for Pinecrest Academy.

Each new CIP added a layer of literacy supports for teachers and students. In the Academy's 2015-2016 CIP, the plan noted action steps to increase professional learning around literacy topics, like guided reading and vocabulary instruction, to provide struggling students with reading interventions, and to form a team to implement the school literacy plan. In subsequent years, literacy goals increased in prominence among the initiatives and action steps of the CIP. The 2016-2017 CIP was unavailable. However, the 2017-2018 CIP referenced the need to

strengthen the school literacy plan. The CIP team added action steps which included writing across the curriculum; increasing reading and rigor across grade levels; providing reading intervention instructors; creating a structure for students to track their reading progress; sponsoring communicative contests, including oratorical and writing contests; and providing professional development in reading and writing instruction. By 2018-2019, the CIP added a layer of literacy support and student ownership. The action steps included having students set and monitor their reading goals, providing students with feedback on writing, motivating and incentivizing student reading, increasing reading across the curriculum, providing professional development that focused on support for struggling readers, and conducting learning walks to establish a common understanding of effective instruction.⁵

With the path to proficiency as a backdrop, the researcher will examine how the principal's knowledge and practices influenced the four broad categories that emerged from the data by discussing three cross-cutting themes: (1) Fostering Trust, (2) Building Capacity, and (3) Supportive School Structures.

Theme 1: Fostering Trust

Using the five characteristics of trust (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000) as a guide, the researcher viewed the actions of Principal Howard as fostering trust given the following evidence. According to Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000), "Trust is one party's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is (a) benevolent, (b) reliable, (c) competent, (d) honest, and (e) open" (p. 556). Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2014) assert that principals who consistently exhibit these traits "across time and settings are more likely to earn and maintain the trust of their faculty than those who do not" (p. 70). Principal Howard fostered

trust by communicating a vision, monitoring the vision, building consensus, and celebrating literacy growth.

Communicating a Vision

Principal Howard communicated a consistent and continuous vision for literacy and cultural sensitivity to teachers, students, parents, and community stakeholders. Her vision promoted reading as an essential skill for a successful life. This vision was communicated verbally, in print, and across social media platforms. In the words of Principal Howard,

My vision is that all students make growth. . . . But if I can take that and tease that out a little deeper . . . I want the students to be able to be proficient readers, definitely by the time that they are in third-grade. I've just followed the goal the school district has set, which I think is a great goal; but I think if we're all working towards making sure all of our students are reading on grade level that that will just . . . raise the bar for everybody. But you know, I know everyone doesn't learn the same way. And some of our children come to us with challenges. So, if they make growth, individual and personal growth, that is really good. (J. Howard, personal communication, October 31, 2020)

The educators and parent interviewed unanimously confirmed correspondence in Principal Howard's vision for reading proficiency and academic rigor at each grade level. According to third-grade teacher Tracey Bing (a pseudonym),

[Principal Howard's] vision for teaching and learning is that all students are capable of learning. She believes that all students can be grade-level ready by the end of the year, and she wants all the kids to have that connection and love with reading. So, she wants that to be a priority for all of her teachers, as well as for them to instill that love of reading to their students. . . . [A] lot of things we do as far as our instruction is centered, of

course, around reading. That includes any type of goals that we may set. We're constantly talking with our kids about the importance of reading and how it's just a life skill that we need in order to be successful. . . . [Principal Howard] stresses this a lot . . . to get the kids career and college ready. And reading is one of those things that they will need. (T. Bing, personal communication, November 18, 2020)

Bing continues by stating that the vision of reading proficiency is at the forefront of Principal Howard's communications, and she expects her teachers to communicate that vision as well.

[Principal Howard] communicates our vision through our staff meetings, any type of professional development. That's one of the things that she starts off with each time she meets with us. She tells us her vision. And it's just kind of broadcast throughout . . . I mean she talks about reading with the kids online. It's really truly apparent in every day, all-day talk. Anything we do as far as like programs that we may have, any engagements that the students may have, it's pretty much apparent in everything that she does. She wants us to do as well. (T. Bing, personal communication, November 18, 2020)

According to third-grade teacher Dorothy Chips (a pseudonym), Principal Howard wanted teachers and students to share her goals stating,

First of all, she believes that all students can learn; and she encourages us to use rigor in the classroom. And . . . she just believes that we need to push our students and challenge them to reach the goals that they set for themselves and that we have set for them. [She] wants all students reading on grade level, so that's one of our biggest goals . . . for us, as classroom teachers as well as for our students. (D. Chips, personal communication, November 12, 2020)

Parents are also familiar with the vision. Parent Anita Montgomery (a pseudonym) simply stated the vision, "Reading is mandatory at that school. . . . Reading is mandatory." (A. Montgomery, personal communication, November 25, 2020)

Interviews and document reviews indicated that Principal Howard's vision was to establish an environment that cultivated a love of reading and help students become proficient communicators and problem solvers. Principal Howard communicated her vision consistently and continuously to all internal and external stakeholders. The reliability, honesty, and openness in which she communicated the vision built trust in her stakeholders.

Monitoring the Vision

Principal Howard monitored the vision by studying qualitative and quantitative data and collaborating with teachers, students, parents, and community partners. Howard described the use of focus walks and other data to monitor literacy implementation.

So we do literacy walks or focus walks. We try to do one of those, at least in a formal way, once a month. . . . I monitor progress assessment data. I also look at our lesson plans. Make sure our teachers are on target with the pacing guide established by the district. And . . . I do attend some of the collaborative planning sessions and also some training sessions and just through the focus walks, just want to make sure that teachers are implementing what they're learning. (J. Howard, personal communication, October 31, 2020)

Monitoring the vision was a shared responsibility. The literacy team, composed of the principal, general education teachers, special education teachers, the academic coach, and the media specialist, looked at literacy from different perspectives. The team created a schoolwide plan with literacy activities and set goals adapted to Pinecrest students' needs. The literacy goal

was that every student read on, above, or as close to grade level as possible. The team monitored the literacy data while considering what worked and what did not work.

All school activities revolved around the school's literacy goals. Schoolwide goals influenced classroom goals, which influenced students' personal goals. The literacy team and teachers monitored progress toward those goals using universal screener data, assessment data, reading comprehension data, and word counts. Schoolwide, grade-level, and classroom data were displayed on public scoreboards throughout the school and outside of classroom doors. The schoolwide display of data reminded students and adults of literacy goals and progress toward those goals. According to Dorothy Chips, "Students see the same goal throughout the building from their notebook all the way up to the top of the hall. Every adult in the building knows the goals" (D. Chips, personal communication, November 12, 2020).

Students were not exempt from the monitoring process. Teachers taught students to monitor their progress using data notebooks. Students shared their progress from their data notebooks with staff, community stakeholders, and parents during student-led conferences. Students communicated where they were, where they needed to be, and measures needed to get to their goals. Additionally, teachers kept parents abreast of student progress through monthly parent contacts.

All data sources pointed to correspondence, or consistency, in monitoring to determine progress toward the literacy vision and established goals. The expectations for the monitoring process were open, honest, benevolent, reliable, and consistent in accordance with the definition of trust posited by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000). Additionally, the monitoring process was a shared responsibility. School leaders, teachers, students, and parents were familiar with the goals and monitored the goals within their sphere of influence, using qualitative and quantitative data. All stakeholders could trust that expectations would be inspected.

Building Consensus

Relationship-building and collaboration were evident in Principal Howard's practices. The relational trust built by Principal Howard played a role in overcoming barriers to collaboration (Farnsworth et al., 2019; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). In school documents, Principal Howard expressed a commitment to student achievement by sharing the responsibility of education with students, parents, teachers, and community members. She also communicated the belief that partnerships must engender respect, relationships, and shared responsibility. Because shared responsibility is collaborative, all participants are accountable for the success or failure of the school.⁶ Therefore, she invited parents and stakeholders to take part in the school improvement efforts to assist all students in the quest for academic success.

At the school district and educational leadership levels, district leaders and experts were invited into the school to support literacy efforts. According to Principal Howard,

When we have our Title I Literacy Night, we typically . . . have someone from the district office who comes to help present and iterate the importance of reading and making sure students are reading early and reading often and that parents foster that love for reading.

(J. Howard, personal communication, October 31, 2020)

Principal Howard also collaborated with peers who were experts in literacy instruction. She invited those experts into her school to provide professional development to improve literacy instruction. Howard stated,

So, whenever . . . we go to these workshops . . . if I have a resource that I think is a good resource, I bring that person back to my school. And there was one lady, her name was B. L., and she was phenomenal, and she helped us . . . get our reluctant writers to write. (J. Howard, personal communication, October 31, 2020)

Principal Howard collaborated with leaders and teachers to develop and implement school initiatives and products at the school level. The initiatives included the school literacy plan, the student leadership plan, and the monitoring plan. The products included the school improvement plan, the school handbook, and social media platforms used to communicate to the public. She also collaborated with teachers and school leaders during professional development and collaborative grade-level planning, as noted above. About collaboration on the literacy plan, media specialist Sophie Middleton stated,

[We] have a literacy team . . . , [We] look at the school, look at the kids, how they're doing, . . . and what changes or additions we can make to . . . plans that are already in place, or . . . incentives we already do . . . that . . . really benefits how that kids are actually performing. [On the] . . . committee . . . there are teachers, our instructional coach, our principal. . . . [We] have a PEC teacher on it so we all can kind of look at it from different angles and say, "Ok, well this isn't working for these kids" or "This isn't working for those." So, we can kind of adapt . . . the whole schoolwide plan to what our specific kids need. (S. Middleton, personal communication, November 10, 2020)

Principal Howard and her team had monthly parent-teacher meetings, where teachers shared student data with parents and offered supports when students were not on target with their reading goals. According to parent Anita Montgomery, teachers "reach out to the parents and let them know what the issue may be and see if they can get parents on board" (A. Montgomery, personal communication, November 25, 2020). Dorothy Chips described the importance of forming relationships with parents,

Well, first I try to build . . . personal relationships with the parents and families . . . in order to teach them and for them to want to learn from us. We have to get to know them

and in order for parents to be open to us. We have to build those relationships with them. So just starting . . . by contacting them . . . not just when somebody has a rough day, but . . . making those positive contacts so that when you do speak to them about the reading and what we need from them to partner with us, they are more open to be my partner, be on my team. So, just encouraging them to as far as like reading with their students at home. And being honest with the parents as to where they are and where they need to be and how to as a parent, this is what you can do to help your child at home. . . . [Just] developing the relationship with them and then . . . being honest with the parents and that goes for whether they are struggling or if they are on grade level. (D. Chips, personal communication, November 12, 2020)

Relationship-building gave teachers and support staff a platform for offering instructional support assistance. Tracie Bing stated,

I can just say that third-grade is a challenging. It's a challenging year. And we try to get the kids to understand that . . . we kind of read to learn and that reading . . . is so important. And that we will do basically whatever we need to do to help them. If that means starting [Response to Interventions]. If that means . . . talking with parents, communicating with them. As far as what your child knows or doesn't know. We try to instill in them the importance of doing nightly reading, at least 20 to 30 minutes a night. And I know from me, I like to share parent tips on how parents can help. And then we also do that here with our home facilitator. She does a [*really*] good job connecting the parents and the school as far as like reading. So, if you are a parent who, "I don't quite know how to help my child, what can I do?" We have ways of helping you do that so that you are successful at home with your child. I know I give out a lot of websites. Parents ask me, . . .

. “What are somethings I can do to help my child increase in their reading?” So, I find various websites that I feel like it's beneficial and helping them, as far as reading. I know I sent home tons of Dolch sight words for students to kind of go over so they can read more fluently. Passages for students to read. So basically just . . . , really getting it to every avenue to help. (T. Bing, personal communication, November 18, 2020)

Concerning reading at home, parent Montgomery said of her daughter,

I get her to read to me. So, therefore, I can see the words she tangles over . . . and I can help her sound them out. I help her sound them out so when she comes to that word again, it'll become easier to her. She asks me questions to make sure I'm paying attention. (A. Montgomery, personal communication, November 25, 2020)

According to the interviews and document review, Principal Howard invited parents to visit the school to observe, volunteer, and participate in workshops. In a letter to parents, Principal Howard acknowledged the role of parental engagement in a child's educational success. She invited parents to actively participate in their child's education, encouraging them to create a place to study at home and contact the child's teacher throughout the school year. The letter also invited parents and families to participate in school improvement activities, develop partnerships that assisted student success, and become involved in volunteerism. Volunteer activities included reading to students, bulletin board preparation, tutoring, and proctoring for tests.

The family engagement facilitator and academic coach presented parent workshops and conducted surveys to solicit parent perceptions. They provided parents and families with information that they could use at home to help students read. Academic coach, Lydia Fountain (a pseudonym), conveyed information on parental engagement,

We have workshops and presentations. I work very closely with our . . . family engagement person, and . . . she provides several workshops as well. . . . I was just finished with our literacy week where we had grade levels to provide literacy activities for families, and so we provide surveys for the parents to fill out . . . just to make sure that we are meeting their needs. . . . [Just] anything that we can do to engage the parents. (L. Fountain, personal communication, November 4, 2020)

Interviews and social media posts confirmed correspondence in the use of multiple literacy-related activities for parents. Before COVID-19, parents attended in-school workshops. One example provided was a literacy station activity where parents walked from station to station, making instructional aids that could be used at home to support reading. Due to COVID-19, such events became virtual. For example, teachers provided parents with a digital choice board of grade-level literacy activities for home use and digital links to e-learning reading resources.

From a parental perspective, Anita Montgomery stated,

The parents and students have bulletin boards as well as newsletters to inform us of additional information. Also, normally we would have a Parent 101 Meeting with the faculty per grade level and including the Principal. . . . In that meeting, we will know the lesson plan, what level they want each child to be on and also they will show what level they are on at that moment. We play different games that they would play in class to get their brains working. I always leave saying, "I'm glad I chose this school for my child!" (A. Montgomery, personal communication, November 25, 2020)

The media specialist partnered with students, parents, and the community through a weekly bedtime story delivered by a mystery reader or readers. The mystery readers have been Principal Howard, the media specialist, teachers, students or special guests. The book reading

was recorded on Facebook Live and posted on the school's YouTube channel. Families and students were encouraged to watch in their pajamas and interact with the reader through the chat-box. Students were encouraged to take a test over the book when they returned to school to earn points on a student reward system or monitor reading progress. Anita Montgomery says the bedtime story had a broader appeal than just the students and their families. She stated the bedtime reading was "for the entire school or the community" (A. Montgomery, personal communication, November 25, 2020). The school also partnered with parents and families through special events, inviting parents and families to Literacy Night, Math Night, Grandparents Day, the International Cultural Festival, Title I meetings, book fairs, and literary competitions. School events were both cultural and literary.

The events were culturally inclusive and demonstrated a desire for familial partnership, which demonstrated Principal Howard's benevolence. The periodic nature of the events demonstrated her reliability. Participants could expect the event to reoccur. Social media and school website posts confirmed that these events were placed on the school's calendar, taking place weekly, monthly, quarterly, or annually. Additionally, interviewees unanimously confirmed Principal Howard's consistent openness, honesty, and competence in her communications. All practices described above fostered trust from the faculty, staff, and stakeholders.

Danika Bacon (a pseudonym) provided an example of the trust between Principal Howard and her teachers stating,

I feel like [Principal Howard] really supports us and gives us autonomy. She believes that we are trained enough and skilled enough to do the job she lays before us and so she doesn't micromanage us. . . . [We] told her, "Hey [Principal Howard], we need to do this schedule. We need this support. We need to do it this way." She's like "Ok, if that's what

I need to do.” So, she has faith in us. And then when we do need help, she gets us . . . help. [She] has that faith in us that we know what we're doing and gives us the autonomy to do it. (D. Bacon, personal communication, October 29, 2020)

After equipping the staff for high-quality literacy instruction, Principal Howard honored her staff's voice when they felt changes were needed. The teachers reciprocated the giving of trust.

At the community level, Principal Howard fostered trust with community members by forming partnerships for literacy growth. Social media posts and the student handbook indicated the priority that Principal Howard placed on community partnerships. Community partners included churches, a local high school, civic and service organizations, public and private businesses, and individuals. Community members were invited to the school to read to students, help struggling students, give students new books, prepare students for writing and oratorical competitions, attend festivals and celebrate student success. One community partner, a restaurant, hosted students and their parents for a special meal when students met their reading goals. In fact, during the Saturday interview, Principal Howard paused our conversation on a couple of occasions to interact with community members who were conducting a virtual writing workshop with students.

Principal Howard fostered trust by building consensus using relationship-building activities and by forming collaborative partnerships. All stakeholders, from district-level leaders to community partners, had an open invitation to visit the school, participate in activities, provide services, and inform the school improvement process. The data sources provided no information that allowed the researcher to determine the degree to which stakeholders were involved in school improvement planning. However, the data consistently pointed to stakeholder participation in school improvement plan implementation regarding literacy.

Celebrating Literacy Growth

At Pinecrest, the celebration of literacy growth emerged as a prominent theme. Though, this theme did not have a prominent presence in reading literature. Students were celebrated for literacy progress during monthly gatherings and after each nine-week grade reporting period. This initiative was consistent with the CIP action step to motivate and incentivize student reading.

Celebrations began at the school but extended into the community. Inspired by a friend, Principal Howard presented the idea of a daily schoolwide celebration to the teachers. Knowing that a daily school celebration would not work for Pinecrest, Principal Howard could get buy-in for a monthly celebration. She stated,

What we decided to do, I got buy-in from the staff, was to have a schoolwide morning meeting once a month. . . . [That] would be our time to come together, and we use it as a time to celebrate. (J. Howard, personal communication, October 31, 2020)

During the monthly gatherings, students led a “pep rally” that celebrated the school’s non-negotiables: attendance, reading, and leadership. Students who reached certain landmarks, such as a million words read, were given a big “prize check” with the number of words read during the celebration. Students who achieved their yearly reading goal were eligible for an out-of-town field trip. To qualify for the field trip, the students met the 90/90/90 criteria, which meant 90% Accuracy, 90% within the zone of proximal development (ZPD), 90% of individual goal or 85% Accuracy and Lexile on Grade Level on the reading comprehension software.

Every nine-weeks, the celebration of reading achievement was carried to the community using the school's "prize patrol," which consisted of Principal Howard, the student’s teachers, and other staff members. The prize patrol drove to the student's home in a caravan while honking

horns. The surprised students were given a gift bag with treats, balloons, and new books. The prize patrol event was recorded and posted to social media, sharing the school and the broader community.

Third-grade teacher, Danika Bacon, explained the motivational aspect of celebrations by stating,

We just really celebrate them. Our kids don't get a lot of celebrations It doesn't matter if you're reading on a fifth-grade level in first grade or you're reading on the 1st grade level in fifth grade. If you met your goal, we're gonna celebrate you. And those celebrations would push . . . kids to want to try harder. . . . Children are very self-centered and so they need extrinsic motivation. They really don't know how to be intrinsically motivated, so we really gotta help them with that. And the school does a great job of that. Every teacher has a scoreboard for [Accelerated Reader] outside their classroom where has five different levels and the kids get to move their name as they meet that percentage of their goal. Because they tell a kid you need to get 10 points, that is hard for them to take 10 points and split it across nine weeks. But . . . when you get the 25 percent, you get to move your name, and then you get 50 percent, you get to move your name. It helps them break it down a little bit better and so that's just part of our school culture. (D. Bacon, personal communication, October 29, 2020)

All data sources acknowledged the prevalence and importance of the celebration of literacy growth at Pinecrest Academy. According to Bacon, the celebration was used as a motivational tool to spur students toward attaining their literacy goals. The celebrations extended beyond the school to the neighborhood and the broader community. Though literacy growth was

not the only celebration at Pinecrest, it held a prominent place among all student achievements celebrated. Students could trust that if they met their goals, their efforts would be celebrated.

Literacy data provided the basis for most of the school celebrations. Students received continuous updates on literacy data throughout the school year. Consistency along with the openness, honesty, competence exhibited by Principal Howard and her faculty and staff fostered trust in the students. Students who accomplished their literacy goals, or made growth, would be celebrated. The students were celebrated during monthly gatherings at the school and with quarterly prize caravans in the community. Community members also celebrated students by distributing new books and by attending special events throughout the year, like Read for the Record Day. All celebrations were memorialized through photographs and video which were posted on social media platform and the school's website. All celebrations were acts of reliability and benevolence.

Theme 2: Building Capacity

Principal Howard improved her capacity and the capacity of teachers to provide high-quality literacy instruction. She improved the capacity of students to set and monitor reading goals, and she improved the capacity of parents to support their child's literacy growth. In this crosscutting theme, the practices that emerged from the data will be discussed using the four broad categories.

Communicating the Vision

Principal Howard communicated the vision and built capacity by (1) providing professional development for teachers, (2) providing culturally responsive and inclusive resources, and (3) providing parental support for student literacy.

Providing Professional Development. Principal Howard entered elementary education with no formal training in reading instruction. She stated,

I have a middle school ELA background . . . when I came here, not necessarily with the skill set of teaching children to read . . . I had an appreciation for read for learning . . . that was kinda my approach. (J. Howard, personal communication, October 31, 2020)

Through the years, Principal Howard and her teachers have attended various workshops to communicate the vision and build literacy instruction capacity. She continued,

We go to these workshops and . . . if I have a resource that I think is a good resource, I bring that person back to my school. . . . It was important to me, making sure I had good support here. Because . . . my background is not learning to read, it's reading to learn.

And I put people around me who were experts in that way. (J. Howard, personal communication, October 31, 2020)

According to Bing,

[Principal Howard] pretty much requires us to participate in professional development. We are required to attend . . . district-wide professional development opportunities. We also have our learning coach who also helps us with that initiative as well. So, we get a lot of training. I know in the past years we've had people or presenters to come and just teach us how to effectively teach the reading so that everybody in our building is on the same accord. Because . . . we all have various learning styles, and we've all been teaching . . . different amount of years. [Principal Howard] just wants us all to be on the same page. So, if we're going to do guided reading, we are going to do guided reading in-sync. So that everybody knows what the guided reading entails. So, a lot of . . . professional development. (T. Bing, personal communication, November 18, 2020)

Chips agreed,

I would say one thing is just by holding . . . meetings where we come . . . to her with data and then work with our academic coach. And then in the past . . . she's had us as a school participate in professional development with guided reading. I think that was two or three years ago we had . . . consistent training as a school, . . . learning just the different components and different strategies that we could take back into our classroom. . . . [Principal Howard] wants to know what we need help with, what we are interested in getting help with, and . . . making sure that we're doing all we can just to push that rigor and to . . . help develop our students into proficient readers. (D. Chips, personal communication, November 12, 2020)

Professional development upheld the vision for high-quality literacy instruction, using effective practices and rigor. Additionally, it built the principals' and teachers' literacy curriculum, assessment, and instruction capacity.

Providing Culturally Responsive and Inclusive Resources. The demographic educator survey revealed that Principal Howard did not have specialized training in culturally responsive pedagogy nor did she provide her teachers with such training. However, she used her school context to inform culturally sensitive books in classroom libraries and the media center. This practice built teacher and staff capacity for exposing students to culturally sensitive literature and to build students' capacity to celebrate diversity.

Cultural sensitivity and inclusion were ubiquitous in literacy instruction. Culturally responsive texts were used throughout literacy instruction and across the curriculum. Educators wanted students to see themselves represented in the text and develop an appreciation for cultures other than their own. According to Principal Howard,

Well, we oftentimes try to get culturally sensitive books when we're building our classroom libraries. We also look to pull other resources from . . . whatever experiences people have. So, it's not just our culture that we want, the African American culture, . . . to expose students to. We want to expose them to all cultures. So, we do try to get culturally sensitive books and make sure our media center is stocked with those type of opportunities as well. So that's just one small way we do that. We also have a magnet focus, a communicative magnet focus . . . where students learn Spanish . . . [We] are making sure they know about the Spanish cultures through various activities that we have. (J. Howard, personal communication, October 31, 2020)

Academic coach Lydia Fountain commented on the need to get students' interest through literature,

[We] try to . . . make sure that we have . . . materials that will, I guess, tend to every culture or meet every student's need at our school. So, we have Hispanic children. Of course, African Americans. We have a few Caucasian children, so we just make sure that we provide literature that can support every child or that will . . . get the interest of every child. (L. Fountain, personal communication, November 4, 2020)

Concerning culturally responsive texts across the curriculum, Tracie Bing stated,

I've had a lot of cultures in my class. I've had a lot of Hispanic, Caucasian, mixed. And one of the things we do, and we collaborate, we try to find passages that centers around their cultures. I know in Social Studies when I'm teaching . . . especially when I'm teaching the Native American unit, I try to find passages that kind of discuss the Native's origin, a little bit about them. And I just want to find passages that kind of hit on a variety

of different genres of cultures. I know a lot of our leveled readers that we use has different cultural backgrounds in it. . . . And then like Cesar Chavez, when I did teach about the people. . . they were like wow I didn't know Hispanics went through some of the things that we went through. So, I try to expose them to different things. (T. Bing, personal communication, November 18, 2020)

All third-grade teachers confirm the use of culturally responsive literature and texts across the curriculum.

Though the predominant population at Pinecrest was African-American, Pinecrest Academy had a Spanish cultural focus in its instructional program. Spanish language and culture were integrated across the curriculum to appreciate cultural diversity in customs and beliefs. Students learned conversational Spanish and the cultures of Spanish-speaking countries. One practice of speaking the Spanish language was the recitation of The Pledge of Allegiance in English and Spanish. Additionally, the music teacher taught students to sing in English and Spanish. Danika Bacon discussed asking Hispanic students to help her choose books that interested them. She stated,

I have a very extensive classroom library, and I have always tried to make sure that students can see mirror images of themselves in the classroom literature. . . . So, the . . . majority of our students are African American, but more and more we're getting Hispanic students. So last year when I was ordering books, I asked one of my Hispanic [students] to sit down with me and I said, . . . “Can you read in Spanish?” She said, “Uh huh,” so I had her pick out books that she would want to see in the classroom library to read. Because she should be able to see herself represented too. (D. Bacon, personal communication, October 29, 2020)

To support the Spanish focus, teachers incorporated the Spanish language, culture, and history during instruction. Using culturally responsive resources built teachers' capacity to reflect student identity within instruction and help students appreciate cultures other than their own.

Media specialist Sophie Middleton addressed the diverse selection of books available to students and teachers by stating,

I started a couple things last year and one of them was expanding our Favorite Section. . . . We had a Favorite Section in the library that just had . . . older books like the *Boxcar Children*, which our students don't read. . . . So, I expanded it to include graphic novels. I have also personally ordered more diverse texts . . . because our kids love reading about . . . superheroes, and if there's an [Accelerated Reader] superhero books, why not let them read em? I bought a lot of books . . . that have characters of color, whether their Native American or Asian or . . . whatever they may be. (S. Middleton, personal communication, November 10, 2020).

Middleton's weekly bedtime stories reflected a diverse book collection. Some of the book readings had characters of color. At the same time, a person of color authored some books. The authors included Yangsook Choi, Connie Miller, Malcolm Mitchell, Natasha Tarpley, Kwame Alexander, and Gloria Koster. Students also listened to books that celebrated cultural events, like Black History Month, Women's History Month, and Hanukkah.

Pinecrest demonstrated an inclusive culture meeting the needs of students with disabilities. Principal Howard spoke of a visually-impaired student in the school. Though visually impaired students usually matriculate in state-run schools for the blind, the student's parents wanted her to stay at Pinecrest. Principal Howard noted that this is another manner in which ". . . we are culturally sensitive to everybody" (J. Howard, personal communication, October 31, 2020).

Providing parental support. As discussed above, Principal Howard and her team used monthly parent-teacher meetings to share student progress and provide instructional supports. Parents and families increased their capacity to support their students during workshops and special events, like Literacy Night, where parents created or received resources to use at home with their students. The researcher discussed the use of parent workshops above. Knowing that parents are not teachers, the teachers showed parents how to use instructional resources to build parent capacity when assisting students. Describing an exchange with a parent, Bacon stated

A lot of times parents want to help. They don't know how to help. . . . [Just] saying you need to read with your child. [Parent says] "My child can read okay." [Do] you ask him questions? [Parent responds] "Yeah." . . . [Teacher asks] . . . Okay, are you just asking who, what, when, where questions? Are you asking why questions where they really have to give you an in-depth response? [Parents] don't know what we know is teachers when it comes to comprehension. So, the students that were coming back and forth with the folders, . . . they get better with their reading. I could increase the complexity of the questions. . . . [It] was almost like Mom became . . . a reading tutor, but I was giving her the material she needed in order to tutor So, I did see an increase in [student] comprehension abilities that . . . were consistent with [tutoring]. (D. Bacon, personal communication, October 29, 2020)

Teachers and support staff built parents' capacity to assist their children with literacy through explicit instruction.

Monitoring the Vision

Principal Howard, staff, and students monitored the literacy goals set by the literacy team. Teacher and student capacity for monitoring goals was facilitated by a schoolwide implementation plan. Three principal practices emerged from the data: monitoring literacy and communicating progress, conducting learning and focus walks, and implementing a student leadership initiative.

Monitoring Literacy and Communicating Progress. Goal-setting supported the literacy vision at the school, classroom, and student levels. Principal Howard and her literacy team set the goals for the school. The teachers, informed by the school goals, set goals for their grade-level classrooms. Then the teachers help students set personal reading goals based on grade-level goals. All goals were monitored periodically and displayed on scoreboards throughout the school. Students monitored their progress by using data notebooks, which they maintained. Dorothy Chips described the use of data notebooks in monitoring progress,

[Depending] on our comfort and strength is . . . what we worked on with the students and . . . as well as with our guided reading groups in our learning stations, . . . just setting them up for success . . . [Then] really focusing on students during that guided reading time and just . . . working on skills that they struggle with. . . . And that's where the data notebooks come back and like for struggling readers, for all students, but for struggling readers to . . . see the progress that they made no matter how big or small it is. It really helps for them to set goals and meet goals for themselves. . . . [We] also use that time to talk with them about their goals. . . . what we can do and what they can do to . . . make progress. (D. Chips, personal communication, November 12, 2020)

Students communicated their data during student-led conferences with parents and other school stakeholders, like community partners. Using their data notebooks, the students shared where

they were, where they needed to be, and measures needed to get to their goals. The maintenance of the data notebook was an important component of the monitoring process because it built student capacity for setting goals, monitoring one's progress, and communicating progress.

Additionally, teachers kept parents abreast of student progress through monthly parent contacts. According to Dorothy Chips, the partnership with parents started with forming relationships. After forming parent partnerships, teachers shared students' strengths and areas for growth with parents. Teachers gave parents tips on how they could help their students and provided supplemental materials that parents could use to help their students at home. Tracie Bing stated,

I can just say that third-grade is a challenging. It's a challenging year. And we try to get the kids to understand that . . . we kind of read to learn and that reading . . . is so important. And that we will do basically whatever we need to do to help them. If that means starting RTIs. If that means . . . talking with parents, communicating with them. As far as what your child knows or doesn't know. We try to instill in them the importance of doing nightly reading, at least 20 to 30 minutes a night. And I know from me, I like to share parent tips on how parents can help. And then we also do that here with our home facilitator. She does a really good job connecting the parents and the school as far as like reading. So, if you are a parent who, "I don't quite know how to help my child, what can I do?" We have ways of helping you do that so that you are successful at home with your child. I know I give out a lot of websites. Parents ask me, . . . "What are somethings I can do to help my child increase in their reading?" So, I find various websites that I feel like it's beneficial and helping them, as far as reading. I know I sent home tons of Dolch sight

words for students to kind of go over so they can read more fluently. Passages for students to read. So basically just . . . , really getting it to every avenue to help. (T. Bing, personal communication, November 18, 2020)

Working with parents to support student literacy is an example of monitoring literacy and communicating progress.

Conducting Learning and Focus Walks. Principal Howard monitored the literacy culture and expectations through learning walks, focus walks, and by looking at the reading intervention and assessment data. Professional development and collaboration built teacher capacity by providing them with the knowledge and skills needed to provide high-quality literacy instruction. Conversely, the learning and focus walk data assessed teachers' capacity to implement the professional learning that they received and informed next steps when capacity was lacking.

Howard stated,

So we do literacy walks or focus walks. We try to do one of those, at least in a formal way, once a month. . . . I monitor progress assessment data. I also look at our lesson plans. Make sure our teachers are on target with the pacing guide established by the district. And . . . I do attend some of the collaborative planning sessions and also some training sessions and just through the focus walks, just want to make sure that teachers are implementing what they're learning.

The academic coach confirmed the use of learning and focus walks. She added that district leaders participate in these walks to monitor implementation of district and school literacy initiatives. As an insider and participant in district learning walks, the researcher can add that all participants

debrief after the walk to come to consensus on their observations and to provide the school leaders with constructive feedback and next steps. Because the learning walk looks at the school's practices, teachers are not provided with individual feedback.

Implementing a Student Leadership Initiative. Principal Howard used a student leadership initiative based on Stephen Covey's book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, to build its students' leadership capacity. Goal-setting, monitoring, and collaboration were integral parts of the program. The data notebooks and student-led conferences were components of the student leadership initiative described above. The student leadership initiative was one example of student capacity-building activities while monitoring the literacy vision at Pinecrest.

Building Consensus

Building consensus for capacity-building is a relational and collaborative exercise. As previously discussed, relationship-building took place between the principal, teachers, students, parents and community members; between teachers, students and parents; and between students and stakeholders. Thus, each interaction where literacy data was shared, capacity-building development was facilitated, and students were celebrated was an opportunity to build consensus in beliefs and practices.

Two examples of building consensus while building capacity are the monthly parent-teacher meetings and professional development. Remembering the words of Tracie Bing concerning professional development,

[Principal Howard] just wants us all to be on the same page. So, if we're going to do guided reading, we are going to do guided reading in-sync. So that everybody knows what the guided reading entails. So, a lot of . . . professional development. (T. Bing, personal communication, November 18, 2020)

Principal Howard and her team had monthly parent-teacher meetings, where teachers shared student data with parents and offered supports when students were not on target with their reading goals. According to parent Anita Montgomery, teachers “reach out to the parents and let them know what the issue may be and see if they can get parents on board” (A. Montgomery, personal communication, November 25, 2020).

At the student level, the principal and teachers built student capacity for Spanish language speaking during group activities. Because the Spanish language and culture were taught to celebrate diversity in customs and beliefs, students learned conversational Spanish. Interviews revealed two practices of speaking the Spanish language as a school: in the recitation of The Pledge of Allegiance in English and Spanish and musical productions where students sang in English and Spanish. All of the practices above were predicated on the establishment of relationships and the ability to collaborate.

Celebrating Literacy Growth

The use of celebration as a motivational tool was a well-established practice at Pinecrest. During the monthly school celebrations, students led the festivities while teachers watched from the side. Principal Howard described the student leadership,

[The] kids really liked it because they . . . could cheer. They could yell. They can do whatever they wanted to do, but we were still very respectful of each other and listened. And it was student-led. . . . [I] was the guide on the side or whoever my team was. The guides on the side kinda directing everything but the students were the ones out front doing the work. (J. Howard, personal communication, October 31, 2020)

Student-led celebrations are an example of building capacity while celebrating growth. The student leadership initiative at Pinecrest built students' capacity for highly effective skills common in successful people. The ability to lead the celebration was an expression of student leadership.

Theme 3: Supportive School Structures

School structures are organizational structures within the school that arrange “time, space, and personnel” to maximize learning and collaboration (Danielson, 2002, para. 1; Ford & Youngs, 2018). School structures to support literacy (SSL) provided a vehicle for the implementation of all literacy initiatives. When examining the school structures utilized, three categories emerged: time and space, resources, and processes. Due to a large number of school structures, the researcher will describe one structure as an exemplar for each broad category.

Communicating the Vision

Principal Howard used many school structures to communicate the literacy vision: the literacy and intervention blocks, professional development, collaboration, parent-teacher meetings, parent workshops, weekly bedtime stories, and special events and celebrations. The researcher will discuss the literacy and intervention blocks due to the extensive reporting on other school structures.

The literacy block communicated what students should know, understand, and be able to do. Students who were not meeting their literacy goals were assigned to another school structure, the intervention block. Principal Howard described the literacy block components used to support literacy instruction and provide interventions for struggling students. The teachers followed a district pacing guide using the components of a literacy block. The literacy block included word study, a mini-lesson, small-group assignments, a writing component, and literacy stations. Literacy stations provided independent reading, independent writing, or teacher-led conferences

with students in need areas. Struggling students received additional support from an intervention paraprofessional or a special education teacher. Howard stated,

Typically the literacy block is 120 minutes, 2 hours. Now that we're on a virtual schedule. . . . I have 90 minutes allocated for the literacy block, so that's about 60 minutes of direct instruction and then 30 minutes of asynchronous work. And that asynchronous work may even be . . . small group activity time with the teacher. But if we were in a typical situation, . . . teachers are running those small groups through the literacy stations that they may have set up in the classroom. So, a literacy station maybe students reading a book independently. A student may be working on a writing piece or a student maybe conferencing with their teacher on an ELA skill. Or a student maybe doing some other independent work. . . . So, it just depends on what the student's needs are. (, personal communication, October 31, 2020)

During the literacy block, students received skill-building work to prepare them for the state assessment. Tracie Bing described the work of the third-grade teachers by stating,

We will pick skills that the students struggle with. For example, it could be . . . they may have taken . . . the benchmark, and we notice . . . most of our students are having difficulties with main ideas and supporting details. So, we would take that skill and . . . focus in on during intervention. We take those real big skills, like locating information, and we work with that. . . . [We] give them a lot of nonfiction passages. Because we are not per se trying to teach to the test, but we know that the test has a lot of nonfiction passages and our students struggle with reading nonfiction passages. So, we try to expose them to as many nonfiction passages as possible. . . . [If] that is a skill that they're all struggling on, then that is something that we would focus our attention on. So, I mean it all depends on

where they score low, context clues, vocabulary. I know for my students, well third-grade in general, . . . we collaborate and talk about what our kids know and don't know. But like vocabulary is one of those big skills too that the kids lack, so we try to focus in on vocabulary too. Just expose them to as many third-grade content words as possible. (T. Bing, personal communication, November 18, 2020)

During the intervention, teachers place students in smaller settings for differentiated and individualized instruction. The third-grade teachers worked with students according to their needs to help students make progress. Dorothy Chips described an important component of the intervention block, human resources, stating,

One thing we have here is our [Early Intervention Program] teachers work with . . . many of the lowest, . . . struggling readers. . . . This year is a new program. And the name of it has slipped my mind. But that they pull [students] out . . . for that. . . . [Then] we work with the rest of them during intervention. In third-grade, we've also grouped [the students] by ability during intervention and worked in specific skills. (D. Chips, personal communication, November 12, 2020)

The literacy and intervention blocks were primary school structures used to communicate the literacy vision. Students received explicit instruction or interventions based on achievement.

Monitoring the Vision

Principal Howard allocated human and material resources monitor literacy initiatives. These resources allowed her to monitor the vision of literacy growth and cultural responsiveness. The human resources included teachers, instructional paraprofessionals, tutors, parents, and community members. Speaking about the work of support staff, like instructional paraprofessionals,

who work with the early elementary grades, Assistant Principal Mary Beth Johnson (a pseudonym) stated,

[Our] early intervention program teachers . . . work closely with those grade levels as well. We also have our . . . teacher too that works closely with third grade. . . . [Pulling] those students that we know . . . have those gaps and trying to . . . close those gaps. (M.B. Johnson, personal communication, November 4, 2020).

Principal Howard stated,

Now last year, I was doing targeted remediation with those students as well. So, I just looked at those children who scored in the 30th percentile and lower and gave them some additional support during specials time. . . . I also have support personnel. I have an instructional para, who helps. So, we . . . have an all-hands-on-deck approach when we're dealing with our students. And I'm just gonna be honest with you. We have more students who need the support than who don't need it. (J. Howard, personal communication, October 31, 2020)

In addition to providing Tier 1, basic instruction, teachers also work with students based on areas of personal strength in learning stations, another school structure. Dorothy Chips described the use of this structure,

In 3rd grade, we've also grouped them by ability during intervention and worked in specific skills. . . . [Depending] on our comfort and strength is . . . what we worked on with the students. . . . [As] well as with our guided reading groups in our learning stations, literacy stations, you know just setting them up for success [Then] really focusing on students during that guided reading time and just . . . working on skills that they struggle with. (D. Chips, personal communication, November 12, 2020)

In addition to school employees, the interviews indicated that volunteers from the community work one-on-one with students to assist them with their reading. As Principal Howard stated, Pinecrest has “an all-hands-on-deck approach” (J. Howard, personal communication, October 31, 2020).

Material resources included social media platforms, computer software, hard-copy and digital books, and instructional materials. Computer software was used to monitor student progress toward their literacy goals. To monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning, literacy team and teachers used universal screener data, reading and writing assessment data, reading comprehension data, and word counts to monitor growth. To monitor interventional delivery, teachers utilized a 45-minute block to provide foundational support using computer software. Tracie Bing briefly described two of the intervention programs used at Pinecrest, Reading Eggs and Reading Expression.

[We] use Reading Eggs and Reading Expression. . . . And those the kids really seem to take well to [it]. [Reading Eggs] focuses on various skills like spelling, phonics, comprehension skills; and I usually gear [my selection] towards my students. . . . [If] I know I have a student who struggles with reading, I'm not going to put them on Reading Expression because that's a . . . higher-level program. They would need to start with Reading Eggs. And Reading Eggs will teach them the process of reading and teach them how to read. (T. Bing, personal communication, November 18, 2020)

Though funding sources were required to obtain human and material resources, the data did not speak to funding these school structures. Financial support for resources was neither discussed during the interviews nor detailed in documents. However, use of Title I and Title II funds were available for Pinecrest due to its Title I status. Title I funding provides supports, like

extra instruction in reading and math, for low-income and struggling students, while Title II funding provides instructional staff and professional development in the nation's neediest schools (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2016; USDOE, 2018a).

Building Consensus

The school structures that supported consensus-building were times and spaces designated for collaboration and celebration. Collaborative planning is set for a particular day and time for each grade level. Principal Howard also had a daily teacher debrief after school, four times per week. These times were protected and outside events had to be scheduled around them. When planning interviews with her staff, Principal Howard ensured that the times on my calendar did not interfere with collaboration or the daily debrief. Monthly parent-teacher meetings, in-person before COVID-19, are now virtual. Though not explicitly stated in the interviews, teachers scheduled monthly meetings with parents. Special events and celebrations were placed on the school calendar and held in the gym, the media center, the school's rotunda, or through a caravan. Each event had a specific time, a specific space, and managed personnel in accordance with the event.

Celebrating Literacy Growth

Principal Howard utilized celebrations and special events, the prize-patrol caravan, social media posts as school structures to celebrate growth. For example, the monthly schoolwide celebration had a very specific process. Principal Howard described a typical monthly celebration,

We celebrate those non-negotiables in our school district. We celebrate our school non-negotiables, and we just . . . cheer each other on and motivate each other. So, . . . we celebrate students' reading. We celebrate attendance. We celebrate . . . good behavior, and we

celebrate students being leaders. . . . [As] the students come in the building, rather than going to their classroom, we . . . all gather in the gym. That would be our morning gathering. We would usually start with a book being read aloud. Whether it was a recorded read aloud or . . . a live read aloud [Then] we will go on into our standard morning exercises: the National Anthem, moment of silence, our schoolwide pledges. [Then] we will move it to our celebrations. . . . [We] not only celebrated the students. . . . [We] celebrate the staff as well. So, it was a dual kind of thing. (J. Howard, personal communication, October 31, 2020)

Each component of the literacy implementation plan, from instruction to assessment, had a process supported by a school structure.

Summary

The researcher began the data analysis with ten pre-established descriptive codes of integrated principal literacy leadership practices. As the data underwent categorical aggregation and the First Cycle coding process, the researcher marked themes in the data. During direct interpretation on individual incidents and Second Cycle coding, four broad categories emerged: Communicating the Vision, Monitoring the Vision, Building Consensus, and Celebrating Growth. The broad categories' analysis revealed three cross-cutting themes: Fostering Trust, Building Capacity, and Supportive School Structures. The cross-cutting themes are interdependent and essential for the existence of the broad categories. The researcher discussed the principal's integrated literacy leadership practices within each cross-cutting theme. Chapter five will discuss the relationship between the findings and extant literature and how the findings answer the research questions posed at the beginning of the investigation.

5 DISCUSSION

Conclusions

Early literacy proficiency is linked to student success in and beyond school (Fiester, 2010). Students who fail to read proficiently by the end of third grade are at increased risk of having academic difficulties throughout schooling, an increased risk of not graduating from high school, and reduced opportunities for economic success. The lack of early reading proficiency produces a reading achievement gap between low-income children, children of color, and their White and affluent peers (Fiester, 2013; Hernandez, 2011; Salloum et al., 2017). Proficient literacy skills are important, given the literacy threshold for today's high-paying jobs (Carnevale et al., 2010). Without those proficient skills, students will likely be left behind. They will be relegated to the decreasing number of low wage jobs and "locked out of the middle class" (Carnevale et al., 2010, p. 2).

Given the reading achievement gap between low-income children, children of color, and their White and affluent peers and its impact on students' future success, principals should be equipped to make instructional decisions concerning the literacy needs of diverse students (Carnevale et al., 2010; Dowell et al., 2012; Fiester, 2013; Frizzell et al., 2017; Hernandez, 2011; Salloum et al., 2017; Teale et al., 2020). When the principal as literacy leader unites culturally responsive practices with literacy instruction, they can reduce the reading achievement gaps of diverse and marginalized students (Horsford et al., 2011; Keehne et al., 2018; Khalifa, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016; Riley & Webster, 2016; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2016). With this premise in mind, the purpose of this study was two-fold. First, this study sought to understand the principal literacy leadership practices used to implement a successful literacy plan that bolstered the outcomes of third-grade students of color from multiple perspectives. Second, the study sought to

determine how the principal formed partnerships with the parents and families of third-grade students of color to increase literacy outcomes.

This case study investigated the knowledge and practices of a principal who raised literacy outcomes for third-grade low-income students of color. The researcher used an integrated theoretical framework for principal literacy leadership. Instructional leadership for effective teaching and learning was coupled with CRSL for its success in closing the achievement gap for diverse students. The case viewed the practices of Principal Joanna Howard (a pseudonym) an elementary principal in the Southeastern United States. Her school, Pinecrest Academy (a pseudonym), was recognized for raising student achievement across all student groups over a two-year period. The researcher used a qualitative intrinsic case study approach to determine the unique actions of a principal who has successfully led the school in reducing the reading achievement gap for students of color (Stake, 1995).

The researcher used multiple data sources, interviews and document reviews, to determine the practices that Principal Howard used to raise student achievement in her school, which was 98.5 percent student of color. The researcher began with ten pre-established descriptive codes taken from the literacy leadership work of Dowell et al. (2012) and the CRSL work of Khalifa et al. (2016). After four rounds of categorical aggregation and reconfiguration, the researcher discovered four broad categories of practices: Communicating the Vision, Monitoring the Vision, Building the Consensus, and Celebrating Growth (Stake, 1995). Direct interpretation across all categories disclosed three crosscutting themes: Fostering Trust, Building Capacity, and Supportive School Structures (Stake, 1995). The researcher reported the crosscutting themes as they intersected with the four broad categories.

Under the crosscutting theme Fostering Trust, the researcher used the Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) definition of trust to ascertain if the findings supported trust in Principal Howard. The practices and provisions of the principal were held to the qualities of benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness. When Principal Howard demonstrated one of the qualities that foster trust in practice, trust was attributed to her. Across all broad categories, the findings confirm that Principal Howard demonstrated and maintained the trust of her faculty, students, parents, and community members.

The findings for Building Capacity were consistent with prior research. According to Brazer and Bauer (2013), effective instructional leaders work to build teacher capacity for high-quality teaching. Capacity-building was facilitated by fostering relationships and increasing collaboration within the school and between the school and the community. Though the principal and teachers did not have formal culturally responsive pedagogy training, the use of culturally sensitive text during instruction was ubiquitous. Principal Howard built capacity for including culturally responsive text in literacy instruction by providing teachers with culturally responsive and inclusive resources. Principal Howard also built parent capacity by providing workshops, presentations, and special events that allowed parents to partner with the school and learn skills to facilitate literacy learning at home (Riley & Webster, 2016).

The crosscutting theme, Supportive School Structures, focused on the organizational structures provided to support literacy rather than the personal practices of the principal. School structures are organizational structures within the school that arrange “time, space, and personnel” to maximize learning and foster collaboration (Danielson, 2002, para. 1; Ford & Youngs, 2018). Time, space, and personnel for professional development, teacher collaboration, school

celebrations, parent workshops, and weekly bedtime stories are examples of school structures that support literacy. Without the school structures the functions could not take place.

The Research Questions

At this time, the researcher will examine the three research questions that shaped this study.

Research Question One

How did the principal as literacy leader promote cultural responsiveness in literacy content knowledge and instruction? Before discussing cultural responsiveness aspect of this question, the researcher will address Principal Howard's attainment of literacy content knowledge. Though Principal Howard did not enter the principalship with the knowledge of early literacy instruction, she developed her knowledge through professional development and by surrounding herself with experts in the field. Principal Howard's efforts to attain the content knowledge needed to lead literacy are congruent with the findings of Stein and Nelson (2003). They posited the leadership content knowledge (LCK) framework, that linked principal's understanding of content with leadership practices. In the LCK framework, expertise in leadership for a specific content area can be developed by "postholing," or deeply exploring the subject at hand (Stein & Nelson, 2003, p. 446). According to Stein and Nelson (2003), "The purpose of postholing is to learn how knowledge is built in that subject, what learning tasks should look like, and what good instruction looks like" (p. 446). Stein and Nelson (2003) also suggested that the content knowledge needed may held by others. Thus, seeking out that knowledge from content experts was an alternate means of attaining the knowledge needed for leadership (Stein & Nelson, 2003). After 14 years as principal of Pinecrest, evidence exists that Principal Howard attained the knowledge needed to lead literacy curriculum, assessment, and instruction.

Furthermore, Principal Howard's knowledge attainment is consistent with the leadership content knowledge (LCK) for literacy framework posited by Overholt and Szabocsik (2013). The LCK for literacy framework posited that principals need a deep core understanding of literacy content in order to evaluate literacy instruction and provide teachers with explicit, directive feedback (Overholt & Szabocsik, 2013). A principal with LCK for literacy possessed knowledge in four categories: Research-based Knowledge about Literacy, Effective Teaching Strategies, Supportive Contexts for Reading Instruction, and Motivating and Engaging Readers (Overholt & Szabocsik, 2013, p. 55). The four Overholt and Szabocsik (2013) categories parallel the knowledge findings of Dowell et al. (2012) in the themes of Content Knowledge and Knowledge of Best Practices Spanning Developmental Age Ranges and Content Areas (p. 12). Overholt and Szabocsik (2013) termed principals with acquired literacy knowledge "expert principals" (p. 55). Expert principals were more likely to (1) provide explicit and directive feedback when evaluating literacy instructional practices, (2) offer guidance to teachers on instructional strategies, (3) provide teachers with better resources, and (4) engage in collaborative conversations with teachers regarding literacy (Overholt & Szabocsik, 2013). Though the findings do not reveal the nature of the feedback that Principal Howard offered to teachers, the findings do point to collaborative conversations, guidance, and the provision of resources.

The researcher will now address the culturally responsive aspect of research question one. Principal Howard promoted cultural responsiveness in literacy content knowledge and instruction by providing culturally sensitive books and texts for students. Furthermore, she set Spanish as one of the Pinecrest's focus areas to expand the knowledge of culture and language and to celebrate cultural diversity. Cultural sensitivity and inclusion were ubiquitous in literacy instruction and across the curriculum. Educators made efforts to find text that would allow students to

see their reflections and develop an appreciation for other cultures. The student handbook described the study of language and culture as the “celebration” of cultural diversity.

Research Question Two

How did the principal use literacy leadership practices to establish a culturally responsive literacy culture? The principal literacy leadership practices in this study couple instructional leadership practices for effective teaching and learning with CRSL for equity and reducing student achievement gaps. Before unpacking Principal Howard’s specific practices, let us review the integrated definition of principal literacy leadership adapted from Plaatjies (2019), Khalifa (2018), and Khalifa et al. (2016). The principal literacy leadership practices of Principal Howard are examined in light of this definition. The researcher proposes this definition for principal literacy leadership. A principal literacy leader (a) possesses knowledge of inclusive literacy curriculum, assessment, and instruction; (b) supervises and assesses culturally responsive and inclusive literacy instructional programs; (c) empowers the instructional staff and stakeholders through professional development activities; (d) promotes a print-rich and culturally diverse literacy learning environment; and develops and advocates a vision and mission of quality literacy instruction for all students. The findings of this study indicate that Principal Howard used each one of these practices in her principal literacy leadership.

First, a principal literacy leader has knowledge of inclusive literacy curriculum, assessment, and instruction. Principal Howard acquired her literacy content knowledge through on-going professional development and consultations with literacy experts. Second, when supervising and assessing culturally responsive and inclusive literacy programs, Principal Howard and her literacy team monitored multiple literacy data sources. She monitored literacy implementation

through learning and focus walks. The continuous monitoring of quantitative data and the monitoring of the literacy culture through learning walks are supported by research (Brumley, 2010; Cobb, 2005; Crum, 2008; Houck & Novak, 2017; ILA, 2019).

Third, Principal Howard empowered here instructional staff and stakeholders, mainly parents, through professional development activities. The findings reported intensive professional development for teachers on reading and writing best practices, the provision of resources, and time for collaboration. All of these empowerment, or capacity-building, practices are supported by research for effective literacy leadership (Dowell et al., 2012; Hollenbeck & Rieckhoff, 2014; ILA, 2019; Murphy, 2004; Overholt & Szabocsik, 2013; Taylor, 2004). The principal and teachers built relationships and collaborative partnerships with parents. Parents were welcomed in the school; and workshops, presentations, special events, and parent-teacher conferences equipped them to assist their children at home. Additionally, teachers provided parents with resources and instructions on the use of those resources to help parents assist their children. These findings support research on parental engagement, high-poverty schools, and literacy learning. Namely, parents care about their children's education and desire to partner with educators in respectful relationships with an aim toward student success (Compton-Lilly & Delbridge, 2018; Riley & Webster, 2016). Parental partnerships with schools raise student achievement and equips parents with the skills to confidently facilitate student learning at home (Riley & Webster, 2016).

Fourth, the findings clearly indicate that Principal Howard promoted a print-rich and culturally diverse literacy learning environment. In promoting a print-rich literacy environment, digital media must also be considered (Plaatjies, 2019; Rowe, 2001). Pinecrest students were provided with multiple platforms to assess digital books at various reading levels. The findings also

indicate that Principal Howard and Pinecrest Academy celebrated and honored the cultural and linguistic diversity of its students and incorporated cultural representations in literacy instruction (ILA, 2019; Jones et al., 2019; Riley & Webster, 2016). However, the findings do not indicate the incorporation of student epistemologies into literacy pedagogy and curriculum (Compton-Lilly & Delbridge, 2018; ILA, 2019; Jones et al., 2019; Keehne et al., 2018; Khalifa, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016; Riley & Webster, 2016).

Finally, the findings of this study indicate that Principal Howard developed and advocated a vision and mission of quality literacy instruction for all students (Crum, 2008; Dowell et al., 2012; Houck & Novak, 2017; ILA, 2019; Plaatjies, 2019; Taylor, 2004; Townsend et al., 2018). The vision was continuously communicated through a variety of platforms using various means: oral, digital, and print. According to teachers, Principal Howard expected her teachers to communicate the same message. Thus, students, parents, and community members received the same message. The importance of students reading on grade level was expressed by parent Anita Montgomery when she stated, “Reading is mandatory at [Pinecrest Academy].” (A. Montgomery, personal communication, November 25, 2020)

Research Question Three

How did the principal as literacy leader foster literacy collaboration with and among staff, families, and community members? Principal Howard fostered collaboration by providing structures, times and spaces, for collaborative partnerships (Dowell et al., 2012). For teachers, Principal Howard provided protected collaborative planning times. She also met with teachers at least four days each week for daily debriefs at the end of the school day. For parents, Principal Howard provided monthly parent-teacher meetings, in-person or virtual depending on COVID-

19 conditions. Principal Howard also used special events and celebrations to foster parent collaboration. The International Cultural Festival, Literacy Night, Math Night, the prize-patrol caravan, Title I parent workshops, and other events served to bring the community and the school together.

Connections to Literature

The integrated framework coupled instructional leadership and CRSL. When considering instructional leadership, the findings of this case study are consistent with effective instructional leadership research. Hallinger (2005) identified three dimensions of effective instructional leadership: Defining the School's Mission, Managing the Instructional Program, and Promoting a Positive School Learning Climate. The practices of Principal Howard align with the practices of research-based effective instructional practices.

In the Defining the School's Mission dimension, Principal Howard clearly and consistently communicated the literacy goals of the school (Day & Sammons, 2014; Dowell et al., 2012; Hallinger, 2005). Her vision for Pinecrest students was to make progress and learn to read on grade level. The plan for literacy proficiency was well documented in the school's CIPs from 2015 to 2019. Each CIP revealed an increased focus on literacy in the school. Principal Howard's decision to spend more time on literacy initiatives was "critical for the school community to believe in the priority of literacy" (Taylor, 2004, p. 30). Principal Howard's actions exhibited focus by establishing and keeping school literacy goals at the "forefront of attention" (Hollenbeck et al., 2014, p. 32). Principal Howard provided a clear vision and direction for the school, focusing the attention of the staff and students on what was important without getting sidetracked with initiatives not aligned with reading proficiency (Day & Sammons, 2014; Schmoker, 2011).

Additionally, Howard communicated that reading and writing proficiency were the instruments for success. The mission of literacy proficiency was fashioned into literacy goals by the school's literacy team. Principal Howard communicated the goals verbally, in print, and across social media platforms to all stakeholders. According to Tracie Bing, conversations about literacy proficiency were prolific and "in every day, all-day talk" (T. Bing, personal communication, November 18, 2020). Also, Principal Howard wanted her teachers and staff to communicate the same message and use the goal of proficiency to guide their work. Danika Bacon stated, "Everything we do is centered around that goal. And then our interventions are based on students who have not met that goal, how can we intervene and help them" (D. Bacon, personal communication, November 23, 2020).

Principal Howard practiced the Managing the Instructional Program dimension through supervising, coordinating, and monitoring instruction, curriculum, and assessment of literacy (Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016; Hallinger, 2005; Hallinger, 2009; Neumerski, 2012; Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2017). The principal and faculty of Pinecrest followed the school district's English Language Arts (ELA) instructional framework and curriculum pacing guide. Teachers and students were well resourced, using a variety of software platforms to instruct, remediate, and assess students' literacy and to provide a digital storehouse for leveled readers. Principal Howard ensured that the media center and classroom libraries were supplied with hard copy books as well. Howard and her team continuously monitored literacy progress using the quantitative data from software platforms as well as the qualitative data from learning and focus walks. Assistant Principal Mary Beth Johnson admitted, "It's a lot of moving targets, but we're trying to monitor it all" (M.B. Johnson, personal communication, November 4, 2020).

In the Promoting a Positive School Climate dimension, Principal Howard promoted professional development, protected instructional time, promoted high-expectations and rigor during instruction, and incentivized the work of teachers and students (Hallinger, 2005; Neumerski, 2012; Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2017). Howard and her teachers described targeted professional development at the district and school-level used to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to support guided reading and writing instruction. According to teachers, Principal Howard wanted to ensure that all teachers knew how to provide high-quality instruction and were on the same page. During the interview, Principal Howard described the instructional time of the 120-minute literacy block. The literacy block included word study, a mini-lesson, small-group assignments, a writing component, and literacy stations. Howard required academic rigor during instruction to push students to higher levels of proficiency. In explaining the importance of rigor, Danika Bacon stated “We don't know what [the students] can do until we challenge them to do it . . . so, I set the bar high and then I support them to reach the bar” (D. Bacon, personal communication, October 29, 2020). Struggling students received additional support from intervention personnel. One theme emerged that was not extensively covered in the literature: providing incentives to teachers and students (Hallinger, 2005). Incentives also appeared in the third dimension. Hallinger (2005) reported, “Instructionally effective schools develop a culture of continuous improvement in which rewards are aligned with purposes and practices” (p. 226). Principal Howard used celebration as a form of extrinsic motivation, celebrating literacy growth at designated times with students, teachers, staff, parents, and community partners.

When considering the CRSL side of the theoretical framework, Principal Howard’s practices were strongly represented in two CRSL dimensions: Promoting Culturally Responsive/Inclusive School Environment and Engaging Students, Parents, and Indigenous Contexts (Khalifa,

2018; Khalifa et al., 2016). In promoting a culturally responsive and inclusive school environment, Principal Howard and her faculty housed culturally sensitive and inclusive texts in the media center and classroom libraries. Teachers wanted to ensure that students' diversity was represented across the curriculum so students could see themselves and celebrate the cultural and linguistic diversity of others. Though the dominant population of Pinecrest was African-American, the school had a Spanish language and culture focus.

Principal Howard engaged students, parents, and Indigenous contexts by partnering with parents and families through special events. Parents, families, and community members were invited to events such as Literacy Night, Math Night, Grandparents Day, the International Cultural Festival, Title I meetings, book fairs, and literary competitions. During the annual International Cultural Festival, the Spanish culture was one of the cultures celebrated. Students dressed in native attire, and parents brought authentic dishes for the festival. Community partners came to the school to participate in celebrations, donating books and reading to students. Community partnerships included churches, a local high school, civic and service organizations, public and private businesses, and individuals. Pinecrest enjoyed wide community support.

The data lacked representation in four CRSL practices: using data to track and reduce inequities in policy and practice, social justice efforts within the community, sharing Indigenous cultural epistemologies during literacy instruction, and using professional development to develop culturally responsive teachers. Though data did not indicate tracking for disparities, Principal Howard's all-hands-on-deck approach to helping all students may have mitigated possible inequities in the system. Additionally, the data sources did not identify the CRSL practice of sharing Indigenous cultural epistemology during literacy instruction (Horsford et al., 2011; Keehne et al., 2018; Khalifa, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016; Riley & Webster, 2016; Santamaria &

Santamaria, 2016). Principal Howard invited parents and community members into the school to read to students; however, the data did not indicate the use of the African or Hispanic oral storytelling traditions or other cultural epistemologies during instruction. The data also provided no indication of social justice activity within the community (Horsford et al., 2011; Khalifa, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2016). The findings did not indicate that Principal Howard used professional learning for culturally responsive pedagogy to develop culturally responsive teachers (Au, K. H., 2007; Keehne et al., 2018; Khalifa, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016). However, the use of culturally responsive texts and the celebration of culture were prominent aspects of the school culture.

Implications for Positive Literacy Outcomes

The case study on Principal Howard provides an example of a principal who raised the literacy proficiency of culturally and linguistically diverse students through integrated principal literacy leadership practices. Due to the growing diversity in schools, in the United States and around the world, literacy leaders are needed who can supervise and monitor the implementation of high-quality literacy instruction as well as those who can recognize, affirm, and celebrate the diversity and social capital of their student body (Au, 2007; Compton-Lilly & Delbridge, 2018; Horsford et al., 2011; Keehne et al., 2018; Murphy, 2004; Puzio et al., 2015; Riley & Webster, 2016; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2016). The case study of Principal Howard has several implications for positive literacy outcomes, from the national to the school levels.

At the national level, the federal government has offered states discretionary grants for impoverished school systems since 1965 with the introduction of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Elementary and Secondary Education Act [ESEA] of 1965, 1965). From the Reading Excellence Act of 1998 to the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy [SRCL]

Program of 2010, the federal government has offered discretionary grants to support literacy instruction and provide professional development (Reading Excellence Act, 1998; SRCL, 2010).

The purpose of the SRCL was

- (1) to support comprehensive literacy development and to advance literacy skills, including pre-literacy skills, reading, and writing, for students from birth through grade 12, including limited-English-proficient students and students with disabilities; and
- (2) to support services and activities that have the characteristics of effective literacy instruction through professional development, screening and assessment, targeted interventions for students reading below grade level, and other research-based methods of improving classroom instruction and practice. (USDOE, 2018b, para. 3 and 5)

Currently, discretionary funding for literacy is the responsibility of the Well-Rounded Education Programs Office, a division of the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education at the U. S. Department of Education. The former SRCL is now the Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD). According to the USDOE (2020),

The Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) program is authorized under Sections 2222-2225 of the ESEA. The purpose of the CLSD discretionary grants is to create a comprehensive literacy program to advance literacy skills, including pre-literacy skills, reading, and writing, for children from birth through grade 12, with an emphasis on disadvantaged children, including children living in poverty, English learners, and children with disabilities. (para. 2)

To fund principal literacy leadership and teacher professional development at the state level, states educational agencies (SEA) must apply for this grant and include cultural responsiveness and literacy leadership professional development provisions.

At the state level, agencies that educate, support, and license superintendents, district leaders, and teachers can create a policy that mandates coursework or professional development in principal literacy leadership. State licensure agencies should require courses on CRSL and literacy instruction for K-12 educational leaders and teachers. These courses must receive the same priority as the required coursework for Programs for Exceptional Children if principals are to reduce the reading achievement gap for students of color (Au, 2007; Fiester, 2013; Hernandez, 2011; Salloum et al., 2017). For undergraduate and graduate studies, colleges and universities can integrate literacy and cultural responsiveness into current course offerings in asynchronous, synchronous, or face-to-face formats. Literacy across the curriculum infused with cultural responsiveness will provide future leaders and teachers with professional knowledge and a prioritized literacy focus. This new approach will also require professional development for college and university professors in an effort to create an “all-hands-on-deck” approach to the nation’s literacy achievement gap. For existing educational leaders and teachers, the state board of education can facilitate professional development through regional service agencies or certificate programs on digital platforms. Funding for these SEA professional development initiatives can come from federal education discretionary grants.

At the district level, district educational leaders must provide a clear district literacy vision, along with the support and resources needed to bring the vision to fulfillment (Houck & Novak, 2017). A clear literacy vision would define the goals for literacy success and cultural responsiveness at each grade level district-wide. The district would communicate that vision to

principals with ongoing, job-embedded professional development on culturally responsive literacy standards, curriculum, and instructional framework (Houck & Novak, 2017; Overholt & Szabocsik, 2013; Townsend et al., 2018). During district professional development, principals would receive instruction and performance tasks related to culturally responsive leadership content knowledge (LCK) for literacy, effective instructional strategies, supportive contexts, data gathering and analysis, intervention systems and program evaluation, and family engagement strategies, such as celebration (Hallinger, 2005; Houck & Novak, 2017; Khalifa et al., 2016; Overholt & Szabocsik, 2013; Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2017; Townsend et al., 2018). The literature suggests that the school district form principal collaborations, or professional learning communities, to allow principals to share with, learn from, and support each other during literacy learning (Houck & Novak, 2017; Overholt & Szabocsik, 2013; Townsend et al., 2018). The district could also facilitate learning walks and classroom visits to reinforce training, provide a common understanding of literacy success, and promote consistent practices across the district (Houck & Novak, 2017). Finally, the district must support principals with the financial, human, and material resources needed to execute the vision (Houck & Novak, 2017). To this end, school districts may need to streamline and align district-wide initiatives to ensure that resources are available for the critical mission of literacy proficiency.

Additionally, district leaders must recruit and hire principals with CRSL training, literacy leadership training, or both. When interviewing for CRSL, district leaders can align questions and performance scenarios with the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration [NPBEA], 2015) competencies for Equity and Cultural Responsiveness and the leadership behaviors of Khalifa et al. (2016) described in this case

study. When interviewing for literacy leadership, district leaders can align questions and performance scenarios with the International Literacy Association's *ILA Standards 2017 for Principals* and the practices described in this case study, which outline the competencies for effective principal literacy leadership (ILA, 2021). District leaders can use the interview results and research-based competency tools to determine the leader's level of competency before hiring or assigning professional development or coaching to build leader capacity.

When talent cannot be acquired, talent can be developed. According to Gusain (2017), developing internal talent is more cost effective and promotes loyalty. Gusain (2017) states,

The monetary benefits of other development initiatives will be small compared to a successful leadership development program. The advantage from talent development is homegrown leaders who understand the business well and are loyal to the organization. Promoting employees internally creates upward movement for them and makes them more engaged and satisfied. Internal growth opportunities also attract potential applicants. (p. 3)

In short, district leaders must hire competent principal literacy leaders or provide the support needed to build the desired competencies in existing leaders.

At the school level, literacy leaders must prioritize literacy and recruit and retain or develop culturally responsive teachers to improve literacy outcomes for students of color (Horsford et al., 2011; Khalifa et al., 2016). As the literacy leader, the principal must focus the priority of the school on literacy proficiency. The principal's focus on literacy initiatives will communicate to the school and community that literacy holds the highest priority and initiatives not aligned to literacy will receive lesser attention (Day & Sammons, 2014; Hollenbeck et al., 2014; Schmoker, 2011; Taylor, 2004). Thus, financial, human, and material resources must also prioritize literacy.

As with Principal Howard, the communication of literacy goals must be consistent, continual, and observed in the principal's practices. When speaking about Principal Howard's communication for literacy proficiency, third-grade teacher Tracie Bing said, "It's really truly apparent in every day, all-day talk. Anything we do as far as like programs that we may have, any engagements that the students may have, it's pretty much apparent in everything that she does. She wants us to do as well" (T. Bing, personal communication, November 18, 2020).

When recruiting, retaining, and developing culturally responsive school teachers, the principal must adopt a framework that builds cultural competence and values the cultural and social academic capital of the students (Au, 2007; Bustamante et al., 2009; Compton-Lilly & Delbridge, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016). Cultural competence, or intercultural competence, is an individual or groups' ability to understand and communicate with people from different cultures. The culturally competent individual thinks, feels, and acts in ways that acknowledge respect for "the ethnic, socio-cultural, and linguistic diversity" of others (Bustamante et al., 2009, p. 797). Students' cultural academic capital and social academic capital refer to the value students bring to the classroom. *Cultural academic capital* refers to "the ways of being and talking that are valued in classrooms and support literacy learning" (Compton-Lilly & Delbridge, 2018, p. 533). Ways of being are enacted through students' speech, dress, and behavior (Compton-Lilly & Delbridge, 2018). *Social academic capital* references social networks between educators and stakeholders "that serve children in school and with literacy learning" (Compton-Lilly & Delbridge, 2018, p. 533). The principal must carefully consider which cultural competence and culturally responsive frameworks are used and ensure congruence with the school context (Bustamante et al., 2009).

The implications for positive literacy outcomes listed above are a call to action in light of the growing diversity in American schools and literacy achievement gap of students of color.

The future of our children and our country depends on the immediate actions that we put into place today.

Suggestions for Further Research

Celebration was a prominent part of Pinecrest's culture. According to a Pinecrest teacher, celebration acted as extrinsic motivation for achieving reading goals. Few studies on principal literacy leadership include motivation as a practice of literacy leaders. In the study on leadership content knowledge (LCK) for literacy, Overholt and Szabocsik (2013) provided four descriptors of good literacy practice for motivating and engaging readers: (a) encourage positive attitudes and motivate learning to read, (b) provide students with rigorous and interesting choices for independent reading, (c) assess student interest to motivate voluntary reading, and (d) engage students with text. However, further research is needed on how to motivate and engage readers with a special focus on the role of celebration. Using incentives for learning is a research-based practice (Hallinger, 2005). Hallinger (2005) included Providing Incentives for Learning in his third dimension of effective instructional leadership, Promoting a Positive School Learning Climate. However, the application of incentives for literacy growth in a culturally diverse learning environment requires further study to provide guidance for principals who wish to implement similar initiatives.

American public schools are becoming increasingly diverse (Horsford et al., 2011; Murphy, 2004; Puzio et al., 2015; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2016). Sixty years after Flesch (2013) wrote *Why Johnny Can't Read: And What You Can Do About It*, low-income students of color in American public schools are still performing below their White peers in reading (Fiester, 2013). Given the reading achievement gap between students of color and their White and affluent peers, principals are needed who make informed decisions to address the unique cultural and linguistic

needs of diverse students during literacy instruction (Carnevale et al., 2010; Dowell et al., 2012; Fiester, 2013; Frizzell et al., 2017; Hernandez, 2011; Salloum et al., 2017; Teale et al., 2020). In this case study, Principal Howard represents a principal literacy leader who combined her knowledge of early literacy curriculum, assessment, and instruction with cultural responsiveness to create a learning culture that fostered reading proficiency for third-grade students of color. Additionally, Principal Howard created a celebratory culture that honored students' cultural diversity, leadership development, and academic achievement. Principal Howard and Pinecrest Academy moved literacy leadership theory to practice and offered an exemplar that other principals can follow as they attempt to reduce the reading achievement gap for students of color.

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FOOTNOTES

¹ The citations for this data have been withheld to protect the anonymity of the school and the state. The state assessments and accountability reporting are available upon requests.

² The citation for this data have been withheld to protect the anonymity of the school and the principal.

³ The citation for this data have been withheld to protect the anonymity of the school and the principal.

⁴ The citations for all state reports have been withheld to protect the anonymity of the state and the school. The state reports are available upon requests.

⁵ The citations for the school improvement plans have been withheld to protect the anonymity of the school.

⁶ The citations for the school handbook has been withheld to protect the anonymity of the school.

APPENDICES**APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL****INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**

Mail: P.O. Box 3999
Atlanta, Georgia 30302-3999
Phone: 404/413-3500

In Person: 3rd Floor
58 Edgewood
FWA: 00000129

October 27, 2020

Principal Investigator: Kristina F Brezicha

Key Personnel: Brezicha, Kristina F; Middleton, Gregory L; Ogletree, Susan; Thompson, Lisa

Study Department: Educational Policy Studies

Study Title: A Principal as Literacy Leader: Promoting Literacy Outcomes for Third-Grade Students of Color

Review Type: Exempt Amendment

IRB Number: H21010

Reference Number: 362728

Approval Date: 09/17/2020

Status Check Due By: 09/16/2023

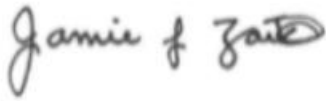
Amendment Effective Date: 10/26/2020

The Georgia State University Institutional Review Board reviewed and **approved** the amendment to your above-referenced Study.

This amendment is approved for the following modifications:

- I would like to remove field observations as a data source for my study. Due to COVID-19, the school's current literacy culture and context are not germane to the study. Additionally, the principal at my research site would like to interact virtually. Thus, the interviews will not take place at the school site as stated in Section 12.8. The interviews will be virtual.

The amendment does not alter the approval period which is listed above and a status update must be submitted at least 30 days before the due date if research is to continue beyond that time frame. Any unanticipated problems resulting from participation in this study must be reported to the IRB through the Unanticipated Problem form.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jamie f Zaikov". The signature is written in a cursive style with a loop at the end of the last name.

For more information, visit our website at www.gsu.edu/irb.

Sincerely,

Jamie Zaikov, IRB Member

APPENDIX B: EDUCATOR INFORMED CONSENT

Georgia State University Educator Informed Consent

Title: A Principal as Literacy Leader: Promoting Literacy Outcomes for Third-Grade Students of Color

Principal Investigator: Dr. Kristina Brezicha

Student Investigator: Lisa D Thompson

Introduction and Key Information

You are invited to take part in a research study. It is up to you to decide if you would like to take part in the study.

The purpose of this study is to understand the leadership factors that have contributed to reading proficiency for third-grade students of color. Your school was awarded the 2019-2020 Title I [REDACTED] designation for improving the academic performance of all student groups over a two-year period on the statewide assessment. Therefore, the research questions ask what principal leadership practices contributed to the reading proficiency of third-grade students of color.

Your role in the study will last no more than two hours over the course of two months.

You will be asked to do the following: complete a demographic survey; participate in one recorded virtual interview; review the interview transcripts for accuracy; and review school documents related to family engagement.

Participating in this study will not expose you to any more risks than you would experience in a typical day.

This study is not designed to benefit you. Instead, this investigation seeks to gain information about the leadership factors that led to reading proficiency for third-grade students of color in your school.

Purpose

The purpose of the study is to understand the leadership practices used to bolster the reading achievement of third-grade students of color and to determine how the principal formed partnerships with the parents and families of third-grade students of color to increase literacy outcomes.

You are invited to take part in this research study because you are an educator in the school. Up to 14 educators will be invited to take part in this study.

Procedures

If you decide to take part, you will do the following:

- Respond to the email invitation with some days and times that work for you to be interviewed.
- Download and sign this form. Return it to Lisa Thompson through email in a portable document format (PDF).
- Complete an educator demographic survey.
- Participate in a recorded virtual interview conducted by Lisa D. Thompson, which should take no more than 60 minutes.
- Review and verify the accuracy of your interview, which should take no more than 30 minutes.
- Be available for a brief follow-up conversation to clarify any questions. This conversation will take no more than 30 minutes.
- Participating in this study should take no more than 2 hours over the course of 2 months.

Future Research

The researcher will remove any information that may identify you and may use your data for future research. If your data is used in future research, you will not be asked for any additional consent.

Risks

In this study, you will not have any more risks than you would in a normal day of life. No injury is expected from this study, but if you believe you have been harmed, contact the Lisa D. Thompson as soon as possible. Georgia State University and the research team have not set aside funds to compensate for any injury.

Benefits

This study is not designed to benefit you. This investigation seeks to gain information about the leadership factors that led to reading proficiency for third-grade students of color in your school.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

You do not have to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop participating at any time. You may refuse to take part in the study or stop at any time.

Confidentiality

We will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. The following people and entities will have access to the information you provide:

- Dr. Kristina Brezicha
- Lisa D. Thompson
- GSU Institutional Review Board
- Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP)

Rather than use your name on study records, a pseudonym will be assigned to you. The information you provide will be stored in a locked cabinet and on password- and firewall-protected computers. Your recorded virtual interview will be kept until the interview has been transcribed and you have verified its accuracy. Upon your verification of the transcription's accuracy, the virtual file will be destroyed. After the results of this study are presented or published, your name and other identifiable information will not be disclosed.

Contact Information

Please contact Dr. Kristina Brezicha, kbrezicha@gsu.edu (Principal Investigator) or Lisa D. Thompson at 478-491-0702 and lthompson23@student.gsu.edu (Student Investigator),

- If you have questions about the study or your part in it, or
- If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the study.

The IRB at Georgia State University reviews all research that involves human participants. You can contact the IRB if you would like to speak to someone who is not involved directly with the study. You can contact the IRB for questions, concerns, problems, information, input, or questions about your rights as a research participant. Contact the IRB at 404-413-3500 or irb@gsu.edu.

Consent

You may save or print a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

If you are willing to participate in this research, please sign below.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Principal Investigator or Researcher Obtaining Consent

Date

APPENDIX C: PARENT INFORMED CONSENT

Georgia State University Parental Informed Consent

Title: A Principal as Literacy Leader: Promoting Literacy Outcomes for Third-Grade Students of Color

Principal Investigator: Dr. Kristina Brezicha

Student Investigator: Lisa D Thompson

Introduction and Key Information

You are invited to take part in a research study. It is up to you to decide if you would like to take part in the study.

The purpose of this study is to understand the leadership practices that have contributed to increased reading success for third-grade students of color. Your school was awarded the 2019-2020 Title I [REDACTED] award for improving the academic performance of all students during a two-year period on the statewide exam. Therefore, the research questions ask what principal leadership practices contributed to the reading success of third-grade students of color.

Your role in the study will last no more than two hours over the course of two months.

You will be asked to do the following: participate in one recorded online interview and review the interview transcripts for accuracy.

Participating in this study will not expose you to any more risks than you would experience in a typical day.

This study is not designed to benefit you. Instead, this study seeks to gain information about the leadership practices that led to reading success for third-grade students of color in your school.

Purpose

The purpose of the study is to understand the leadership practices used to raise the reading success of third-grade students of color and to determine how the principal partnered with the parents and families of third-grade students of color to increase reading levels.

You are invited to take part in this research study because you are a parent of a student of color in the school. Up to six parents will be invited to take part in this study.

Procedures

If you decide to take part, you will do the following:

- Respond to the email invitation with some days and times that work for you to be interviewed.

- Print and sign this form. Return a copy of the signed form to Lisa Thompson in a portable document format (PDF).
- Participate in an online recorded interview conducted by Lisa D. Thompson, which should take no more than 60 minutes.
- Review and verify the accuracy of your interview, which should take no more than 30 minutes.
- Be available for a brief follow-up conversation to clarify any questions. This conversation will take no more than 30 minutes.
- Participating in this study should take no more than 2 hours over the course of 2 months.

Future Research

The researcher will remove any information that may identify you and may use your data for future research. If your data is used in future research, you will not be asked for any additional permissions.

Risks

In this study, you will not have any more risks than you would in a normal day of life. No injury is expected from this study, but if you believe you have been harmed, contact the Lisa D. Thompson as soon as possible. Georgia State University and the research team have not set aside funds to pay for any injury.

Benefits

This study is not designed to benefit you. Instead, this study seeks to gain information about the leadership practices that led to reading success for third-grade students of color in your school.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

You do not have to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop participating at any time. You may refuse to take part in the study or stop at any time.

Confidentiality

We will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. The following people and entities will have access to the information you provide:

- Dr. Kristina Brezicha
- Lisa D. Thompson
- Georgia State University Institutional Review Board
- Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP)

In study records, a false name will be assigned to you rather than your name. The information you provide will be stored in a locked cabinet and on password- and firewall-protected computers. A copy of the online recording will be protected until the interview has been transcribed into written notes and you have verified its accuracy. After you verify that the transcribed notes are accurate, the online file will be destroyed. When the study is presented or published, your name or other information will not be revealed.

Contact Information

Please contact Dr. Kristina Brezicha, kbrezicha@gsu.edu (Principal Investigator) or Lisa D. Thompson at 478-491-0702 and lthompson23@student.gsu.edu (Student Investigator),

- If you have questions about the study or your part in it, or
- If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the study.

The IRB at Georgia State University reviews all research that involves human participants. You can contact the IRB if you would like to speak to someone who is not involved directly with the study. You can contact the IRB for questions, concerns, problems, information, input, or questions about your rights as a research participant. Contact the IRB at 404-413-3500 or irb@gsu.edu.

Consent

You may save or print a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

If you are willing to participate in this research, please sign below.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Principal Investigator or Researcher Obtaining Consent

Date

APPENDIX D: RECRUITMENT EMAIL FOR PRINCIPAL

Dear X,

My name is Lisa D Thompson. I am doctoral student at Georgia State University in the Educational Policy Studies department. I am conducting a study to understand the leadership factors that have contributed to reading proficiency for third-grade students of color. Your school was awarded the 2019-2020 Title I Reward School designation for improving the academic performance of all student groups over a two-year period on the statewide assessment. Additionally, the majority of your third-grade students, 55 percent or above, scored at or above grade level on the reading portion of the Spring 2019 [REDACTED] Assessment.

You are invited to participate because you are the principal at XYZ. No more than 20 participants will be recruited for this study. The participants include the assistant principal, literacy or instructional coach, media specialist, third-grade teachers, and teacher-selected parents of color. Participation in the study will include an individual interview, which should take no more than 60 minutes. The interviews will be conducted a mutually agreed upon location and time. Upon completion of the transcription of the interview, I will ask you to review the transcript to ensure accuracy and be available for a brief follow-up conversation to ensure an accurate understanding of the conversation. This review and any follow-up conversation, if necessary, should take no more than 30 minutes.

There are no direct benefits to participating in the study. However, the findings of the study will help other elementary school principals understand the practices needed to close the reading achievement gap for third-grade students of color.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop participating at any time.

If you decide to participate in the study, I will ask you to send some days and times that work for you to meet and be interviewed. I will also send you the informed consent form to read and sign. Please let me know if you have any questions regarding the research study and/or what I am asking of you as a volunteer participant.

Sincerely,
Lisa D. Thompson

APPENDIX E: EDUCATOR DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY**Educator Demographic Information**

Administered to educators at introductory meeting using Microsoft Forms.

Name: _____

Pseudonym: _____
(Choose a fictitious name for this study.)

Position

- Principal
- Assistant Principal
- Literacy or Instructional Coach
- Media Specialist
- Third-grade Teacher

Years in Current Position

- 1-3 years
- 4-7 years
- 8-10 years
- 10-19 years
- Over 20 years

Age

- 20s
- 30s
- 40s
- 50s
- 60s
- 70 or Over

Gender Identity

- Male
- Female
- Other

Ethnicity

- African American/Black
- American Indian/Alaskan Native
- Asian
- Caucasian/White
- Hispanic/Latino
- Multi-racial
- Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
- Other

Level of Education

- Associate Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Specialist Degree
- Doctorate Degree

Specialized reading training

- Yes
- No

If yes, please describe below:

Culturally responsive pedagogy training

- Yes
- No

If yes, please describe below:

APPENDIX F: PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Principal Interview Protocol

*Ask these semi-structured questions during a one-hour interview block. Before and after the interview, ask the principal not to reveal the identity of any educator or grade-level teacher who **will not** be taking part in this study.*

1. What is your vision for reading teaching and learning in your school?
2. How do you monitor your progress toward your vision?
3. Give me an overview of your Tier 1 reading instruction for third-grade students.
4. How do your teachers meet the unique needs of struggling readers?
5. How do you develop teachers' capacity for teaching reading?
6. How do you honor and engage students' cultures during reading instruction?
7. How do you engage with students' families and communities in reading support?
8. What school-home reading activities does your school promote?

APPENDIX G: EDUCATOR INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol: Assistant Principal, Academic Coach, Media Specialist, and Third-Grade Teachers

*Ask these semi-structured questions during a one-hour interview block. Before and after the interview, ask all educators not to reveal the identity of any educator or grade-level teacher who **will not** be taking part in this study.*

1. What is your principal's vision for reading teaching and learning in your school?
2. How do the principal, teachers, and support staff monitor progress toward that vision?
3. Give me an overview of the Tier 1 reading instruction for third-grade students.
4. How do you meet the unique needs of struggling readers?
5. **Assistant Principal, Academic Coach, Media Specialist.** How does the principal develop your capacity to support reading?

Third-Grade Teachers: How does the principal develop your capacity to teach reading?

6. **Assistant Principal, Academic Coach, Media Specialist.** How does the school honor and engage students' cultures during reading instruction?

Third-Grade Teachers: How do you honor and engage students' cultures during reading instruction?

7. How do you engage with students' families and communities in reading support?
8. What school-home reading activities does your school promote?

APPENDIX H: PARENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Parent Interview Protocol

*Ask these semi-structured questions during a one-hour interview block. Before and after the interview, ask all parents not to reveal the identity of any parent who **will not** be taking part in this study.*

1. How has the principal communicated her desire to improve your student's reading level?
2. How do the principal and teachers monitor your student's progress?
3. Does the principal offer reading workshops to parents? If so, please describe?
4. Do teachers celebrate your culture during reading instruction? If so, please describe?
5. Does the principal invite parents and families to come into the school to read to students?
6. Describe the home-school reading activities that have taken place at the school or in the community.
7. How do you assist your student with reading at home?
8. What would you like for me to know about reading instruction at this school?

APPENDIX I: DATA CODING GUIDE

Codes represent the knowledge, practices, and behaviors of a principal as literacy leader.

Instructional Literacy Leadership Codes (Dowell et al., 2012)			
Code	Term	Description	Indicators
DLM	Developing a literacy mission	<p>Knowledge and skills needed to develop a shared mission that values literacy development</p> <p>Skill set of relationship building; collaborative development and promotion of an organizational mission that values literacy</p>	<p>Develops a shared mission for literacy</p> <p>Establishes relationships</p> <p>Collaborates to develop and promote an organizational mission for literacy</p>
EMS	<p>Literacy environment and management Systems</p> <p><i>Assessment systems and environmental organization</i></p>	<p>Knowledge about formal and informal literacy assessment that results in flexible skill grouping</p> <p>Knowledge of the classroom environments conducive to literacy learning, like classroom literacy routines, whole group or small group instructional practice, teaching students at the appropriate instructional level</p>	<p>Formal and informal literacy assessments</p> <p>Flexible skill grouping</p> <p>Teacher-child interactions</p> <p>Established routines</p> <p>Teaching at appropriate instructional level</p> <p>Mix of whole and small group teaching</p>
KBP	<p>Knowledge of best practices for developmental ages and content</p> <p><i>Foundational literacy knowledge</i></p> <p><i>Assessment-informed instruction and the co-development of reading and writing</i></p>	<p>Knowledge of instructional strategies based on assessment</p> <p>Knowledge of the interrelatedness of reading and writing co-development</p>	<p>Instruction based on assessment</p> <p>Daily reading and writing practice</p> <p>Age and developmentally appropriate reading material</p> <p>Reading aloud</p>

			Reading and writing co-development Reading and writing processes
CKL	Content knowledge of literacy <i>Foundational literacy knowledge</i> <i>Tier I instruction</i>	Knowledge of importance of early literacy skills, such as oral language development and print awareness Knowledge of composition and text structures Knowledge of the functions of language and importance of knowing personal and social aspects of language development	Oral language development Print awareness Linguistic knowledge Composition (spelling and writing) Narrative and expository literature and comprehension Functions of language Personal-sociocultural aspects of language
MEI	Monitoring and evaluation of literacy instruction <i>Building capacity for literacy and monitoring implementation</i>	Knowledge regarding how to effectively monitor and evaluate literacy instruction Knowledge and skill regarding supporting and evaluation of teachers and coaches Expertise in facilitating professional development that further promotes skill with literacy teaching Provides needed resources for impactful literacy teaching and coaching	Monitors and evaluates literacy instruction Supports and evaluates teachers and coaches Provides professional development Provides resources for teaching and coaching
SSL	School structures to support literacy <i>Providing resources for classrooms and media centers</i>	Provides funding that promotes classroom libraries and access opportunities Provisioning for literacy	Access to print and literature Provision for literacy instruction and learning

	<i>Organizing classrooms for learning</i>	Knowledge of organizing classrooms for optimal literacy learning	Classrooms organized for optimal learning (schedules, structures, use of blocks, workshops)
CRSL for Literacy (Khalifa et al., 2016)			
Code	Term	Description	Indicators
CRSE	Promotes culturally responsive and inclusive school environment	Promotion of a culturally responsive school context with an emphasis on inclusivity Challenges exclusionary and marginalizing behaviors	The principal promotes a literacy culture that: Accepts Indigenized, local identities Builds relationships; reduces anxiety among students Models CRSL for staff in building interactions Promotes vision for an inclusive instructional and behavioral practices If necessary, challenges exclusionary policies, teachers, and behaviors Acknowledges, values, and uses Indigenous cultural and social capital of students Uses student voice Uses school data to discover and track disparities in academic and disciplinary trends
CRT	Develops culturally responsive teachers	Ensures that teachers are and remain culturally responsive Ability to articulate a vision that supports the development and sustaining of culturally responsive teaching	The principal promotes a literacy culture that: Develops teacher capacities for culturally responsive pedagogy

			<p>Collaborates walkthroughs</p> <p>Creates culturally responsive PD opportunities for teachers</p> <p>Uses school data to see cultural gaps in achievement, discipline, enrichment, and remedial services</p> <p>Creates a CRSL team that is charged with constantly finding new ways for teachers to be culturally responsive</p> <p>Models culturally responsive teaching using culturally responsive assessment tools for students</p>
CSR	Critically self-reflects on leadership behaviors	Awareness of self and his/her values, beliefs, and/or dispositions when it comes to serving poor children of color	<p>The principal as literacy leader:</p> <p>Commits to continuous learning of cultural knowledge and contexts</p> <p>Displays a critical consciousness on practice in and out of school; displays self-reflection</p> <p>Uses school data and indicators to measure CRSL</p> <p>Uses parent/community voices to measure cultural responsiveness in schools</p> <p>Challenges Whiteness and hegemonic epistemologies in school</p> <p>Uses equity audits to measure student inclusiveness, policy, and practice</p>

			<p>Leads with courage</p> <p>Is a transformative leader for social justice and inclusion</p>
ESPC	Engages students, parents, and Indigenous contexts	Ability of the school leader to engage students, families, and communities in culturally appropriate ways	<p>The principal promotes literacy collaboration that:</p> <p>Develops meaningful, positive, relationships with community</p> <p>Is a servant leader, as public intellectual and other roles</p> <p>Finds overlapping spaces for school and community</p> <p>Serves as advocate and social activist for community-based causes in both the school and neighborhood community</p> <p>Uses the community as an informative space from which to develop positive understandings of students and families</p> <p>Resists deficit images of students and families</p> <p>Nurture/cares for others; sharing information</p> <p>Connects directly with students</p>
Emergent Theme			
CLG	Celebrate Literacy Growth	Creates structures to measure, monitor, acknowledge, and celebrate students' literacy growth	<p>The principal motivates students toward literacy growth by:</p> <p>Prioritizing literacy as a desirable goal</p>

		Celebrates students' literacy growth during scheduled events	Creating school structures that celebrate student literacy growth
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