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Teacher and Principal Perceptions of Principal Leadership Practices Having the Strongest Relationship to Student Achievement

Michael C. Conran

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL PERCEPTIONS OF PRINCIPAL
LEADERSHIP PRACTICES HAVING THE STRONGEST
RELATIONSHIP TO STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

PROGRAM IN ADMINISTRATION AND SUPERVISION

BY

MICHAEL C. CONRAN

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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The painstaking research, refinement of ideas, reflections and data analysis that contributed to a certain level of sophistication of thought resulting in a contribution to the field of knowledge focused on effective principal leadership practices resulting in high levels of student achievement, was not performed in a vacuum.

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Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to my mother and world-class educator,
Patricia.

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study examined the perceptions of high performing elementary, middle and high school teachers and principals, as evidenced by their students' high achievement levels, relative to the principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement. The Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model, which contains six domains and 21 elements identifying comprehensively researched and evidence-based principal leadership practices, was used as a conceptual framework. The identification of the specific principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement hinged on the delineation of the perceptions of the teacher and principal study participants relative to the principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement.

Due to the nature of this study, which examined the perspectives and experiences of human subjects, a qualitative case study approach was used. Using a semi-structured interviewing methodology, a series of in-depth interviews were conducted with elementary, middle and high school teachers and principals. The data collection was centered around the overarching research questions: (1) Which principal leadership practices, as perceived by teachers, have the strongest relationship to student achievement? and (2) Which principal leadership practices, as perceived by principals,

have the strongest relationship to student achievement? Data analysis identified patterns that gave rise to themes on which the study's implications were hinged.

The major findings of this study revealed specific principal leadership practices accounting for high levels of student achievement, including the principal: providing meaningful feedback to teachers regarding predominant instructional practices; providing teacher support and job-embedded professional development; communicating clearly and positively with an emphasis on teaching and learning; making student-focused decisions; building trust and positive relationships with all school constituent groups; and promoting a collegial and collaborative environment in which to collectively solve problems and make decisions.

The findings of this study may help principal preparation program faculties design syllabi more narrowly focused on the essential principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement and their application in the field.

Implications of the results for this study and future research are discussed.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify which school principal leadership practices, as perceived by both teachers and principals, have the strongest relationship to student achievement. As illustrated in the literature review, scholars and practitioners have chronicled the evolution of the myriad roles and responsibilities of the school principal, the frameworks developed to measure principal performance and related topics relative to principal leadership effectiveness, as measured by student achievement. Teacher and principal perceptions relative to which specific principal leadership practices have the strongest relationship to student achievement remained largely unexamined prior to this qualitative case study.

Statement of the Problem

Since 2000, The Wallace Foundation supported numerous research studies on school leadership and published more than 70 reports on the subject. Through that work, drawing on both detailed case studies and large-scale quantitative analysis, the research showed that most school variables, separately, have little effect on learning. Principals, though, capable of performing a combination of key practices to reach critical mass, practices including: shaping a vision of academic success for all students; creating a climate hospitable to education; cultivating leadership in others; improving instruction; and managing people, data and processes to foster school improvement have been

deemed second only to classroom instruction among school-related factors that affect student learning in school (The Wallace Foundation, 2013).

Regardless the adjectives used to describe the stylistic or methodological approach to leadership (e.g., instructional, transformational, and distributed) the research identifies the school leader roles and responsibilities of the principal, the “practices,” as most essential to collective teacher efficacy and student learning outcomes (Hallinger & Wen-Chung Wang, 2015; Leithwood, Patten, & Jantzi, 2010; Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004).

Understanding which principal leadership practices have the strongest relationship to student achievement creates a problem for principals, as there is little research to suggest some degree of amalgamation of the numerous principal leadership evaluation instrument domain elements and sub-elements, paring down to the most essential principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement. Studies have indicated the strong connection between administrative leadership and effective schools (Edmonds, 1979; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Hallinger & Wen-Chung Wang, 2015; Leithwood et al., 2004).

The specific problem addressed by this case study was the lack of knowledge aimed at identifying which principal leadership practices have the greatest impact on student achievement.

Key studies over the course of the last seven decades have recognized the principal as the catalyst for: building a strong vision; sharing leadership; leading a learning community; and gathering data and monitoring curriculum and instruction (Stronge, Richard, & Catano, 2008). A knowledge gap exists as to which principal

leadership practices, as perceived by teachers and principals, have the strongest relationship to student achievement.

Scholars and practitioners have studied the roles and responsibilities of the principal, chronicled the evolution of principal leadership styles and methodologies and have constructed principal leadership frameworks and instruments that identify key principal leadership practices to help guide principals in carrying out their roles and responsibilities with due diligence. This study looks at the identification of the principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study was to identify the principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement, as perceived by teachers and principals. The study included elementary, middle and high school teachers and principals. This qualitative case study used semi-structured interviews as the primary means of data collection to acquire this new knowledge (Yin, 2016).

Interviewing elementary, middle and high school teachers and principals relative to their perceptions of the principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement provides insight into which of these practices are most closely linked to positive student outcomes, the implications of which could be useful to the design of school leadership preparation programs, the design of more narrowly focused principal evaluation frameworks and rubrics or the development of an entirely new educational leadership paradigm.

Importance of the Study

The significance of this case study is to capture teacher and principal perceptions of what effective principals provide in terms of principal leadership, what these practices look and sound like, in order that they are well prepared and are able to seek out the knowledge and support needed to exemplify the desirable principal leadership ideas and traits reflected in these practices. Further, the significance of this study identifies for teachers, those essential principal leadership practices they should look for and expect from their principals as they seek the support they need to be successful in the classroom.

While the importance of effective principals is undisputed, few studies have identified specific skills that principals need to promote school success (Grissom & Loeb, 2011). Since the effective schools movement pushed principal instructional leadership center stage in the mid-1980's, overall principal time devoted to instructional activities is 12%-26% (Grissom, Loeb, & Master, 2013; Lavigne, Shakman, Zweig, & Greller, 2016; National Center for Education Statistics, 2012), and researchers continue their work to illuminate the dynamic relationships among leadership, teaching quality, and student learning in school improvement (Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Murphy, Neumerski, Goldring, Grisson, & Porter, 2016).

Several stakeholder groups may benefit from this study on teachers' and principals' perceptions relative to the principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement. Using this study's results, universities may better design principal preparation programs to focus more intentionally on teaching the principal leadership practices most closely related to positive student achievement. This case study may also benefit scholars in the development of principal performance

frameworks and rubrics that better target specific principal leadership practices aimed at teacher quality and the improvement of instruction (Hallinger, 1982; Hallinger & Wen-Chung Wang, 2015; Marshall, 2017; Marzano, 2018).

Conceptual Framework

Principal instructional leadership has been studied for decades (Andrews, 1985; Andrews, 1987; Austin, 1979; Barth, 1986; Bridges, 1967; Cuban, 1988; Edmonds, 1979; Hallinger, 2011b; Hallinger & Wen-Chung Wang, 2015; Murphy et al., 2016) and throughout these same decades, competing leadership models emerged to include transformational (Leithwood, 1994; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001), distributed (Spillane et al., 2001), and instructional (Hallinger & Heck, 2010).

The debate over which leadership model or instructional leadership practices offer the greatest leverage for understanding how school leaders contribute to learning has been reduced in recent years. Empirical results across a large number of studies have begun to show that the influence on school performance by a shared and integrated form of instructional leadership, as measured by the quality of its pedagogy and the achievement of its students, is substantial (Hallinger, 2011a; Hallinger & Wen-Chung Wang, 2015; Marks & Printy, 2003).

Consistent with a more shared and integrated form of school leadership, the conceptual framework selected for this study is the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model, which blends the instructional and operational leadership roles and responsibilities of the school leader. In this research- and evidence-based model, Robert J. Marzano integrates the National Policy Board for Educational Administration's (NPBEA) Professional Standards for Educational Leaders while defining six domains and

twenty-one elements addressing all the actions, decisions and work that a principal performs on a daily basis (Herrmann & Ross, 2016; Marzano, 2018; NPBEA, 2015). In this qualitative case study, teacher and principal study participants will share their perceptions relative to the principal leadership practices that have the strongest relationship to student achievement and their responses will be correlated with the domains and elements of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model. As patterns emerge from the data collected from study participant interview responses, themes will be identified and correlated to the domains and elements found within the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model. These themes will be used during the systematic qualitative analysis of the study to generate new knowledge relative to principal leadership practices, as perceived by teacher and principal perceptions, that have the strongest relationship to student achievement.

Research Questions

The research questions for this case study were:

RQ1: Which principal leadership practices, as perceived by teachers, have the strongest relationship to student achievement?

RQ2: Which principal leadership practices, as perceived by principals, have the strongest relationship to student achievement?

As there is little research on which specific principal leadership practices have the strongest relationship to student achievement, a quantitative research design may be limiting. There may potentially be any number of specific principal leadership practices in combination with any number of principal leadership styles responsible for, or contributing to, positive student achievement. For these reasons, a qualitative case study

was considered a more appropriate methodology to explore insights and develop deeper knowledge on which specific principal leadership practices have the strongest relationship to student achievement.

Overview of Research Design

A qualitative case study was performed. This study sought to generate new knowledge resulting from the systematic qualitative analysis of data derived from teacher and principal study participant responses to semi-structured interview questions relative to the study's research questions exploring which principal leadership practices have the strongest relationship to student achievement. The Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model served as a conceptual framework, guiding the analysis and interpretation of the data (Brinkmann, 2013; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Seidman, 2019).

The study sample was drawn from a population of two elementary (K-5), three middle (6-8) and two high (9-12) school teachers, and one elementary (K-5), one middle (6-8) and two high (9-12) principals for a total of 11 participants. Teacher study participants have taught for a minimum of five years. Principal study participants taught for a minimum of five years prior to becoming a principal and have served as a principal for a minimum of five years. More details about the specific design of the study, including how student achievement data criteria was applied to narrow the study sample down to teachers and principals whose practices were already demonstrating proven levels of positive student achievement, are provided in Chapter III.

Definition of Terms

The Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP) is the state assessment and accountability measure for Michigan students enrolled in a public school

district. MSTEP assessments in English Language Arts and Mathematics are administered to all students in grades 3-8.

The Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR) is the state assessment and accountability measure for Illinois students enrolled in a public school district. IAR assessments in English Language Arts and Mathematics are administered to all students in grades 3-8.

Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT): The PSAT is administered to students in grades 8-11: PSAT 8/9 is administered to students in grades 8 and 9. PSAT 10 is administered to students in grade 10 and eligible students in grade 11.

Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT): The college entrance exam, SAT, is administered to students in grade 11.

Student Achievement: For the purpose of this study, student achievement is defined as students scoring “proficient” or above at grade level on the MSTEP, performance “level 4 or 5” on the IAR, or reaching or exceeding “benchmark” values at grade level on the PSAT or SAT (see Appendix A)

Instructional Leadership: Instructional leadership is generally defined as the management of curriculum and instruction by a school principal.

Transformational Leadership: A leadership style in which leaders encourage, inspire and motivate employees to innovate and create change that will help grow and shape the future success of the school and its students and teachers.

Distributed/Shared Leadership: A leadership style that broadly distributed leadership responsibility, such that teachers, teacher leaders and administration within a school lead each other.

Assumptions, Limitations and Delimitations

An assumption of this case study was that the data gleaned from the semi-structured interview questions asked of study participants could be coded and used to generate new knowledge relative to principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement. Another assumption is that all study participants answered the semi-structured interview questions honestly and completely during the interviews. The research identifies principal leadership practices within the broader context of overall principal leadership roles and responsibilities and this study assumed that participant responses to semi-structured interview questions could align to specific instructional leadership practices, overall school leader roles and responsibilities, or both.

A limitation of this case study was that the scope of the domains and elements of the study's conceptual framework, the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model, may not fully capture the breadth of the study participants' responses to the study's semi-structured interview questions.

A delimitation of this case study was that the participants may not fully represent the norm for all elementary, middle and high school teachers and principals. A larger, more diversified group size may provide more insight.

Over the course of a 26 year period, the researcher was principal of four Illinois schools that ranked in the top 1% of the state and was principal of the number one ranked public high school in the state of Colorado. Knowing which consistently demonstrated principal leadership practices resulted in the high student achievement of the researcher's schools while principal, there was potential for conscious or unconscious researcher bias

relative to the understanding and/or interpretation of study participants' semi-structured interview responses.

The literature review conducted for this study, summarized in Chapter II, may also impart some bias. Although a rather exhaustive literature review was conducted prior to the study, additional literature was reviewed throughout the coding process of the study participants' transcribed responses to the semi-structured interview questions, where further exploration of the literature was viewed as necessary for a thorough and systematic qualitative analysis of the data derived from the study participants' transcribed responses to the semi-structured interview questions.

Summary

This case study set out to identify which principal leadership practices, as perceived by teachers and principals, have the strongest relationship to student achievement, using a qualitative interviewing methodology. Although numerous studies over the course of the last seven decades have recognized the principal as the catalyst for successful schools, a knowledge gap exists as to which instructional leadership practices, specifically, have the strongest relationship to student achievement. The results of this study may serve multiple entities such as: college and university principal preparation programs; school district HR and professional development Directors; principal evaluation framework and performance rubric developers; as well as teachers, School Boards, and, of course, principals.

Four more chapters follow. Chapter II is a comprehensive review of the literature on school leadership, which includes the evolution of the school principal's roles and responsibilities over time, school leadership styles and methodologies and the

establishment of school leadership assessments, including the domains and elements of the study's conceptual model, the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model. The primary topic discussed in Chapter II is the gap in the literature relative to which principal leadership practices have the strongest relationship to student achievement and how this study will fill this gap in the literature. In Chapter III, the study's research design is discussed and specific details of how the study was conducted are defined. Chapters IV and V focus on the actual research conducted for this study; Chapter IV presenting the research results, and Chapter V presenting an interpretation of the study's findings.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Key in the term *School Leadership* into an internet search, and in less than one second over one billion results will appear. Education Foundations, education policy institutes, national school leadership organizations, federally sponsored commissions and both nationally and internationally recognized education scholars, researchers and practitioners have contributed to this substantial body of research over the past seven decades. The research is as broad as it is deep. The research traces the evolution of the roles and responsibilities of the principal from manager to leader, the identification of critical principal leadership practices as they relate to effective schools and the development of instruments with which to monitor and measure principal performance as a means of promoting best school leader practices that ultimately result in positive student achievement.

While this previous research has clearly and abundantly resulted in the identification of school leadership practices most strongly connected to effective schools, it provides little insight into teacher and principal perceptions of which specific school leadership practices have the strongest relationship to student achievement.

The goal of this literature review is to summarize the evolution of the roles and responsibilities of the school principal, identify effective principal leadership styles and methodologies and identify the components of instruments created and used to measure

and evaluate effective principal leadership practices, including a thorough exploration of the components and elements of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model.

Evolution of Principal Roles and Responsibilities

Principal Role as Instructional Leader

Early schools had single teachers, or masters, who were answerable to the local community, often through elected or appointed school boards, for what went on in their classrooms. As schools became larger in the early 1800s, and grade-level classes were established, the position of “principal teacher” was created. This person, almost always a man, was a teacher who also carried out some clerical and administrative duties that kept the school in order, such as assigning classes, conducting discipline, maintaining the building, taking attendance, and ensuring that school began and ended on time (Kafka, 2009).

At the turn of the 20th century throughout the 1950’s, school principals, with exceptions where circumstances called for them to return to their roots in the classroom, principals emerged as program managers (Hallinger, 1992). School administration models illustrating emergent principal roles and responsibilities in that era, in response to nationwide trends toward school consolidation, a call for school administration to emulate that of corporate management and the increased political nature of educational institutions, led the majority of school principals to forswear the instructional arena as a domain of primary concern (Cuban, 1988; Hallinger, 1992).

During the 1960’s and 1970’s, the requirement that the principal fulfill the role of manager was further exacerbated by the need for principals to then manage federally sponsored and funded programs for special populations targeted toward the physically

and mentally challenged, economically disadvantaged and English learners. In addition to these programs, federal dollars were being infused nationwide to support curriculum innovations, particularly for math and science, which principals were also expected to manage, regardless that they were then implementing innovations whose goals, substance and procedures were designed by others and as a result focused principals' concern more on meeting criteria for compliance than on program improvement (Hallinger, 1992).

Principals were finding it more and more difficult to be teachers of teachers due to changing roles and responsibilities. As a result of the ever-increasing scope of curricular offerings and teacher specializations, teachers became increasingly less likely to view their principal as an instructional expert and principals more likely to view the expectation that they themselves be instructional experts, unrealistic (Erickson, 1965). Teachers tended to accept the principal's supervision only when they perceived it to be competent to assist them specific to subject and grade level, and as a result principals found it difficult to maintain a status of, "jack of all trades" (Erickson, 1965).

As a result, even then, the notion that as school districts became better organized and supported, one could visualize faculties comprised of teaching teams that combine the efforts of "clinical" professors, experienced teachers, beginning teachers, and student teachers arranged in such a manner as to provide much more specialized and intensive classroom guidance than one principal whose expertise at best was limited in scope (Conant, 1963). However, it would take decades for this notion to develop and be recognized among other best practices relative to instructional leadership.

In October of 1979, as the 1980's were preparing to dawn and introduce a new model of principal leadership (Hallinger, 1992), Ronald Edmonds (1979) noted

unequivocally that among the most tangible and indispensable characteristics of effective schools was strong administrative leadership, without which the disparate elements of good schooling could neither be brought together nor kept together, and that instructionally effective schools maintained a climate of expectation in which no children were permitted to fall below minimum but efficacious levels of achievement.

Although Edmonds' assertion of the need for strong leadership to produce effective schools was widely supported, there was little research or literature at the time presenting models describing how specific principal leadership practices translate to actual student success (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982).

In 1981, to address his concern about, "the widespread public perception that something is seriously remiss in our educational system" (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), the Honorable T.H. Bell, then Secretary of the United States Department of Education created the National Commission on Excellence in Education. In 1983, the Commission published its seminal report, "A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform." The Commission ominously cautioned:

Our Nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world...We report to the American people that while we can take justifiable pride in what our schools and colleges have historically accomplished and contributed to the United States and the well-being of its people, the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people. (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983)

Although the Commission's report would later come under scrutiny and criticism relative to its gathering of statistical information and the limited scope of its research, the report nonetheless had tremendous impact on American education, leading to comprehensive school reform efforts, as a catalyst for the academic-standards movement, drawing attention to the importance of education policy and leading to a focus on school accountability (Weiss, 2003).

As school accountability was on the rise, so too was the conception of how schools could improve reliant upon certain assumptions that included schools not having the capacity to improve themselves, rather being dependent on external sources; student performance being best measured by standardized tests and that by observing high performing schools, desirable characteristics could be identified and applied to the training of teachers and principals of lower performing schools (Barth, 1986). From the assumption that such desirable characteristics could be identified, came a proliferation of studies that led to the creation of frameworks attempting to define the practices of effective principals, which included such practices as creating school goals, coordinating the curriculum, supervising and evaluating instruction and monitoring student progress (Hallinger, 1982).

By the mid-1980's, policy makers and scholars asserted that the "instructional leadership" role of the principal was crucial to school effectiveness. From these assertions, federal efforts to support the development of school leadership emerged. Such efforts included preparatory training programs for administrators. During this time, a litany of cited variables among scholars and practitioners identified the correlation of unusually high student achievement to strong principal leadership, and as a result one of

the most distinctive developments of the 1980's emerged. That is, that the focus of these programs center less on pre-service preparation, and move instead toward the inservice stage, providing learning experiences for practicing principals (Wimpelberg, 1990).

At the start of the 1990's, "instructional leadership" had become, since the previous decade, the single most preferred image of K-12 school leadership (Greenfield, 1987). This preference, however, does not preclude two additional central leadership concepts emerging in educational administration research: distributed leadership and transformational leadership (Berkovich, 2018), which in addition to the recognition of the importance of organization building, creating shared visions and distributing leadership (Hunt, 1991), engaged teachers as co-collaborators in the restructuring agenda (Leithwood, 1994).

Since the 2000's, it has become increasingly more evident that instructional leadership needed to switch to transformational leadership and subsequently a distributed function, involving senior, middle and teacher leaders, as well as principals (Bush, 2015).

For nearly seven decades, educational scholars and practitioners have recognized that as the roles and responsibilities of the school principal have evolved, so too has the scope of those roles and responsibilities. In this post-industrial era, when never before have students come to the public school from such diverse backgrounds, family patterns and native languages, our society has charged schools with delivering a high quality, multi-disciplinary education to all students, seeking to guarantee the promise of successful learning and adulthood employment for all (Arterbury & Hord, 1991). As a result, the role of the school principal has evolved from building manager to one that stipulates they harness the collective energy of all school constituent groups relative to

school vision and goals, culture, curriculum, instruction, assessment, professional development, facilities, finance, family engagement, all while maintaining high visibility, excellent communication and facilitation skills and performing all duties in a highly ethical and transparent manner (Bridges, 1967; Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996; Edmonds, 1979; Erickson, 1965; Hallinger, 1982; Marzano, 2013; Marzano, 2018; Murphy, Hallinger, Weil, & Mitman, 1983).

Leadership is widely regarded as a key factor in accounting for differences in the success with which schools foster the learning of their students. While other factors within the school also contribute to such turnarounds, powerful leadership is the catalyst (Leithwood et al., 2004; Sutchter, Podolsky, & Espinoza, 2017). The expectation that principals should be instructional leaders is now deeply engrained in our understanding of effective school leadership. Managing the daily operations of their schools is insufficient; present day principals are expected to engage closely with teaching and learning (Neumerski et al., 2018).

School Leadership Styles and Methodologies

Ultimately, student performance expectations rest squarely on the shoulders of the principal. In a role that encapsulates the varied and nuanced work of middle management and extends beyond plant maintenance and compliance to include counseling, budgeting, inspiring, teaching, learning, disciplining, evaluating, buffering, celebrating, consoling, and a million other tasks, the principal is the chief learning officer (Hall, Childs-Bowen, Cunningham-Morris, Pajardo, & Simeral, 2016).

Of the factors that influence student achievement most, the vast majority are school-, teacher-, and curriculum based, all of which are influenced by the building principal (Hattie, 2009).

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is having the ability to get people to want to change, improve, and be led (Northouse, 2001). Authority and influence associated with transformational leadership are not necessarily allocated to those occupying formal administrative positions. Rather, power is attributed by organizational members to whomever is able to inspire their commitments to collective aspirations, and the desire for personal and collective mastery over the capacities needed to accomplish such aspirations (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006).

School leadership has a greater influence on schools and pupils when it is widely distributed (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). Transformational leadership has significant positive effects on collective teacher efficacy, the level of confidence teachers possess relative to their ability to organize and implement whatever educational initiatives are required for students to reach high standards of achievement, when principals clarify goals by identifying new opportunities for the school; developing, articulating, and inspiring others with a vision of the future; and promoting cooperation and collaboration among staff toward the attainment of common goals (Leithwood et al., 2010).

Hauserman and Stick (2013) found that highly transformational principals were viewed as effective disciplinarians who focused on making students responsible; acted as role models and emphasized collaboration; encouraged leadership in staff; were open to

innovative ideas and supported projects by providing resources; were respectful and considerate of staff; consulted those affected by decisions or issues; and were trusted and viewed as professionals.

Distributed Leadership

In the distributed leadership model, the principal shares authority and power; teachers take leading roles, assume responsibility, and act independently as individuals or groups as shared responsibility is rooted in the structure and culture of the school. (Natsiopoulou & Giouroukakis, 2010). The nature of distributed leadership as a theory criticizes the hierarchical design of leadership and suggests the involvement of all personnel in the decision-making mechanism and collaboration among the entire staff as ways to effectively coordinate work and solutions to organizational problems (Gumus, Sukru Bellibas, Esen, & Gumus, 2018).

As the role of the principal has changed, there is a greater emphasis on shared decision making and professional learning communities in which all school stakeholders develop a shared mission, vision, and values; engage in collective inquiry; build collaborative teams; take action; and focus on continuous improvement that are assessed on the basis of student achievement results (DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

Instructional Leadership

Several notable models of instructional leadership have been proposed over the years, one of the earliest of which was developed by educational leadership researcher and author, Philip Hallinger, one of the foremost scholars in this field. Hallinger's model, the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS), is the instructional leadership model most frequently used in empirical investigations (Hallinger, 2008),

proposes three dimensions for the instructional leadership role of the principal: defining the school's mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school learning climate (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987; Hallinger, 2008). Each of the model's three dimensions outline specific practices including, but are not limited to: developing a focused set of annual school-wide goals; using data on student performance when developing the school's academic goals; referring to the school's academic goals when making curricular decisions with teachers; pointing out specific strengths and weaknesses in teachers' instructional practices during post-conference feedback; and making it clear who is responsible for coordinating the curriculum across grade levels (Hallinger, 1982).

Bamburg and Andrews (1990) noted that proponents of effective schools research hypothesized that to have instructionally effective schools, there must be: a clear and focused mission; strong instructional leadership by the principal; high expectations for students and staff; frequent monitoring of student progress; the presence of a positive learning climate; parent/community involvement; and an emphasis upon student attainment of basic skills. While each of these correlates plays a critical role in the development of an instructionally effective school, the nature of the relationship each have upon student achievement is less well defined. Further, instructional leadership was found to be a set of strategic interactions grouped into four areas including: the principal as a resource provider; the principal as an instructional resource; the principal as an effective communicator; and the principal as a visible presence.

Instructional leadership has become increasingly accepted globally as a normative expectation in the principalship. Scholars have generated a substantial body of empirical

research on instructional leadership that has been the subject of analytical reviews by scholars throughout the world. The scope and findings of these reviews affirm that instructional leadership has become firmly entrenched in the firmament of global research, policy and practice. One can conclude that instructional leadership has been accepted as a core element of school leadership in a wider array of contexts around the world (Hallinger & Wen-Chung Wang, 2015).

If principals seek to be instructional leaders then they must acknowledge that the position of principal carries with it the burden of not only "managing" the day-to-day activities of running a school (i.e., meeting with parents, attending meetings at central administration, monitoring the budget, resolving discipline issues, scheduling assemblies, supervising lunchrooms, etc.) but also of providing instructional leadership. Further, principals must not only become knowledgeable about effective instructional practices, they must also be able to effectively work with teachers that have instructional concerns or problems, understand that staff development activities are vital and that their participation in staff development activities is a powerful factor in the successful adoption and implementation of curriculum innovations (Bamburg & Andrews, 1990).

Within its Principal Leadership Development Framework (PLDF), which builds upon a foundation provided by prominent researchers, educational thinkers, and practitioners, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) establishes a clear and concise picture of effective building leadership, expressing the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and actions necessary for success as a principal.

There are four criteria within the PLDF for the principal who serves as Instructional Leader:

Criterion 1: Builds collective capacity of the entire staff through the cultivation of a robust Professional Learning Community.

Criterion 2: Builds individual capacity of the entire staff through differentiated supervision, coaching, feedback, and evaluation practices.

Criterion 3: Ensures the alignment of rigorous curricula, research-based best practices in instruction, and comprehensive formative and summative assessment approaches.

Criterion 4: Promotes monitoring systems that use real-time data to inform instruction and intervention at the teacher, team, and school levels.

In our results-driven culture of schooling, the principal's responsibility and requirement is plain: to demand and develop high-quality learning experiences in every classroom, at every minute, for every child. The principal, so named for the position's original role as "principal teacher," is the gatekeeper for instructional excellence (Hall et al., 2016).

School Leadership Assessment

Although all previously identified principal roles and responsibilities are essential to the effective operation of schools, current research on effective schools and management has narrowed the focus of the myriad principal roles and responsibilities, and how they lead to a fundamental and essential understanding of the linkages between school leadership and learning. And, further, a research-based focus on instructional leadership and the development of new conceptual frameworks and instruments with

which to measure the capacity of principals to be effective instructional leaders (Hallinger, 2005). These emerging and well-developed frameworks and instruments identify specific principal instructional leadership practices and evidences of the impact these practices have on student learning (Leithwood et al., 2004; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001).

Existing school leadership frameworks and instruments identify practices that include, among many, the principal providing a clear vision as to how instruction should be addressed in the school, effectively supporting and retaining teachers who continually enhance their pedagogical skills through reflection and professional growth plans, being aware of predominant instructional practices throughout the school, providing clear and ongoing evaluations of teacher strengths, ensuring that multiple sources of data guide lesson planning and lesson implementation and ensuring that teachers are provided with job-embedded professional development that is directly related to their instructional growth goals (Marshall, 2017; Marzano, 2018; Stronge et al., 2008; Williams, Cameron, & Davis, 2009). Despite this research, evaluation alone does not lead to improved leadership effectiveness, few principal evaluation systems include explicit professional learning opportunities for principals, such as how to coach teachers to build their instructional practice, how to conduct effective classroom observations and provide quality feedback, or how to create a shared vision and build an effective team (Micheaux & Parvin, 2018).

Teacher and Principal Perceptions

Instructional leadership is a vital component of successful teaching and learning in schools. Specific to principal instructional leadership, university faculty, expert

principals and expert principal teacher leaders: view teacher evaluation as a long-term commitment to continuous growth rather than one or more traditional observations using an evaluation instrument; view professional growth as an opportunity to assess teachers' professional growth needs and provide learning opportunities with a particular focus, congruent with those needs; view curriculum development to be a function of instructional leadership, and identified the need to develop capacities for assessing and improving curriculum and instruction; view knowledge about effective instruction as vital for the improvement of student learning and identified the principal as ultimately responsible for instructional decisions, and such decisions require knowledge of state and district standards, research on school climate that promotes student learning, pedagogical knowledge, and knowledge about how to plan, deliver, and assess instruction, including instruction for diverse groups of learners (Backor & Gordon, 2015).

What teachers want from their principals as school leaders has seemingly remained fairly constant over time. As far back as 1925, Saunders found that teachers wanted from their principal: accurate information regarding research-based instructional best practices; opportunities to visit teachers modeling those practices; opportunities to practice implementing those research-based instructional best practices intelligently under the sympathetic supervision of the principal; curriculum appropriate to the immediate and future needs of every pupil; curriculum material capable of maximizing student potential; and a principal who models democratic leadership techniques, recognizing that the classroom teacher is as important a social factor in the school community as is the principal (Saunders, 1925).

Zimmerman identifies four key domains as pivotal components to a successful professional evaluation process: interactions between principal and educator; consistent evaluations; principal commitment to effective professional evaluation; and a principal knowledgeable in pedagogy, content, and evaluation. In addition, Zimmerman notes that teachers desire a reciprocal, communicative relationship with their evaluators and the need for the evaluation process to contain constructive feedback from their principal about their professional strengths and weaknesses, including constructive general feedback, encouragement, pedagogically appropriate feedback with suggestions and examples for improvement, and adequate time for the feedback process (Zimmerman & Deckert-Pelton, 2003).

Many teachers perceive their principals as mentors and potential sources of valuable pedagogical information, as often principals are more experienced than the teachers they evaluate and their insight can be very helpful relative to the delivery of instruction. Conversely, when principals are perceived to have little teaching or pedagogical experience, or reduced content knowledge, teachers' belief in their principals' abilities to be competent judges of teaching abilities is greatly reduced. That is, the evaluation process is only effective if the evaluator has a good understanding of teaching (Zimmerman & Deckert-Pelton, 2003).

There appears to be conflicting findings in the research relative to teacher and principal perceptions of the frequency of which principal instructional behaviors are enacted and observed. Whereas Goff found that there is often a large, measurable gap in the perceptions of instructional leadership between teachers and principals, the difference implying that teachers may be seeing and interpreting elements of instructional leadership

differently than are principals (Goff, Goldring, & Bickman, 2014), Gurley found that there is little if any difference between the perceptions of principals and teachers regarding the frequency of principal instructional leadership behaviors enacted and observed. Gurley's finding is a departure from what has typically been reported by other researchers, that principals rate themselves substantially and consistently higher than do their teachers in reporting on the frequency with which they engage in instructional leadership behaviors (Gurley, Anast-May, O'Neal, & Dozier, 2016).

The large scale reform initiatives that many, if not most, of American schools are faced with can be enhanced when the principals are committed, consistent, knowledgeable, and skilled evaluators of teachers' pedagogical skills (Zimmerman & Deckert-Pelton, 2003).

The Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model

This proposed qualitative case study's conceptual framework is based on the main idea that leadership behaviors and responsibilities can impact student achievement outcomes by influencing teacher growth through constructive feedback and interactions between school leaders and teachers. According to Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, and Porter (2006), leaders affect factors that sequentially impact outcomes, such as student achievement. Consistent with the best literature in learner-centered leadership (Heck & Hallinger, 1999; Leithwood, Riedlinger, Bauer, & Jantzi, 2003; Malinger & Heck, 1996), the impact of leadership behaviors in terms of valued outcomes is indirect, i.e., it is conciliated by classroom practices, school climate, and school operations.

The Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model will be used as a lens through which to analyze the data as themes emerge to contribute to the analysis and

conclusions relative to principal leadership practices that have the strongest relationship to student achievement as perceived by the participants of this proposed qualitative case study. The Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model was designed to break down large categories of school leadership behaviors into six concise domains and twenty-one elements, in order for school leaders to self-assess and guide professional practice and growth. As part of the process, the school leader is evaluated on how effectively he or she is getting the desired results of implementing each domain and its elements. The Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model domains and elements provide the school leader a road map for improving his or her practice (Marzano, 2018).

The goal of this proposed qualitative case study is to identify effective behaviors that converge with areas of leadership practices to provide building principals with key recommendations for significantly impacting teacher growth leading to the highest positive impact on student achievement. The Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model domains and elements provide a comprehensive growth and evaluation framework that addresses all the actions, decisions, and work that a school leader does on a daily basis. The model encourages every educator in the system to use a common professional language and to use common names and descriptors for specific school leader behaviors (Marzano, 2018).

In this proposed qualitative case study, study participants (teachers and principals) will share their perceptions relative to the principal leadership practices that have the strongest positive impact on teacher growth and subsequently, student achievement. Participants' responses will be correlated with the domains and elements of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model, specifically cultivating principal leadership

behavior connections that correspond to the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model indicators. Similar to the philosophy of the conceptual framework of this proposed qualitative case study, Knapp, Copland and Talbert (2003) view instructional leadership as a means to, “creating powerful, equitable learning opportunities for students, professionals, and the system, and motivating or compelling participants to take advantage of these opportunities.”

The researcher's analysis of the themes that will emerge from the data will rely on a semi-structured interviewing methodology, which will help the researcher interpret and interconnect emergent interview response patterns into identified themes that correspond to the domains and elements found within the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model. For example, a teacher's response valuing the principal's support with the development of intensified instructional interventions during a grade-level MTSS meeting correlates to the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model Domain 1: A data-driven focus on school improvement; Element 3: ensures the appropriate implementation of interventions and supportive practices to help each student meet achievement goals. Constant comparison analysis was used to compare, interpret, and analyze the multiple perceptions of participants through data triangulation (Yin, 2016). Specifically, the data sources triangulated in this study included: (1) Study participants' transcribed semi-structured interview responses, (2) Researcher field notes and 3. Teacher and Principal study participants' responses to RQ1 (Teachers) or RQ2 (Principals). This information was used throughout the data analysis process in order to formulate the findings of the research questions:

RQ1: Which principal leadership practices, as perceived by teachers, have the strongest relationship to student achievement?

RQ2: Which principal leadership practices, as perceived by principals, have the strongest relationship to student achievement?

It was through this triangulated data that patterns emerged from the analysis and interpretation was substantiated.

The Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model contains six domains and 21 elements that define the major job responsibilities of the school leader, the language reflecting current literature and research regarding school leaders (see Figure 1):



Source: Marzano, 2018.

Figure 1. The Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model

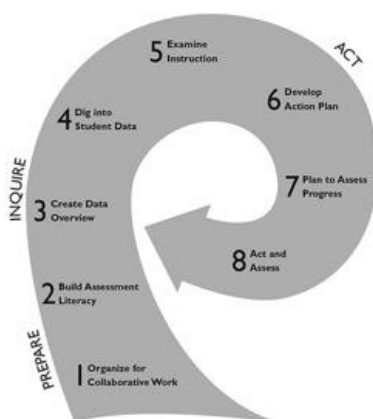
Domain 1

Domain 1, A Data-Driven Focus on School Improvement, addresses student achievement and emphasizes the use of data to drive student achievement, which drives school improvement. Elements within Domain 1 identify key school leadership capacities that: (1) ensures the appropriate use of data to develop critical goals focused on improving student achievement at the school; (2) ensures appropriate analysis and interpretation of data are used to monitor the progress of each student toward meeting achievement goals; and (3) ensures the appropriate implementation of interventions and supportive practices to help each student meet achievement goals (Marzano, 2018).

To help all students achieve, teachers need to systematically and routinely use data to guide instructional decisions and meet students' learning needs. Data use is an ongoing cycle of collecting multiple data sources, interpreting data to formulate hypotheses about strategies to raise student achievement and implementing instructional changes to test hypotheses (Hamilton et al., 2009). Collaboration among teachers in each step of the data-based inquiry process maximizes the benefits of data use by helping teachers share effective practices, adopt collective expectations for students' performance, gain a deeper understanding of students' needs, and develop effective strategies to better serve students (Bongiorno, 2011).

In 2005, researchers and practitioners from the Harvard Graduate School of Education and Boston Public Schools developed a process for organizing the core work of schools. The process allows teachers to collaboratively study a wide range of evidence and use what they learn to improve instruction (see Figure 2). The steps include: Organizing for collaborative work by establishing structures and teams; building

assessment literacy to increase comfort with data; creating a data overview and identify a priority question; digging into student data and identify a learner-centered problem; examining instruction and identify a problem of practice; developing an action plan; creating a plan to assess progress; and acting and assessing by documenting improvements in teaching and learning and adjust as needed (Oberman & Boudet, 2015).



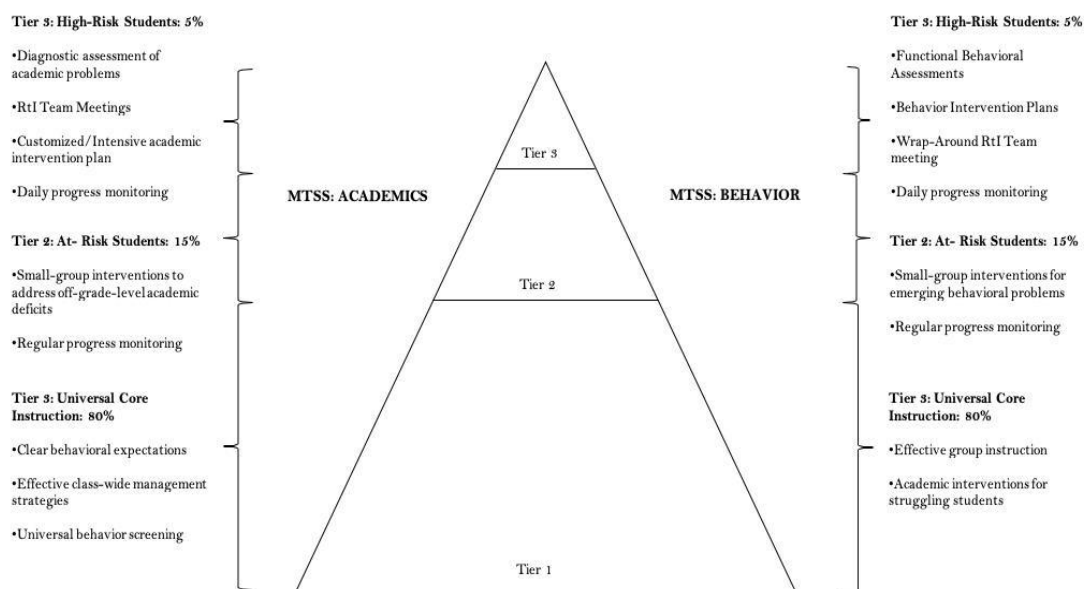
Source: Boudett, City, & Murnane, 2013.

Figure 2. Process for Organizing the Core Work of Schools

A strong culture of data use is critical to ensuring routine, consistent, and effective data-based decision making. The building data team can represent a range of stakeholders such as an administrator, two to three teachers across different grade levels or content areas, one to two classroom support professionals (such as a coach or special education teacher), and a district-level staff member who works with data. This team solicits input from, and work with, the entire school community. A data team might write the school plan describing how the school will use data to support school-wide goals, and defining key concepts critical to teaching and learning (e.g., achievement, data, evidence, collaboration). The data team's role is to clarify the school's data use vision, model

using data to make instructional decisions, and encourage other staff to use data to improve instruction (Bongiorno, 2011).

Response to Intervention (RtI), Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS) and Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) are frameworks used by data teams and professional learning communities while proactively addressing problems with students who show signs of academic weakness (see Figure 3). These frameworks include essential components including: ensuring a high-quality education for all students; universal screening so that teachers can spot children who are struggling; targeted, research-based instructional interventions of increasing intensity designed to help students improve in problem areas; frequent progress monitoring so that teachers can see how well students are responding to the targeted interventions; and data-based decision making based on the information gathered from that monitoring (Samuels, 2016).



Source: Grosche & Volpe, 2013.

Figure 3. RtI, MTSS and PBIS Frameworks

The Response to Intervention and Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports frameworks conceptualize different levels of instruction. Tier 1 is the universal instruction that every student in a school should be receiving. Tier 2 includes students who are receiving extra academic support, often provided in small groups. Tier 3 is for students who have severe or persistent needs who require individualized and intensified instructional intervention. Student movement among tiers should be fluid: A student with acute needs doesn't need to progress through the tiers to get individualized support and a student who needs some extra support should not miss out on the universal instruction that is provided in Tier 1 (Samuels, 2016).

Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports is a research-based framework for supporting children with behavior disorders. Like the RtI and MTSS frameworks, PBIS operates on tiers. All students are taught certain behavioral expectations and rewarded for following them, and students with more needs are provided increasingly intensive interventions (Samuels, 2016).

Domain 2

Domain 2, Instruction of a Viable and Guaranteed Curriculum, reflects the interconnectedness of curriculum and instruction as well as the necessity that the school leader possess a clear vision of what teaching looks like in the school. Elements within Domain 2 identify key school leadership capacities to ensure that the school leader: (1) provides a clear vision for how instruction should be addressed in the school; (2) uses knowledge of the predominant instructional practices in the school to improve teaching; (3) ensures that school curriculum and accompanying assessments align with state and district standards; (4) ensures that school curriculum is focused on essential standards so

it can be taught in the time available to teachers; and (5) ensures that each student has equal opportunity to learn the critical content of the curriculum (Marzano, 2018).

Every child deserves access to excellent teaching and learning every day, regardless of his or her ZIP code or family income. Socioeconomic conditions, race, gender, ethnic background, and other factors should not be predictors for educational attainment. School systems have to be relentless in addressing the issue of expanding learning opportunities for each and every student while building on the strengths all children bring to the classroom (Hirsh & Brown, 2018).

A “guaranteed” curriculum is often defined as a mechanism through which all students have an equal opportunity (time and access) to learn rigorous content. This requires a school-wide (or district-wide) agreement and common understanding of the essential content that all students need to know, understand, and be able to do. The word “all” needs emphasis; a guaranteed curriculum promotes equity, giving all children equal opportunity to learn essential content, and to provide this opportunity, curricular materials and instructional approaches must be grounded in research, implemented with fidelity, and must include vertical as well as horizontal alignment. Curriculum development is often regarded as a district function. However, schools (through teachers) implement the curriculum, and, if implementation varies significantly from teacher to teacher, then student outcomes will also likely vary significantly from classroom to classroom. These days, teachers have access to a variety of curriculum resources, such as open educational resources, playlists, digital textbooks, and teacher-developed curriculum. Having access to options is a good thing, but having many choices does not

ensure all choices are well aligned to the school's guaranteed and viable curriculum (Dempsey, 2017).

For a curriculum to be “viable,” there must be adequate time for teachers to teach the content and for students to learn the content. A viable curriculum eliminates supplementary content and allows teachers the flexibility to meet student needs through different methods of content delivery, helping students dive deeper into their passions. At its essence, a guaranteed and viable curriculum represents the core non-negotiables of student learning. It's what schools and teachers commit to providing for all students (Dempsey, 2017).

Core practices in ambitious, or high-leverage, instructional practices are built on a principles that include: teachers having the pedagogical know-how to learn about students' prior knowledge, to assess that knowledge and build on it; teachers believing that all kids are smart and capable of engaging with and understanding high-level content; teachers' possessing knowledge of students including, but is not limited to, academic assessment, understanding child development, building relationships with children, families, and communities; teachers having a repertoire of practices that supports them to continually learn about their students; teachers focus student learning on developing knowledge of content that requires them to engage in intellectually rich and challenging ways; and teachers identifying and interrupting patterns of inequity and bias (TEDD, 2014).

Core practices in ambitious, or high-leverage, instructional practices are the central actions and instructional tasks. They are the things that teachers do that are most likely to support meaningful student learning. These core practices include: leading a

group discussion; explaining and modeling content, practices, and strategies; eliciting and interpreting individual students' thinking; diagnosing particular common patterns of student thinking and development in a subject-matter domain; implementing norms and routines for classroom discourse and work; coordinating and adjusting instruction during a lesson, specifying and reinforcing productive student behavior; implementing organizational routines; setting up and managing small group work; building respectful relationships with students; talking about a student with parents or other caregivers; learning about students' cultural, religious, family, intellectual, and personal experiences and resources for use in instruction; setting long- and short-term learning goals for students; designing single lessons and sequences of lessons; checking student understanding during and at the conclusion of lessons; selecting and designing formal assessments of student learning; interpreting the results of student work, including routine assignments, quizzes, tests, projects, and standardized assessments; providing oral and written feedback to students; analyzing instruction for the purpose of improving it; orienting students to one another and the content; positioning all students as competent learners; and setting and maintaining high expectations for all students (TeachingWorks, 2019; TEDD, 2014). For example, in mathematics instruction, viewing children as sense-makers and knowing students as individuals and learners, core practices in ambitious, or high-leverage, instructional practices include: eliciting and responding to student reasoning: orienting students to each other's ideas and to the mathematical goal; setting and maintaining expectations for student participation; positioning students competently; teaching towards an instructional goal; assessing students' understanding; and using mathematical representations (TEDD, 2014).

In addition to the core practices in ambitious, or high-leverage, instructional practices, there are numerous other instructional models and frameworks that address specific learners such as English learners. As an example, the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) Model is a research-based and validated instructional model that has proven effective in addressing the academic needs of English learners throughout the United States. The SIOP Model consists of eight interrelated components: lesson preparation, building background comprehensible input, strategies, interaction, practice/application, lesson delivery, and review/assessment. The eight SIOP strategy components and the instructional strategies connected to each of these components, guide teachers in designing and delivering lessons that address the academic and linguistic needs of English learners, strategies that include, but are not limited to: content and language objectives that clearly identify what the students will learn and how they will learn it; adapting content to simplify material without watering it down; providing teacher-prepared outlines to guide students in taking notes; using speech that is appropriate to the students' language proficiency level; scaffolding procedural tasks; providing EL students opportunities to practice speaking; encouraging more elaborate responses from ELs students; and creating content word walls (CAL, 2018).

Educational standards are the learning goals for what students should know and be able to do at each grade level. Education standards are not a curriculum. Local communities and educators choose their own curriculum, which is a detailed plan for day to day teaching. Standards are what students need to know and be able to do, and curriculum is how students will learn it. The majority of school districts within the United States have adopted the Common Core State Standards, K-12 educational

standards for English language arts, literacy and mathematics. A third grade example of a Common Core Standard for literacy is: recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.2]. A third grade example of a Common Core Standard for math is: solve two-step word problems using the four operations. Represent these problems using equations with a letter standing for the unknown quantity. Assess the reasonableness of answers using mental computation and estimation strategies including rounding [CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.3.OA.D.8] (CCSS, 2019).

As of 2019, more than three-quarters (84%) of U.S. students live in states that have education standards influenced by the Framework for K-12 Science Education and/or the Next Generation Science Standards (NSTA, 2019). A third grade example of a *Next Generation Science Standard* for science is: make observations and/or measurements of an object's motion to provide evidence that a pattern can be used to predict future motion [3-PS2-2] (NGSS, 2017).

Since 2013, and as recently as 2019, states are integrating the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework into their state standards for Social Studies. An example component of the C3 framework is: by the end of fifth grade, students working individually and with others can explain how a democracy relies on people's responsible participation, and draw implications for how individuals should participate [D2.Civ.2.3-5.] (NCSS, 2013).

Domain 3

Domain 3, Continuous Development of Teachers and Staff, focuses on operational and human capital management. The school leader's primary focus is on improving teacher practice. In addition the school leader must ensure that all staff grow in their areas of responsibility. Elements within Domain 3 identify key school leadership capacities to ensure that the school leader: (1) effectively hires, supports and retains personnel who continually demonstrate growth through reflection and growth plans; (2) uses multiple sources of data to provide teachers with ongoing evaluations of their pedagogical strengths and weaknesses that are consistent with student achievement data; and (3) ensures that teachers and staff are provided with job-embedded professional development to optimize professional capacity and support their growth goals (Marzano, 2018).

Research supports the increasing pressure on principals to deliver better instruction, however not much is known about why, when and how principals guide teachers' work in the classroom. While principals see themselves as effective in organizational and indirect instructional management, they perceive themselves as less effective in guiding teachers in instructional matters (Salo, Nylund, & Stjernstrøm, 2015). As an instructional leader in the building, the principal is expected to understand the tenets of quality instruction as well as have sufficient knowledge of the curriculum to know that appropriate content is being delivered to all students. This presumes that the principal is capable of providing constructive feedback to improve teaching or is able to design a system in which others provide this support (Wahlstrom & Seashore Louis, 2008).

The process by which principals provide teachers timely and meaningful feedback on their instruction must be guided by a research-based and validated set of components of instruction. Teaching is very complex. To navigate these complexities requires a comprehensive teacher evaluation framework designed to assist principals while they guide and evaluate teachers. Charlotte Danielson's teacher evaluation framework breaks the complexities of teacher evaluation down to four domains, 22 components, and 76 elements (see Figure 4). The four domains include Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Instruction and Professional Responsibilities. For example, specific to instruction, Domain 3 of the Danielson teacher evaluation framework, Instruction, addresses: teacher communication students, the use of questioning and discussion techniques, engaging students in learning, the use of assessment in instruction and demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness (Danielson, 2013).

In education, research has shown that teaching quality and school leadership are the most important factors in raising student achievement. For teachers and school and district leaders to be as effective as possible, they continually expand their knowledge and skills to implement the best educational practices. Educators learn to help students learn at the highest levels. Professional development is the only strategy school systems have to strengthen educators' performance levels. Professional development is also the only way educators can learn so that they are able to better their performance and raise student achievement (Mizell, 2010).

<p>Domain 1: Planning and Preparation</p> <p>1a Demonstrating Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy • Content knowledge • Prerequisite relationships • Content pedagogy</p> <p>1b Demonstrating Knowledge of Students • Child development • Learning process • Special needs • Student skills, knowledge, and proficiency • Interests and cultural heritage</p> <p>1c Setting Instructional Outcomes • Value, sequence, and alignment • Clarity • Balance • Suitability for diverse learners</p> <p>1d Demonstrating Knowledge of Resources • For classroom • To extend content knowledge • For students</p> <p>1e Designing Coherent Instruction • Learning activities • Instructional materials and resources • Instructional groups • Lesson and unit structure</p> <p>1f Designing Student Assessments • Congruence with outcomes • Criteria and standards • Formative assessments • Use for planning</p>	<p>Domain 2: The Classroom Environment</p> <p>2a Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport • Teacher interaction with students • Student interaction with students</p> <p>2b Establishing a Culture for Learning • Importance of content • Expectations for learning and achievement • Student pride in work</p> <p>2c Managing Classroom Procedures • Instructional groups • Transitions</p> <p>• Materials and supplies • Non-instructional duties • Supervision of volunteers and paraprofessionals</p> <p>2d Managing Student Behavior • Expectations • Monitoring behavior • Response to misbehavior</p> <p>2e Organizing Physical Space • Safety and accessibility • Arrangement of furniture and resources</p>
<p>Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities</p> <p>4a Reflecting on Teaching • Accuracy • Use in future teaching</p> <p>4b Maintaining Accurate Records • Student completion of assignments • Student progress in learning • Non-instructional records</p> <p>4c Communicating with Families • About instructional program • About individual students • Engagement of families in instructional program</p> <p>4d Participating in a Professional Community • Relationships with colleagues • Participation in school projects • Involvement in culture of professional inquiry • Service to school</p> <p>4e Growing and Developing Professionally • Enhancement of content knowledge and pedagogical skill • Receptivity to feedback from colleagues • Service to the profession</p> <p>4f Showing Professionalism • Integrity/ethical conduct • Service to students • Advocacy • Decision-making • Compliance with school/district regulations</p>	<p>Domain 3: Instruction</p> <p>3a Communicating With Students • Expectations for learning • Directions and procedures • Explanations of content • Use of oral and written language</p> <p>3b Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques • Quality of questions • Discussion techniques • Student participation</p> <p>3c Engaging Students in Learning • Activities and assignments • Student groups • Instructional materials and resources • Structure and pacing</p> <p>3d Using Assessment in Instruction • Assessment criteria • Monitoring of student learning • Feedback to students • Student self-assessment and monitoring</p> <p>3e Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness • Lesson adjustment • Response to students • Persistence</p>

Source: (Danielson, 2013)

Figure 4. Danielson's Teacher Evaluation Framework

Professional development should be grounded in faith in teachers, the institutions they work for, and the power of the broader community of educators around the country and the globe. Effective professional development should be understood as a job-embedded commitment that teachers make in order to further the purposes of the profession while addressing their own particular needs. It should follow the principles that guide the learning practices of experienced adults, in teaching communities that foster cooperation and shared expertise. Characteristics of effective professional

development opportunities include: collaborative decision-making; a growth-driven approach; collective construction of programs; inquiry-based ideas; tailor-made techniques; varied and timely delivery methods; adequate support systems; context-specific programs; proactive assessment; and andragogical (adult-centered) instruction (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004).

In public schools, effective professional development affects students. Student learning and achievement increase when educators engage in effective professional development focused on the skills educators need in order to address students' major learning challenges (Mizell, 2010).

College and university programs cannot provide the extensive range of learning experiences necessary for graduates to become effective public school educators. Once students graduate, meet their state's certification requirements, and are employed, they learn through experience. As in all professions, new teachers and principals take years to gain the skills they need to be effective in their roles (Mizell, 2010).

Some modes of professional development include: individual reading/study/research; teachers observing other teachers; an expert teacher coaching one or more colleagues; team meetings to plan lessons, problem solve, improve performance, and/or learn a new strategy; faculty, grade-level, or departmental meetings; online courses; college/university courses; workshops to dig deeper into a subject; conferences to learn from a variety of expertise from around the state or country, whole-school improvement programs; and proprietary programs by private vendors (Mizell, 2010).

Desimone (2011) identifies five core features of effective professional development:

- Content focus: Professional development activities should focus on subject matter content and how students learn that content.
- Active learning: Teachers should have opportunities to get involved, such as observing and receiving feedback, analyzing student work, or making presentations, as opposed to passively sitting through lectures.
- Coherence: What teachers learn in any professional development activity should be consistent with other professional development, with their knowledge and beliefs, and with school, district, and state reforms and policies.
- Duration: Professional development activities should be spread over a semester and should include 20 hours or more of contact time.
- Collective participation: Groups of teachers from the same grade, subject, or school should participate in professional development activities together to build an interactive learning community.

To be effective, professional development requires thoughtful planning followed by careful implementation with feedback to ensure it responds to educators' learning needs. Educators who participate in professional development then must put their new knowledge and skills to work. Professional development is not effective unless it causes teachers to improve their instruction or causes administrators to become better school leaders (Mizell, 2010).

Domain 4

Domain 4, Community of Care and Collaboration, promotes an inclusive way to think about the school leader's role in establishing a community of care, including the

responsibility to ensure equity in instruction, the celebration of diversity, and an emphasis on collaborative teamwork for teachers to plan effective instruction. Domain 4 addresses the way a school does its work, looking at how staff forms a unified, transparent, and collaborative environment so that the school functions at optimal levels, emphasizing the operational side of the school leader's responsibilities. Elements within Domain 4 identify key school leadership capacities to ensure that the school leader: (1) ensures that teachers work in collaborative groups to plan and discuss effective instruction, curriculum, assessments, and the achievement of each student; (2) ensures a workplace where teachers have roles in the decision-making process regarding school planning, initiatives, and procedures to maximize the effectiveness of the school; (3) ensures equity in a child-centered school with input from staff, students, parents, and the community; and (4) acknowledges the successes of the school and celebrates the diversity and culture of each student (Marzano, 2018).

Without a thoughtful vision, effective principal leadership and teacher cooperation, little progress will be made to improve student outcomes (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010a). An effective school leader promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing not only the learning community within the school building, but also in the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996). Within the schoolhouse, these effective school leaders establish, guide, and are active participants in professional learning communities (PLCs). Professional learning communities have emerged as arguably the best, most agreed-upon means by which to continuously improve instruction and student performance (Schmoker, 2006). PLC members include, but are not limited

to: classroom teachers, grade-level team leaders, reading specialists, special education teachers and administrators. PLCs explore the data and are committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008). In the broader context, relative to parents and the larger community, the effective school leader: understands the importance of diversity and equity and the external issues and forces affecting teaching and learning; ensures that communication occurs among the school community concerning trends, issues, and potential changes in the environment in which school operates; and recognizes the importance of a continuing dialogue with other decision makers affecting education (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996).

Domain 5

Domain 5, Core Values, represents ways of thinking about the values that the school leader is committed to: transparency, trust, cultural responsiveness, and safety. These are the values that the school leader instills in the school so that they are perceived by all stakeholders. Domain 5 is based on the understanding that what the school leader values and models influences the community's perception of the school and how it feels to be a part of the school. Elements within Domain 5 identify key school leadership capacities to ensure that the school leader: (1) is transparent, communicates effectively, and continues to demonstrate professional growth; (2) has the trust of the staff and school community that all decisions are guided by what is best for each student; and (3) ensures that the school is perceived as safe and culturally responsive (Marzano, 2018).

Parents, teachers, principals, and students often sense something special and undefined about the schools they attend. Culture is the underground stream of norms,

values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals that have built up over time as people work together, solve problems, and confront challenges. This set of informal expectations and values shapes how people think, feel, and act in schools (Peterson & Deal, 1998).

Paying attention to the core values of the school is the most important way for leaders to communicate effectively (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Principals communicate core values in what they say and do in their everyday work, uncovering and articulating core values, looking for those that buttress what is best for students and that support student-centered professionalism (Peterson & Deal, 1998). People's willingness to trust is influenced by whether they feel others are acting appropriately in their roles (Berg, Connolly, Lee, & Fairley, 2018).

Domain 6

Domain 6, Resource Management, recognizes the important role that resource management plays in both instructional and operational leadership and school improvement. Domain 6 focuses on how school leaders manage all of the fiscal and physical resource necessities at the school to support optimal student learning, including attention to and compliance with district and federal mandates. The school leader's resource management duties outlined in Domain 6 contribute to the larger vision of the school in their specific and targeted support of school improvement, instruction and curriculum, continuous improvement, collaboration and care, and core values. The three elements of Domain 6 specifically emphasize this focus on student achievement and school growth, identifying key school leadership capacities to ensure that the school leader: (1) ensures that management of the fiscal, technological, and physical resources of the school supports effective instruction and achievement of each student; (2) utilizes

systematic processes to engage district and external entities in support of school improvement; and (3) ensures compliance to district, state, and federal rules and regulations to support effective instruction and achievement of each student (Marzano, 2018).

Many districts have limited resources available for discretionary use in supporting improved learning, and as a consequence, schools and principals have limited resources to help them raise student achievement. This does not preclude supportive districts providing principals the flexibility to use existing human and financial resources to address unique school needs while remaining consistent with school and district improvement frameworks and strategic plans (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010b). Further, leveraging community resources and local partnerships can support principals in offering high-quality academic and enrichment opportunities to students by broadening the experiences that may be typically offered to students and by expanding access to local expertise such as health and human services agencies, departments of public safety and parks and recreation, community colleges, businesses, community-based organizations, and other entities can effectively maximize opportunities for students (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

This flexibility can manifest in myriad ways, including:

- Giving schools greater autonomy and flexibility with the use of time, organizational structures, teacher assignments and alternative systems for delivering instruction in exchange for holding principals and faculty accountable for results.

- Involving principals in budget discussions by allowing them to present well-conceived plans, aligned with district and school improvement plans, for using district resources to improve schools.
- Strategically directing resources to address the district's most pressing needs, most challenged schools and most at-risk students.
- Treating time as a critical resource — and perhaps the most critical resource.
- Encouraging an entrepreneurial spirit among principals in seeking outside funds to support school improvement aligned with the strategic plan.
- Broadening the scope of expertise and support to include community resources. (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010b; U.S. Department of Education, 2011)

Summary

The research makes clear that quality teaching and strong administrative leadership result in effective schools. However, more research is needed to further identify the specific school leadership practices that result in positive student achievement. As the principal's performance expectations have grown the past 70 years, from a focus on managing to a focus on student achievement, so too has the presumption that they be both operational and instructional leaders. Sebastian et. al. assert that if improvements in principal practice can be made to influence student achievement, they need to be devoted to both instructional leadership and organizational management. The emphasis on principal training and professional development on instructional leadership alone may be misguided, as organizational management is highly correlated with instructional leadership (Sebastian, Allensworth, Wiedermann, Hochbein, &

Cummingham, 2018). The evolution of the principal as instructional leader requires the principal to possess the knowledge and expertise necessary to guide and support teachers, who themselves have myriad performance expectations relative to planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, implementation of curriculum with fidelity and professional responsibilities.

One important revelation was the realization that principals cannot accomplish the plethora of tasks required of them to be effective school leaders alone. Rather, they must create school communities that foster the collaborative efforts of all stakeholders, sharing the responsibility for planning, problem solving and decision making.

Researchers have largely focused on school leadership practices thought to best produce effective schools by categorically identifying the roles and responsibilities effective principals assume relative to building and communicating a common vision of core values; creating a sense of community and collaboration; maintaining a focus on teacher growth, instructional best practices and the use of data to drive instruction; providing a viable and guaranteed curriculum, providing timely and meaningful professional development; and managing both material and human resources. However, there is very little research capturing teacher and principal perceptions of which of these school leadership practices, specifically, have the strongest relationship to student achievement. This study is an opportunity to fill the knowledge gap that exists relative to the critical relationship between specific school leader practices and student achievement. The goal of this study was to develop new knowledge related to this critical relationship. An overview of the qualitative case study methodology, using semi-structured interviews

as the primary means of data collection to acquire this new knowledge (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015) is provided in Chapter III.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHOD

This chapter is the research methodology for this qualitative case study relative to the identification of which school principal leadership practices, as perceived by both teachers and principals, have the strongest relationship to student achievement. This approach allowed for a deeper understanding of teacher and principal perceptions relative to these practices and a means by which to develop new knowledge relative to the principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement. Student achievement was chosen as a measure, versus student growth, as student achievement measures student performance relative to the acquisition of grade-level proficiencies, while student growth measures progress toward the acquisition of grade-level proficiencies. Since students can make positive growth, yet still not be proficient, achievement has been chosen as a measure in order that the study data reflect principal leadership practices that actually resulted in students demonstrating grade-level proficiency or above. This study was focused on teachers and principals whose practices have already resulted in students performing at proficient or above as measured by their achievement scores.

The applicability of a semi-structured interviewing methodology for this study is discussed throughout this chapter. The research plan and methodology, study

participants, procedure, analysis method and ethical concerns are also addressed in this chapter.

Research Questions

This study sought to generate new knowledge based upon the answers to these research questions:

RQ1: Which principal leadership practices, as perceived by teachers, have the strongest relationship to student achievement?

RQ2: Which principal leadership practices, as perceived by principals, have the strongest relationship to student achievement?

Methodology Selected

Qualitative research is a craft, marked by the challenge of doing original research that is transparent, methodical and adheres to evidence. Qualitative research enables the researcher to study the everyday lives of many different kinds of people and what they think about, under many different circumstances and to conduct in-depth studies about a broad array of topics in plain and everyday terms (Yin, 2016).

As identified by Yin (2016), five features distinguish qualitative research from other forms of social science research: studying the meaning of people's lives, in their real-world roles; representing the views and perspectives of the people in a study; explicitly attending to and accounting for real-world contextual conditions; contributing insights from existing or new concepts that may help to explain social behavior and thinking; and acknowledging the potential relevance of multiple sources of evidence rather than relying on a single source alone. Many qualitative studies, based solely on a

set of open-ended interviews, are interested in capturing the interviewees' words and ideas, not in arraying the responses numerically.

A qualitative case study was performed using semi-structured interviews as the primary means of data collection to acquire new knowledge relative to the principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement. In a classic text, interviewing has been defined as a, "face-to-face verbal exchange, in which one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information or expressions of opinion or belief from another person or persons" (Maccoby & Maccoby, 1954). Much research is done on schooling in the United States; yet so little of it is based on studies involving the perspective of the teachers and principals whose individual and collective experience constitutes schooling. To understand the meaning teachers and principals make of their experience, interviewing provides a necessary avenue of inquiry (Seidman, 2019).

This study sought to generate new knowledge resulting from the systematic qualitative analysis of data derived from teacher and principal study participant responses to semi-structured interview questions relative to the study's research questions exploring which principal leadership practices have the strongest relationship to student achievement. The Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model served as a conceptual framework, guiding the analysis and interpretation of the data (Brinkmann, 2013; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Seidman, 2019).

Semi-structured qualitative research interviews are defined as interviews with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

Semi-structured interviews are probably the most widespread qualitative interviews in the human and social sciences and are sometimes the only format given attention in textbooks on qualitative research, as semi-structured interviews can make better use of the knowledge-producing potentials of dialogues by allowing much more leeway for following up on whatever angles are deemed important by the interviewee (Brinkmann, 2013).

Semi-structured interviews give the interviewer a greater chance of becoming visible as a knowledge-producing participant in the process itself, rather than hiding behind a preset interview guide. And, compared to unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews are staged and conducted in order to serve the researcher's goal of producing knowledge, allowing the interviewer greater say in focusing the conversation on issues deemed by the interviewer as important in relation to the study (Brinkmann, 2013).

The goal of qualitative interviewing is to obtain the interviewee's descriptions rather than reflections or theorizations. That is, qualitative interviewing is meant to provide a first-order understanding through concrete description (Brinkmann, 2013).

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify the principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement, as perceived by teachers and principals. Therefore, a qualitative case study was the most appropriate research methodology.

Positionality

The researcher has worked in education as a school teacher and administrator for 32 years and holds a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education and a Masters of

Education in Administration and Supervision. No study participant had a direct relationship, professional or personal, with the researcher that may have imparted any measure of bias on the research study.

The researcher, as both study observer and research instrument (Yin, 2016), has been trained in the requisite skills to carry out this qualitative case study. The researcher has conducted hundreds of teacher and administrator candidate interviews with the intent to hire. The researcher has conducted in excess of one thousand pre- and post- evaluation conferences with teachers and administrators. The researcher has been trained in all iterations of both the Danielson Teacher Evaluation Framework and Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model. The researcher completed training and receive interviewer certification from Ventures for Excellence. The researcher completed coursework in both Documentary Research and Directed Research at Loyola University, Chicago.

Study Participants

The study's purposive sample was originally proposed to deliberately draw from a population of two elementary (K-5), two middle (6-8) and two high (9-12) school teachers, and two elementary (K-5), middle (6-8) and two high (9-12) principals for a total of 12 participants.

Teacher study participants are teachers who have taught for a minimum of five years and whose students (80% or higher):

- Scored "proficient" or "advanced" at grade level on the MSTEP in English Language Arts or Math; or

- Scored “level 4” or “level 5” at grade level on the IAR in English Language Arts or Math; or
- Reached or exceeded “benchmark” values at grade level on the PSAT or SAT in English Language Arts and Math.

Principal study participants are principals who taught for a minimum of five years prior to becoming a principal and have served as principal for a minimum of five years and whose students during tenure as a principal (80% or higher):

- Scored “proficient” or “advanced” at grade level on the MSTEP in English Language Arts or Math; or
- Scored “level 4” or “level 5” at grade level on the IAR in English Language Arts or Math; or
- Reached or exceeded “benchmark” values at grade level on the PSAT or SAT in English Language Arts and Math.

Years’ experience and student achievement criteria was established for teacher and principal study participants in order to solicit the perceptions of those teachers and principals whose practices were already resulting in desired student outcomes.

Once all participants’ vantage points were taken and their implications made explicit, new knowledge was generated relative to principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement. Student achievement was measured by the school’s state summative assessment.

A total of 11 participants were recruited through the researcher’s professional network of teachers and administrators. The researcher first reviewed state testing data by district to identify schools that met the case study’s student achievement criteria, then

reached out via email to teachers, principals and superintendents in his professional network via email to identify potential study participants meeting the established case study participant criteria. All teacher and principal study participants were White and the schools represented by study participant teachers and principals had an average of 16% economically disadvantaged students and 21% minority student enrollment.

Data Collection

Teacher and principal study participants were asked to participate in a one-on-one interview with the researcher. The interviews lasted approximately one hour, during which participants were asked to respond to the semi-structured interview questions relative to their perceptions of which principal leadership practices had the strongest relationship to student achievement. The interviews were held virtually, using Zoom. The interviews were recorded, audio only, and transcribed in order that following the interviews the researcher was able to systematically analyze responses to construct new knowledge from data collected from all interview respondents. Pseudonyms, as well as the replacement of names of specific people, groups, or places that could disclose confidentiality to other readers were used, while avoiding loss of context in the interview. All recordings were kept secure and confidential on a hard drive to which only the researcher has access and were destroyed following transcription. In addition to audio recordings, all original records such as contact-information sheets and informed consent documents were held securely on a hard drive to which only the researcher had access to guard against the identity of participants being accidentally revealed (Seidman, 2019). Direct and indirect (e.g., details that someone could combine with other information in order to deduce a subject's identity) data identifiers were replaced by coding them with random numbers,

letters and/or initials, allowing the researcher to avoid revealing participants' identities. The researchers' coding list was stored in a locked and secure location separately from the coded study data. At the conclusion of the study, all information, including coding lists, that might link study data, either directly or indirectly, to participants' identities were destroyed.

For transcription purposes, participants' semi-structured interview responses were assigned random letter and numerical codes. The professional transcription service only knew study participants by this code. The transcripts, without any names or any other identifying information, are being kept indefinitely to make available for future research on a hard drive to which only the researcher has access.

This qualitative case study used a semi-structured interviewing protocol (see Appendix B), where the researcher, as interviewer, and the interview questions were the instrumentation used for the study. Memos were periodically used following each interview. The interviews began with general background questions. Study-specific interview questions followed.

All study participants signed a consent form and verbally confirmed their consent at the start of their interview. The interviews were conducted face-to-face, virtually, using Zoom conferencing, which enabled the researcher to interview study participants via the Internet in real time. Each study participant's virtual interview was recorded, audio only, with the study participants' written and verbal consent. Each participant's interview took place within a single session that lasted approximately one hour. No interview was conducted without first confirming the written and verbal informed consent of the participants. Each recorded participant interview was transcribed by a

professional audio transcription service, Scribie, who signed a non-disclosure form (see Appendix C), prior to transcribing the interviews. All recordings were kept secure and confidential on a hard drive to which only the researcher had access and were destroyed following transcription.

Memo writing was a frequent occurrence throughout the study. Memos are preliminary analytic notes about codes and comparisons and any other ideas about data that occur. Through studying data, comparing them, and writing memos, ideas were defined that best fit and interpreted the data as tentative analytic categories. When inevitable questions arose and gaps in categories appeared, data was sought that might answer these questions and fill the gaps (Charmaz, 2014).

The domains and elements of the study's conceptual framework, the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model established the categories and codes for the purpose of analyzing the data. Memos were used when correlating excerpts from individual study participant semi-structured interview responses to the defined codes or categories by their analytic properties; to spell out and detail processes subsumed by the codes or categories; to make comparisons between data and data, data and codes, codes and codes, codes and categories and categories and categories; to provide sufficient empirical evidence to support the definitions of categories and any analytic claims; to offer conjectures to check in the field setting; to sort and order codes and categories; to identify gaps in the analysis; and to interrogate a code or category by asking questions of it (Charmaz, 2014).

Procedures Followed

Approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was received from Loyola University Chicago (see Appendix H). Once approval was received, the researcher emailed districts whose teachers and principals met the study participant criteria, qualifying them as potential study participants, for permission to conduct research study (see Appendix D). Districts willing to participate in the study signed a letter of cooperation form (see Appendix E). Following district signed approval, consent letters were sent to qualifying teacher (see Appendix F) and principal (see Appendix G) participants in the study.

Data Analysis

Coding is the process of defining what data are about (Charmaz, 2014). Coding of interview transcriptions was an essential means by which to break down the interview transcriptions into meaningful and manageable pieces of data, to then use in data analysis.

Note taking and qualitative semi-structured interview transcriptions were the dominant modes of field data collection for this qualitative case study.

The challenge of taking notes relative to the field data, while being an active participant in the field, as well as observing and listening to what is going on during the semi-structured interviews was overcome by a thorough processing of field notes immediately following each semi-structured interview. This timely reworking of the field notes allowed the researcher to write out any fragments, abbreviations, or other cryptic comments that the researcher may not later have understood. The notes were then

revised and converted into a more formal set of notes that eventually became part of this qualitative case study's database (Yin, 2016).

In addition to the field notes taken in real time during the semi-structured interviews, notes were also taken from the transcribed audio recording of each semi-structured interview. Further, once the audio recordings of the semi-structured interviews were transcribed, themes were then derived using the qualitative data analysis computer software program, Dedoose, and copious amounts of hand coding (Charmaz, 2014; Yin, 2016). Dedoose is a cross-platform app for analyzing qualitative research and is recognized for its facility in storing and retrieving large amounts of data and in coding and sorting these data. Dedoose can also link memos to particular codes or segments of text, which allows for the creation of concept maps and the generation of data visualizations used to examine the general nature of the data, understand how the code system has been applied to the qualitative content and expose patterns of variation in the qualitative data and coding activity across sub-groups.

The researcher analyzed the audio recording transcriptions of the semi-structured interview participant responses to create codes for key words and phrases from within each of the transcriptions (e.g., "timely and meaningful feedback"). Using Dedoose, the researcher created nodes for each of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model domains and elements (e.g., Domain 1, A Data-Driven Focus on School Improvement, Element 3, ensures the appropriate implementation of interventions and supportive practices to help each student meet achievement goals), to which the established codes were aligned and categorically assigned as emergent themes.

The semi-structured interview transcriptions were coded by assigning concise and specific values (Lavrakas, 2008). Labels were attached to segments of transcriptions that depicted what each segment was about. Coding full interview transcriptions gave the researcher ideas and understandings that might otherwise have been missed by merely relying on field notes. Coding full transcriptions enabled a deeper level of understanding and raised analytic questions about the data from the very beginning of data collection and throughout. Coding distilled the data, sorting them, and producing an analytic handle for making comparisons with other segments of data. Coding of the semi-structured interview transcriptions involved: (1) an initial phase naming each word, line, or segment of data followed by (2) a focused, selective phase that used the most significant or frequent initial codes to sort, synthesize, integrate, and organize the data. The researcher kept the coding simple, direct, analytic and emergent (Charmaz, 2014).

Through the process of open coding, the researcher read through the semi-structured interview transcriptions several times to create tentative labels for chunks of data in order to generate initial categories and their properties, the data broken apart and concepts delineated to stand for interpreted meaning of raw data. Axial coding was then used to identify relationships among the open codes, systematically developing codes and linking them within the framework of identified subcategories. Finally, selective coding was used to integrate and refine categories in order to determine a core variable that included all of the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2014).

Recognizing and understanding research bias is crucial for determining the utility of study results (Galdas, 2017). In order to minimize researcher bias, all semi-structured interviews were recorded and fully transcribed. The researcher thoroughly compared

interview recordings to interview transcriptions. And, researcher memos and analytic notes were reviewed and evaluated for indications of potential bias.

Validity, Reliability and Ethical Assurances

Four strategies were consistently applied throughout this qualitative case study in order to ensure study validity: Intensive, long-term involvement; rich data; triangulation; and the use of numbers.

1. Using a ten-question semi-structured interview protocol in order to produce a complete and in-depth understanding of teacher and principal participant perceptions, including the opportunity to conduct repeated interviews if necessary (Maxwell, 2013).
2. Collection of rich, detailed and varied data from semi-structured interviews that were fully transcribed verbatim (Maxwell, 2013). Gathering of rich data to give the researcher solid material for building a significant analysis. Rich data are detailed, focused, and full. They reveal participants' views, feelings, intentions, and actions as well as the contexts and structures of their lives. Rich data generates solid material upon which to build a significant analysis (Charmaz, 2014; Maxwell, 2013).
3. Triangulation of the 11 participants' semi-structured interview responses to collect converging evidence from these different sources, reducing the risk of chance associations and of systematic biases (Maxwell, 2013).
4. Use of actual numbers instead of adjectives when claiming something was "typical," "rare," or "prevalent" (Maxwell, 2013; Yin, 2016). Many of the conclusions of qualitative studies have an implicit quantitative component.

Any claim that a particular phenomenon is typical, rare, or prevalent in the setting or population studied, or that some behaviors or themes were more common than others, is an inherently quantitative claim, and requires some quantitative support (Maxwell, 2013). Therefore, simple numerical results, “quasi-statistics,” were periodically derived from the data in order to make more explicit and precise any claims (Becker, 1970).

Relative to reliability, and consistent with Maxwell’s assertions concerning study validity, Silverman (2005) stated that reliability is achieved by tabulating categories and being certain that all aspects of the teacher and principal participant semi-structured interview responses were fully transcribed to the most minute, yielding consistent results, whether or not those results are valid (i.e., whether or not the results are relevant to the purpose for which the instrument is intended) (Lavrakas, 2008).

Three ethical assurances were considered throughout the study. Relative to the study participants, the researcher obtained consent from each of the study’s participants and maintained strict confidentiality, establishing a mutual respect and trust. Relative to the research, the researcher assumed several ethical responsibilities including; maintaining the integrity of the research methodology; respecting the study participants’ time and effort by following through with the study in such a manner that took no short cuts while gathering data and performing data analysis; and following through on the commitment to the study participants and the profession by publishing the results of the study. Finally, the researcher, without qualification, assumed the ethical responsibility to self, study participants and the profession to produce the highest quality work of which he was capable (Corbin & Strauss, 2014).

Summary

The goal of this chapter was to outline the case study methodology used to answer the research questions. The chapter outlined the procedure, study participants, data collection, and interview questions summarizing the specifics of how the study was conducted and who participated in the study. This study sought to generate new knowledge resulting from the systematic qualitative analysis of data derived from teacher and principal study participant responses to semi-structured interview questions relative to the study's research questions exploring which principal leadership practices have the strongest relationship to student achievement. The Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model served as a conceptual framework, guiding the analysis and interpretation of the data. All study participants contributed to the generation of this new knowledge by sharing their perceptions. The goal of Chapter IV is to provide the study results and demonstrate that the qualitative semi-structured interviewing methodology described in Chapter III was followed.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The problem addressed in this qualitative case study was the lack of understanding of teacher and principal perceptions of principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement. This understanding is critical as there are 90,410 principals in the United States (NCES, 2017) and these perceptions may provide universities insights to better design principal preparation programs to focus more intentionally on teaching the principal leadership practices most closely related to positive student achievement and may also benefit scholars in the development of principal performance frameworks and rubrics that better target specific principal leadership practices aimed at teacher quality and the improvement of instruction. In this chapter, the trustworthiness of the gathered data will be justified, and the results will be discussed and aligned to the research questions. The findings will be analyzed and explained within the context of the study.

Results

This chapter contains the results of the qualitative study, using a semi-structured interviewing methodology, conducted to answer the research questions:

RQ1: Which principal leadership practices, as perceived by teachers, have the strongest relationship to student achievement?

RQ2: Which principal leadership practices, as perceived by principals, have the strongest relationship to student achievement?

This chapter also includes study sample criteria, tables, interview excerpts, charts and graphs to complement the summary. The process used to analyze the transcripts from the semi-structured interviews conducted to capture the perceptions of teacher and principal relative to principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement and the degree to which these perceptions correlate to the study's conceptual framework, the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model, is described in detail in this chapter.

Sample

The researcher sought a representative sample of two elementary school (K-5) teachers and two elementary school (K-5) principals, two middle school (6-8) teachers and two middle school (6-8) principals and two high school (9-12) teachers and two high school (9-12) principals.

Teacher study participants are teachers who have taught for a minimum of five years and whose students (80% or higher):

- Scored “proficient” or “advanced” at grade level on the MSTEP in English Language Arts or Math; or
- Scored “level 4” or “level 5” at grade level on the IAR in English Language Arts or Math; or
- Reached or exceeded “benchmark” values at grade level on the PSAT or SAT in English Language Arts and Math.

Principal study participants are principals who taught for a minimum of five years prior to becoming a principal and have served as principal for a minimum of five years and whose students during tenure as a principal (80% or higher):

- Scored “proficient” or “advanced” at grade level on the MSTEP in English Language Arts or Math; or
- Scored “level 4” or “level 5” at grade level on the IAR in English Language Arts or Math; or
- Reached or exceeded “benchmark” values at grade level on the PSAT or SAT in English Language Arts and Math.

The study participant recruitment process took more time than the researcher anticipated, as the majority of districts in Michigan did not respond to the invitation to participate, reducing the limited few districts in the state of Michigan that met the rather high bar set by the study participant criteria to even fewer. The researcher modified the IRB application to expand the scope of possible study participants to include Illinois and was granted approval (see Appendix I).

Ultimately, two elementary school (K-5) teachers and one elementary school (K-5) principal, three middle school (6-8) teachers and one middle school (6-8) principal and two high school (9-12) teachers and two high school (9-12) principals met the criteria and participated in the study, for a total of 11 study participants, with both teacher and principal representation at each of the grade level groupings K-5, 6-8 and 9-12.

The seven teacher participants in the study had an average of 22 years’ teaching experience, 151 total years’ teaching experience. The four principal participants in the study had an average of 11 years’ experience as principals, 45 total years’ principal

experience and had an average of 13 years' teaching experience, 52 total years' teaching experience.

Table 1

Participant Demographic Information

Participants Demographics		Number of Participants	Percentage
Gender	Male	5	45.50%
	Female	6	54.50%
Grade Level	K-5	3	27.30%
	6-8	4	36.40%
	9-12	4	36.40%
Teacher	1-5 yrs. Experience	0	0.00%
	6-10 yrs. Experience	1	14.29%
	11-15 yrs. Experience	1	14.29%
	16-20 yrs. Experience	1	14.29%
	21+ yrs Experience	4	57.14%
Principal	1-5 yrs. Experience	0	0.00%
	6-10 yrs. Experience	1	25.00%
	11-15 yrs. Experience	3	75.00%
	16-20 yrs. Experience	0	0.00%
	21+ yrs Experience	0	0.00%

Data Collection

Inductive coding and analysis of the transcribed data was done through Dedoose qualitative data analysis software program. Dedoose facilitated data coding and categorizing to aid the analysis process (Yin, 2016). Inductive analysis was an optimal approach for this study as it deterred the researcher from applying any preconceived ideas by identifying themes through careful coding of the data (Yin, 2016).

The 11 research study participant interviews served as the source of research data. All interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and uploaded into Dedoose for analysis purposes. The six domains and 21 domain elements of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model, the study's conceptual framework, were each assigned

separate codes within Dedoose. Each of the 11 transcribed interviews were examined line by line, from which 474 excerpts were identified and assigned a total of 842 codes (see Table 2).

Combined, the two research questions seek insights relative to which principal leadership practices, as perceived by teachers and principals, have the strongest relationship to student achievement.

Findings and Analysis

As anticipated, the teacher and principal responses to the semi-structured interview questions varied. Specific to the study's conceptual model, the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model, the coded excerpts from the teacher and principal study participant semi-structured interview responses revealed an uneven distribution across the six domains of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model (See Figure 5).

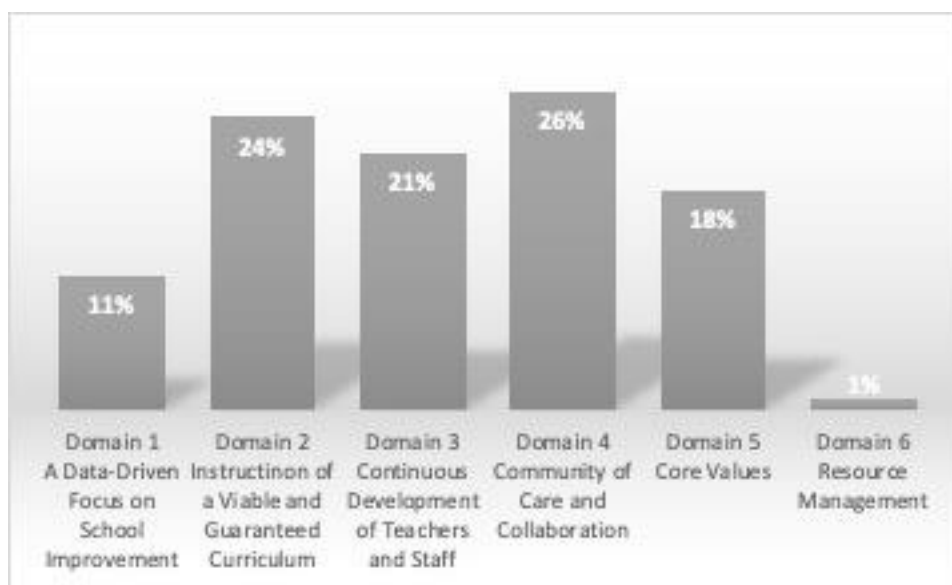


Figure 5. Distribution of Coded Excerpts Across the Six Domains

Table 2

Codes Assigned to Teacher and Principal Interview Excerpts

	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	Total		P1	P2	P3	P4	Total	Combined Total		
D-1 E1	0	1	5	1	5	1	2	15		D-1 E1	0	5	5	15	25	40	
D-1 E2	0	1	4	1	5	1	0	12		D-1 E2	1	8	5	3	17	29	
D-1 E3	0	1	1	1	2	0	0	5		D-1 E3	1	9	3	2	15	20	
D-2 E1	3	2	3	4	7	2	0	21		D-2 E1	1	14	11	16	42	63	Theme 6
D-2 E2	3	5	12	1	10	10	3	44		D-2 E2	8	13	12	11	44	88	Theme 1
D-2 E3	0	1	1	0	2	3	0	7		D-2 E3	2	7	1	3	13	20	
D-2 E4	0	0	3	0	2	1	0	6		D-2 E4	1	3	1	3	8	14	
D-2 E5	0	0	2	0	1	2	0	5		D-2 E5	2	5	2	4	13	18	
D-3 E1	4	4	5	5	4	15	8	45		D-3 E1	5	2	11	29	47	92	Theme 2
D-3 E2	3	4	8	0	3	1	3	22		D-3 E2	3	5	3	7	18	40	
D-3 E3	5	2	0	0	1	2	9	19		D-3 E3	7	1	6	12	26	45	
D-4 E1	2	1	7	2	14	9	0	35		D-4 E1	2	10	14	9	35	70	
D-4 E2	8	2	9	6	14	6	5	50		D-4 E2	6	7	15	10	38	88	
D-4 E3	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	4		D-4 E3	1	10	5	10	26	30	Theme 5
D-4 E4	2	4	2	3	4	3	0	18		D-4 E4	2	3	1	5	11	29	
D-5 E1	3	3	5	7	16	5	1	40		D-5 E1	3	9	4	2	18	58	Theme 3
D-5 E2	9	6	5	6	13	5	0	44		D-5 E2	4	6	7	10	27	71	Theme 4
D-5 E3	1	4	0	4	3	1	1	14		D-5 E3	1	1	2	2	6	20	
D-6 E1	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	3		D-6 E1	0	1	0	0	1	4	
D-6 E2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		D-6 E2	0	1	1	0	2	2	
D-6 E3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		D-6 E3	0	1	0	0	1	1	
Total	45	42	72	41	106	69	34	409		Total	50	121	109	153	433	842	

Possible explanations for this uneven distribution are discussed in Chapter V.

That said, six themes emerged from the data analysis, which included: (1) both teachers and principals share the perception that teachers improve instructional practices when the principal provides timely and meaningful feedback regarding predominant instructional practices, (2) both teachers and principals share the perception that strong teachers continue to demonstrate reflection and growth when supported by their principal, (3) teachers, more so than principals, have the perception that the principal must be recognized by all school stakeholders as a transparent leader who continually enhances his/her leadership skills, (4) teachers, more so than principals, have the perception that all school stakeholders must trust that principal decisions are measured by how they impact students, (5) principals, more so than teachers, have the perception that the principal must

ensure equity in a child-centered school with input from all school stakeholders, and (6) principals, more so than teachers, have the perception that the principal must provide a clear vision for the school’s instructional model. Figure 6 illustrates, for each of the six identified themes, the number of teacher and principal interview response excerpts, coded relative to their correlation to specific domains and elements of the conceptual framework, the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model.

A thorough line by line and word by word reading of each teacher and principal study participant semi-structured interview transcript captured the teacher and principal perceptions of the principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement. The essence of these perceptions resulted in the emergence of six themes directly correlated to specific domains and elements within the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model.

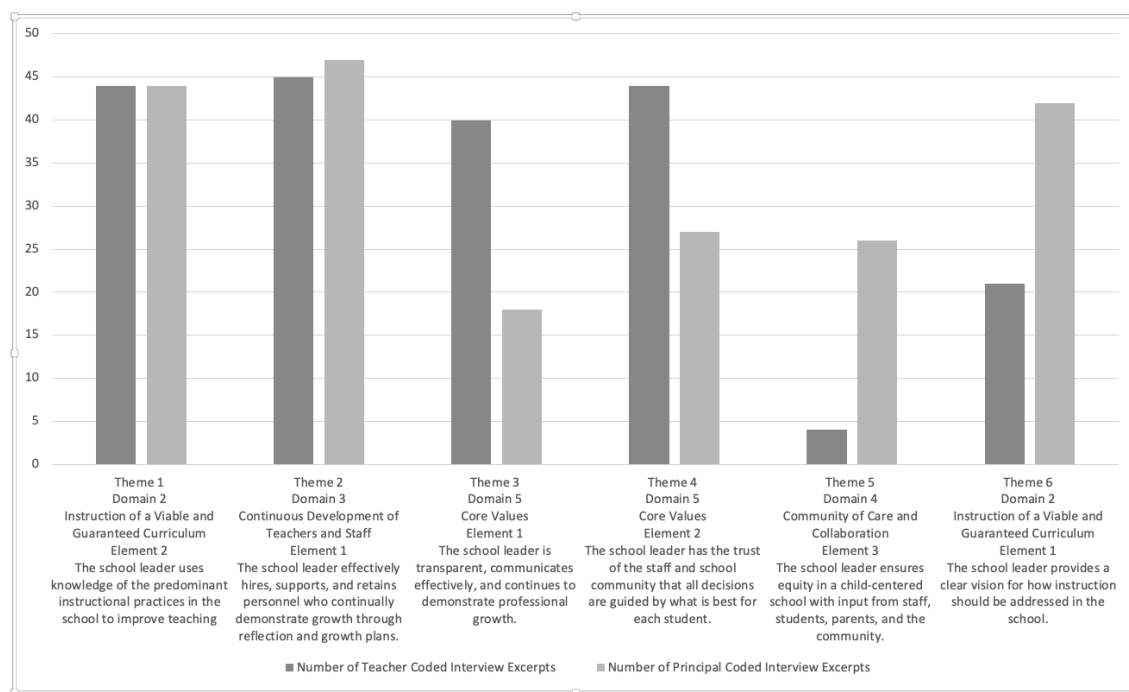


Figure 6. Codes Assigned to Interview Excerpts Resulting in Six Themes

Theme 1

Both teachers and principals share the perception that teachers improve instructional practices when the principal provides timely and meaningful feedback regarding predominant instructional practices.

An analysis of the data showed that the most prevalent shared perception between teachers and principals is the belief that the principal must use his/her knowledge of the predominant instructional practices in the school to improve teaching. This perception correlates most closely to Domain 2, Element 2, of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model.

Domain 2: Instruction of a Viable and Guaranteed Curriculum, Element 2: The school leader uses knowledge of the predominant instructional practices in the school to improve teaching.

Frequent walk-throughs and /or other classroom observations provide teachers with timely and meaningful feedback relative to the predominant instructional practices in the school. Emphasizing the critical importance of the accuracy of the feedback provided to each teacher regarding instructional practices, P2 commented:

as a principal, looking at their classroom management, the instruction that's being implemented within the classroom, how they plan and prepare in the classroom as well, having follow-up dialogue with them, making sure that we are in constant communication, that we're doing multiple walk-throughs, and having that open dialogue.

The regularity of walk-throughs and /or other classroom observations, consistency throughout the school year suggests the importance of a systematic approach to monitoring the effect of the predominant instructional practices. T3 stated:

helping your staff to make improvements... through observations and giving them that feedback...you see those factors grow, any ideas that you have as a principal and sharing those ideas to your staff and giving feedback, either informal feedback or through an observation and suggestions... I think sometimes from the principal's perspective... small suggestions can make a huge impact on your students' learning how you teach or just how your overall classroom runs.

Providing teachers feedback regarding instructional practices needed to address learning gaps and diverse student populations promotes equity. Equity means that each child has access to a guaranteed curriculum, one that offers all students an equal opportunity to engage in rigorous content, and a viable curriculum, one that offers adequate time for teachers to teach and students to learn the curriculum. Equity also means that students who are marginalized, disenfranchised or who have special needs not only have equal access, but the necessary supports to be successful. P2 commented: "making sure that they're (teachers) providing, again, all the necessary curriculum content, intervention supports in that classroom."

Predominant instructional practices and trends are documented and regularly shared with teachers following observations, with problems of practice being accurately described for the teacher by the principal. Various teacher evaluation scales or rubrics, such as the Danielson teacher evaluation framework, document teacher growth over time and produce data that reflects teacher growth and improvement and the implementation

of new instructional strategies resulting from provided feedback from the principal. The goal, ultimately, is that the teacher can describe the predominant instructional practices used in the school and how they affect student achievement. Participant T2 summarized:

after an observation, a teacher expects that they should receive written feedback, obviously they should also be reflecting on the observation; and after they have reflected, they expect the same to come from their principal. And then after that, they would expect to have, I would say, an in-person type meeting conference to go through the different things that went well, but obviously things that you can improve on, sometimes smaller, sometimes bigger, but always it should be something written. And I also agree that even if a lesson doesn't always go well, I think that there should always be something positive, but overall it should be that conversation piece that's happening. It should be something that happens in a short timeframe, 'cause when you're teaching so many lessons a day, it's easy to forget one lesson to the next. So I think having that feedback in a timely manner, but definitely the details and I think the teacher should be willing to take that feedback and then use it in their classroom, moving forward.

It is important to note that it is not simply the frequency with which principals visit classrooms or the duration of time spent during those classroom observations that teachers value most, rather it is the quality of the feedback given after the walkthrough or observation either informally or during formally scheduled conversations between teacher and principal during follow up observation post-conferences. Teachers can be skeptical of the feedback they receive from principals if they feel that the principal is not well grounded in the predominant instructional practices or lack the teaching experience

to fully grasp, appreciate and/or acknowledge what it is they are observing while visiting classrooms for observation purposes. T3 and T6 make clear the importance of both timely and meaningful feedback from principals following a classroom walkthrough or observation:

I think really giving me feedback piece, and yes, the principal should be seen as that leadership role, but you should be comfortable enough that you trust that principal is giving you feedback that you know would be helpful for your students and worth the time in your classroom... as a teacher, you're going to grow because you take that feedback that they're giving you and you trust that what they're giving you, you don't take it as criticism, but you take it as seeing what you can improve on... I think from the teacher side, respecting that when they give you a suggestion to then try that suggestion out or give them feedback on what went well or what didn't go well, even if it's not always from an observation but some type of suggestion that they give, I think that just makes a huge impact... I think having that feedback in a timely manner, but definitely the details and I think the teacher should be willing to take that feedback and then use it in their classroom. (T3)

I don't know, classroom practices or routine or something like that. Some people don't expect that much from principals, and I would say, I've been teaching kind of a while, I don't necessarily expect that much from principals just because... There's all sorts of reasons why a person would go into educational administration, and it's not necessarily because they've been particularly successful in the classroom... I'm sure, every once in a while that you have a

principal who was an excellent practitioner in the classroom and for whatever reason, became a principal. But I don't think that happens very often. They wanted to get out of the classroom. (T6)

Recognizing the critical nature of the principal's use his/her knowledge of the predominant instructional practices in the school to improve teaching, P2 states:

We have a foot in the door in all of that with our teachers... make sure that you're doing that again on a consistent basis, but also following up on the practice that's happening, the dialogue that you're taking place with them, and sharing the challenges that you may see in the classroom, talking through with the teacher on some of the improvements that... suggestions we can provide them, but also talking more importantly about all the good things that they're doing and how they can continue to strengthen that. So I just think it's an open dialogue, open communication, and it's ongoing.

The most prevalent shared perception between teachers and principals is the belief that the principal must use his/her knowledge of the predominant instructional practices in the school to improve teaching. An analysis of the inductively coded transcription excerpts of all study participant interviews revealed 44 teacher and 44 principal references to Domain 2, Element 2, of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model.

Theme 2

Both teachers and principals share the perception that strong teachers continue to demonstrate reflection and growth when supported by their principal.

An analysis of the data showed that the second most prevalent common perception between teachers and principals is the belief that the principal must have the capacity to effectively hire, support and retain personnel who continually demonstrate growth through reflection and growth plans. This perception correlates most closely to Domain 3, Element 1, of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model.

Domain 3: Continuous Development of Teachers and Staff, Element 1: The school leader effectively hires, supports and retains personnel who continually demonstrate growth through reflection and growth plan.

Teachers and principals agree on three essential principal practices strongly related to student achievement, all three of which, notably, take place outside the classroom. These three practices include: hiring the very best available talent using nondiscriminatory and standardized interview processes and protocols; supporting teachers on the continuum through a collaboratively implemented teacher evaluation plan where teachers can work with their principals on establishing pedagogical growth goals and principals can monitor that growth and provide interventions, allowing teachers opportunities to reflect on their instruction and the improvement of their craft; and timely and meaningful job embedded professional development in order that teachers demonstrate continuous growth in their area of responsibility

The essence of Domain 3, Element 1, of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model reflects the principal's capacity to hire, support and develop excellent teachers. A majority of both teacher and principal perceptions captured the critical importance of the principal's capacity to demonstrate these three practices.

Hiring excellent teachers at the start is arguably the first and most crucial step in building a strong staff and ensuring that the very best talent stands before the students in every classroom, every day. T6 comments:

I think a huge responsibility of the principal is hiring, making good hires. And taking good advice, planning for that, really putting a lot of thought into the hiring. Because no matter how long-standing the principal, most likely kind of the faculty as a whole is gonna be of longer standing with the district. So yeah... So contributing to building that kind of strong faculty. The core person that you hire is just so important. So careful hiring, hiring in advance, knowing what one is looking for, setting up a good hiring committee, that sort of thing, is really key.

In addition to the primary principal practice of instructional leadership and supporting teachers in their pedagogical instructional growth, principals provide teachers with emotional support, with parents matters, in matters of classroom management and student discipline and myriad other ways. Supportive principals are good listeners and collaborative. Supportive principals empower teachers by encouraging risk taking, creativity and innovation. The perceptions of both teacher and principal study participants revealed the significance of principal support for teachers:

I like to be innovative and constantly changing, and I feel that a principal that is going to be open to their ideas, to new ideas and philosophies and support ingenuity and creativity and professional development, if the teacher can make an argument for how this is going to be beneficial to the students and the success in the classroom, I think that it is integral that the principal support that. (T2)

Undying support...I think they need to feel like they can come to you for support, just like a kid does to a parent, "I need some help dad and come and ask me for it, or where I'm having an issue, good then let's just talk through that. (P4)

That's a really important part of my job, is to be able to be a good listener to whomever sharing with me information, and by listening it really leads to building trust and being able to have people know that I'm gonna do what I say I'll do and I'll be there to support them through the work that I'm asking them to do... they expect me to do what I say I'm gonna do. They expect me to... They really expect me to be able to support them in their efforts that they're doing. I think that they expect me to be present, to be approachable and to be the conduit for things that come to them. (P1)

I think some of the most important roles and responsibilities for a principal is to support and encourage the staff to teach the students to the best of their ability...making their staff empowered to raise the academic rigor of their students...looking out for the best interest of the students and empowering the teachers to work to that goal. (T4)

Teacher and principal study participants also agree that timely, meaningful and job-embedded professional development is paramount to teachers' ability to demonstrate continuous growth in their area of responsibility:

Collective teacher efficacy basically refers to when you have a group of teachers who truly believe that they can make an impact in the classroom, then they'll work towards that goal and do so. So, my role as principal is working with our division chairs to ensure that the professional development process is aligned with those

goals, to make sure that we're measuring outcomes in the classroom and making progress towards developing students who take ownership of their learning. So from an instructional perspective, I work very closely with that group to make sure that that's happening. (P3)

We had a big professional development meeting a couple of weeks ago, and I had to be articulate with my staff about my vision and I clearly was not clear enough. So, though I literally drew them a picture, I found out that I'm gonna have to continue to draw that picture and continue to have one-to-one conversations about where are we gonna go? What do you mean by this defining terms, defining words? (P4)

I believe the most important role to improve student learning is to be part of the instruction, to know what curriculum is being taught in their school and giving the teachers professional development... I think that that's extremely important and the only way to get there is to allow the PLCs to develop and for the principal to be a part of those PLCs and to provide the professional development... being able to come to him or her with our needs and having a principal that listens and understands and does provide professional development and provide whatever it is the teachers need. (T5)

I think that one thing would be to create a culture of reflection. Maybe along with the teacher evaluation, so that the teachers are constantly reflecting on practices so that they are continuing to use best practices and to look at and determine where they feel that they need help with, and then give access to those teachers for professional development, or strategies, or whatever it is that they're looking

for. So I think that could be a really important thing. So that kind of culture of reflection and support...teachers need the support and need the professional development options and the "Ata-boys" kind of stuff that a principal can give.

(T7)

So be supportive of staff, supportive of staff in ways that staff sees for personal growth, and to inform staff in a concise way of areas of growth according to the opinion of the principal, to offer staff avenues to improve their personal growth, be it access to substitutes, if they want to attend a conference, access to other resources that district might offer in the pursuit of improving one's practice. So, being supportive, being flexible, I think are two key ways you can help professionals improve their growth. (T1)

The second most prevalent common perception between teachers and principals is the belief that the principal must have the capacity to effectively hire, support and retain personnel who continually demonstrate growth through reflection and growth plans. An analysis of the inductively coded transcription excerpts of all study participant interviews revealed 45 teacher and 47 principal references to Domain 3, Element 1, of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model.

Theme 3

Teachers, more so than principals, have the perception that the principal must be recognized by all school stakeholders as a transparent leader who continually enhances his/her leadership skills.

An analysis of the data showed that the greatest discrepancy between teacher and principal perceptions relative to the principal practices having the strongest relationship

to student achievement pertains to the principal's transparency, ability to communicate effectively, and continued demonstration of professional growth. This perception correlates most closely to Domain 5, Element 1, of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model.

Element 1 of Domain 5 of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model identifies principal transparency, ability to communicate effectively and commitment to professional growth as important practices for principals to demonstrate on the continuum.

There are likely as many definitions of, and assigned attributes of principals who are recognized as, 'transparent' as there are synonyms for the word. For the purpose of this study, a principal's transparency is reflected by their: possession of uncompromisable core values; presence and visibility; and capacity to clearly articulate the school's goals, mission and vision. Study participants, teachers significantly more so than principals, recognize the importance of principal transparency:

Sometimes I think it's just the little things, the being present. When my principal walks down the halls, it's really encouraging to see students look up and say hello, and acknowledge that he is there. And they seem to understand we're all in this together and there's our commander-in-chief walking around, making sure everything's as it should be. (T4)

I think it's extremely important the principal is in the room and visible at any time can pop in and look at what's going on and be part of that culture. (T5)

The principal could be visible in the building, and could be encouraging and supporting different programs, and when there's something going on in the

building, interacting with the kids and happenings that are going on so that they know that it's a respected behavior. (T7)

Someone that's gonna be consistent, present. (T1)

They really expect me to be able to support them in their efforts that they're doing. I think that they expect me to be present, to be approachable and to be the conduit for things that come to them. (P1)

Clear, open and honest communication was also recognized by study participant teachers and principals as being a critical principal leadership practice. Further, that the principal effectively utilize multiple media sources to communicate with staff and community non-negotiable factors that have an impact on student achievement. Study participants, teachers significantly more so than principals, recognize the importance of effective principal communication:

I think that whole communication piece as well is a big thing, that they expect someone who is there for them, that is there for their students. (T3)

The empowerment of the teacher and clear and concise communication about curricular expectations, district initiatives and flexibility and support and helping staff gain that new information that might be out there. (T1)

That we're maintaining an open door policy, open communication, open dialog. We're setting goals with teachers... having follow-up dialogue with them, making sure that we are in constant communication... they expect ultimately to have someone that's there to listen, someone that's gonna be visible, someone that's going to be visible and present, someone that's gonna have their back and be supportive. (P2)

I have to have some time with it, to figure out how that's gonna translate to our students. So that when I do communicate, things that are coming maybe down from a district level, that I've kind of already worked through some of the things of how that's going to affect our student population or them as teachers. (P1)

The principal's own professional development activities should be consistent with the principal's identified growth plan and evidence of leadership initiatives present. Principals must also demonstrate uncompromised problem solving and decision making skills aimed toward raising student achievement. Specific to continued demonstration of professional growth, principal study participants were asked, "In your own opinion, what helps you grow the most as a principal?" P3 responded:

Learning from our teachers, learning from the experiences they have, learning from our best teachers, getting outside of our building. I think one of the best things we do is get outside of our building and see what other schools, not only in this area are doing, but other schools globally. What are they doing to impact student learning? Read. I think always looking to learn about how we can do things better is the most important thing we do.

The greatest discrepancy between teacher and principal perceptions relative to the principal practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement pertains to the principal's transparency, ability to communicate effectively, and continued demonstration of professional growth. An analysis of the inductively coded transcription excerpts of all study participant interviews revealed 40 teacher and 18 principal references to Domain 5, Element 1, of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model.

Theme 4

Teachers, more so than principals, have the perception that all school stakeholders must trust that principal decisions are measured by how they impact students.

An analysis of the data showed that the second greatest discrepancy between teacher and principal perceptions relative to the principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement pertains to the principal's capacity to foster positive relationships and gain trust from the staff and school community that all decisions are guided by what is best for each student. This perception correlates most closely to Domain 5, Element 2, of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model.

Domain 5: Core Values, Element 2: The school leader has the trust of the staff and school community that all decisions are guided by what is best for each student.

Teachers, more so than principals, identified principal leadership practices associated with Element 2 of Domain 5 of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model, the school leader has the trust of the staff and school community that all decisions are guided by what is best for each student, as having the strongest relationship to student achievement. In order to build such trust, the principal must also establish positive working relationships.

Educators make their life's work, helping students grow. This vocation encompasses the whole child. Teachers and principals go well beyond merely addressing the academic needs of their students; they address the physical, social, emotional and cultural needs of the students as well. Therefore, the principal must consistently take inventory of student, teacher, parent and school community perceptions to ensure that

school policies and procedures are viewed as ethical, fair, unbiased, and culturally responsive. By constantly taking such inventories and following through on commitments and assurances, the principal builds trust with all school constituent groups over time. Teachers and principal study participants, although more teachers than principals, recognize the importance of building trust:

I think you want from your principal that leadership skills and somebody that you trust and somebody that really you have that positive relationship that you can grow as a teacher and become a stronger teacher... you have that positive relationship, I think that as a teacher, you're going to grow because you take that feedback that they're giving you and you trust that what they're giving you, you don't take it as criticism, but you take it as seeing what you can improve on, and I just think that it's a big thing when you trust your administration. (T3)

Ultimately, if a staff member feels threatened or feels like the administrator is not acting in good faith, they're... It seems, in my opinion, less likely to change for the better or grow... effort needed to overcome some obstacles or to improve student achievement might be lessened if there's a lack of trust between principal and teaching staff. (T1)

It's critical the principal and the teacher have some kind of a connection, some kind of a bond where they're constantly working together as a collaborative team... It'll build a trusting and honest foundation between the two. So I think it's absolutely critical for students' success. (P2)

By listening it really leads to building trust and being able to have people know that I'm gonna do what I say I'll do and I'll be there to support them through the

work that I'm asking them to do... I definitely am able to articulate to the staff my point of view, but and the expectations that I have for the outcomes for students... when I do communicate, things that are coming maybe down from a district level, that I've kind of already worked through some of the things of how that's going to affect our student population or them as teachers. (P1)

A close examination of the combined transcripts of the study participant responses to the semi-structured interview questions revealed that 53 references were made to the critical importance of the principal establishing positive working relationships. Positive relationships are established with staff, faculty, students, parents, and community when the principal performs all roles and responsibilities with integrity and with the genuine desire to ensure the well-being of the whole student. Two of the many teacher and principal study participant references to the establishment of positive working relationships include:

It boils down to a relationship that the teachers and the principal have... I don't feel that you're gonna see any growth in a teacher... we strategized together and we collaborated and we worked extremely hard because the relationship was so strong. (T5)

Most people that know me would know that I usually say it's all about relationships, and I think it is... I think that having good relationships and being there for your staff and the same thing for students. (P4)

The second greatest discrepancy between teacher and principal perceptions relative to the principal practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement pertains to the principal's capacity to foster positive relationships and gain trust from the

staff and school community that all decisions are guided by what is best for each student. An analysis of the inductively coded transcription excerpts of all study participant interviews revealed 44 teacher and 27 principal references to Domain 5, Element 2, of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model.

Theme 5

Principals, more so than teachers, have the perception that the principal must ensure equity in a child-centered school with input from all school stakeholders.

An analysis of the data showed that the greatest discrepancy between principal and teacher and perceptions relative to the principal practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement pertains to the principal's capacity to ensure equity in a child-centered school with input from staff, students, parents, and the community. This perception correlates most closely to Domain 4, Element 3, of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model.

Element 3 of Domain 4 of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model identifies the importance of the principal's capacity to ensure equity in a child-centered school with input from staff, students, parents, and the community. Equity is not merely ensuring that every student gets the same, rather it is ensuring that each individual students get what they need to be successful. Ensuring equity across the school house requires a tremendous amount of collaboration.

Successful principals recognize that relying on the collective wisdom of the group when solving problems and making decisions requires such collaboration. Growing teacher leaders, creating time within each school day for teachers to meet and plan instruction, review student data, design intensive instructional interventions to remediate

struggling students, and meet in Data and MTSS teams to address students' lowest foundational skills and progress monitor interventions are essential principal practices. When staff, students, parents, and community members feel their input is valued, the overall functioning of the school improves. Teacher and principal study participants, principals significantly more so than teachers, recognize that equity born out of a truly collaborative spirit is vitally important:

We really promote collaboration and working together and our number one focus for the last handful of years has been relationships. And it's not just between kid and kid, it's kids and teachers, and teachers with teachers. So it's critical the principal and the teacher have some kind of a connection, some kind of a bond where they're constantly working together as a collaborative team. (P2)

I find the most important role I do is leading our leaders, so to speak. So making sure that our leadership teams are moving things forward, and making decisions, and asking the right questions and engaging in inquiry around the most important things related to students... I think the characteristics of that teacher are someone who is willing to get better, willing to learn, but also willing to collaborate with their colleagues. Because as a staff in any school, we can learn from each other, and we're better when we collaborate than when we work in isolation...the concept of collective teacher efficacy basically refers to when you have a group of teachers who truly believe that they can make an impact in the classroom, then they'll work towards that goal and do so. (P3)

PLCs to develop and for the principal to be a part of those PLCs and to provide the professional development... as far as principal leadership practices that relate

directly to the student is being part of our PLCs and our data team and being part of the monitoring of our students, and being part of the process and part of the curriculum... we strategized together and we collaborated and we worked extremely hard because the relationship was so strong. (T5)

Empowering other staff to take on responsibilities and to make decisions and mentor staff... being flexible in working with staff on gaining time to have a learning community, a PLC type get together and being attentive and being able to respond to staff input, staff concerns, staff needs. (T1)

The greatest discrepancy between principal and teacher and perceptions relative to the principal practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement pertains to the principal's capacity to ensure equity in a child-centered school with input from staff, students, parents, and the community. An analysis of the inductively coded transcription excerpts of all study participant interviews revealed 26 principal and 4 teacher references to Domain 4, Element 3, of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model.

Theme 6

Principals, more so than teachers, have the perception that the principal must provide a clear vision for the school's instructional model.

An analysis of the data showed that the second greatest discrepancy between principal and teacher and perceptions relative to the principal practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement pertains to the principal's capacity to provide a clear vision for how instruction should be addressed in the school. This

perception correlates most closely to Domain 2, Element 1, of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model.

Element 1 of Domain 2 of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model identifies the importance of the school leader providing a clear vision for how instruction should be addressed in the school.

The principal's vision for instruction, when created collaboratively with teachers, encompasses: the school's predominant instructional practices; the instructional strategies framework, including the use of data, required to promote learning for the school's diverse population; non-negotiable and clearly articulated lesson plan components; intentional lesson planning; and a school-wide language of instruction. Teacher and principal study participants, principal more so than teachers, articulated the importance of the principal providing a clear vision for how instruction should be addressed in the school:

Making sure you have the adequate materials for the curriculum that you are rolling out and implementing within your school, you're providing services for kids that have higher needs or challenges or struggle in reading, math, executive functioning, whatever that may be... making sure those things are being implemented with fidelity and that you're doing everything you can to meet the needs of all... pushing forward thinking, pushing and challenging teachers to provide everything they can do to meet the needs of the learners within the classroom... drive our mission...looking at data from student focus groups, from parents, from teachers, from your staff, is always very helpful to constantly put you in check on certain things. (P2)

Setting a culture and setting a tone... listening to see where's your community, where are your kids, where is your staff. (P4)

So the concept of collective teacher efficacy basically refers to when you have a group of teachers who truly believe that they can make an impact in the classroom, then they'll work towards that goal...it appreciative inquiry. So, when you start working with teachers or students and you bring the appreciative part to them, that creates a safe space for teachers to grow. And then when you provide them with models when they do feel safe and growing and getting better and really reflecting on their work, then what happens is you begin to create models of success within your building... with the highest levels of ability to collaborate and seek input, and make sure that decisions that are made are done with teachers, not to them. (P3)

Working within, the teachers working with parents and the teachers working with each other and the students working and the parents working all together so it's that cool culture of how they're going to get all the different stakeholders to buy into what's going on and to work collaboratively for a common good... making sure the correct curriculum is being taught, to help problem solve with staff when challenges are discovered... being flexible in working with staff on gaining time to have a learning community, a PLC type get together and being attentive and being able to respond to staff input, staff concerns, staff needs. (T2)

The second greatest discrepancy between principal and teacher and perceptions relative to the principal practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement pertains to the principal's capacity to provide a clear vision for how instruction should be

addressed in the school. An analysis of the inductively coded transcription excerpts of all study participant interviews revealed 42 principal and 21 teacher references to Domain 2, Element 1, of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model.

Additional Data Collected

Teacher and principal interview participants identified two principal leadership practices they perceived to have a strong relationship to student achievement that had no direct correlation to the study's conceptual framework, the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model. The principal leadership practices identified by three or more teacher and/or principal interview participants with no direct correlation to the study's conceptual framework, and anticipated as a possible limitation in Chapter I were social-emotional competence and empathy:

Specific to social-emotional competence, teacher and principal participants commented:

But I think though it's harder to be a teacher today, I think the challenges that are coming at us are coming at us so quickly, and they're so different, the anxiety of kids and all the social-emotional stuff. (P4)

That all still ties into your whole social-emotional piece, is do you have the health services that can provide for those students that might have executive functioning concerns, anxiety, school refusal, things of that nature? (P2)

I'd say, need to be flexible and not rigid, realizing that different students have different academic needs, different social-emotional needs, and the one-size-fits-all model doesn't really work in my experience. (T1)

Specific to empathy, teacher and principal participants commented:

Some of the other things I think are no-brainers. Are you thoughtful? Do you have empathy? Can you build trust with kids? But around our building a lot we say, “Be kind.” So it doesn't cost anything to be kind, but we expect that a lot. (P4)

Empathy for their students and making sure that those students understand that they're there for them each and every day, and it all starts with the relationship that they have with their students and however we can grow. (P1)

They expect ultimately to have someone that's there to listen. (P2)

Listening to what they say about how they want to learn, what they think about, what they're worried about, what they're happy about. (T7)

Summary

This chapter contains the results of the data analysis and connects the analysis back to the study's research questions. Eleven study participants, K-12 teachers and principals, were interviewed for this qualitative study using a qualitative interviewing methodology. Research participants responded to semi-structured research questions during a 30-60 minute interview process. The interview responses were audio recorded and later transcribed. The interview questions were targeted to delineate which principal leadership practices, as perceived by teachers and principals, have the strongest relationship to student achievement. As patterns emerge from the data collected from study participant interview responses, themes were identified and correlated to the domains and elements found within the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS

This chapter synthesizes and discusses the results in light of the study's research questions, literature review and conceptual framework. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify which school principal leadership practices, as perceived by both teachers and principals, have the strongest relationship to student achievement. This chapter includes sections on the trustworthiness of the data, a discussion that the analysis conducted was consistent with semi-structured interviewing methodology and how the analysis connects back to the research questions. In addition, this chapter includes implications of research, implications for practice, recommendations for future research and conclusions.

Trustworthiness of the Data

The trustworthiness of the study's data was born out of the design of the study, the methodology used and the reliability of the perceptions of the teacher and principal study participants, rather than the employment of any specific procedure (Yin, 2016). In other words, the ambitious study participation criteria that was established to seek only the perceptions of teachers and principals whose work was already resulting in high levels of student achievement was a deliberate means by which to build study trustworthiness and credibility.

The seven teacher study participants in the all taught for a minimum of five years, and had an average of 22 years' teaching experience. The four principal study participants taught for a minimum of five years, had been principals for a minimum of five years and had an average of 11 years' experience as principals. Further, both teacher and principal study participants had 80% of their students achieving at proficient or above in ELA or Math as evidenced by normed state testing results.

Discussion of the Findings

Prior to interviewing the teacher and principal study participants using a semi-structured interviewing methodology to ascertain their perceptions relative to the principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement, the researcher presented, in Chapter II, an exhaustive review of the literature. The literature review was broadly constructed to capture the evolution of the roles and responsibilities of the principal over time. The literature review also investigated effective principal leadership practices, including the separate components of the study's conceptual framework, the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model.

Chapter IV identified the six themes that emerged from the analysis of the data. The six themes were identified as a result of reading each study participant's semi-structured interview transcript and the correlation of interview excerpts to their corresponding domain and element of the conceptual framework, the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model.

The identification of the six themes allows for a more narrowly focused discussion of the study's findings and a deeper exploration of current research and other

recent studies conducted relative to each identified theme and its corresponding domain and element within the conceptual framework:

Theme 1

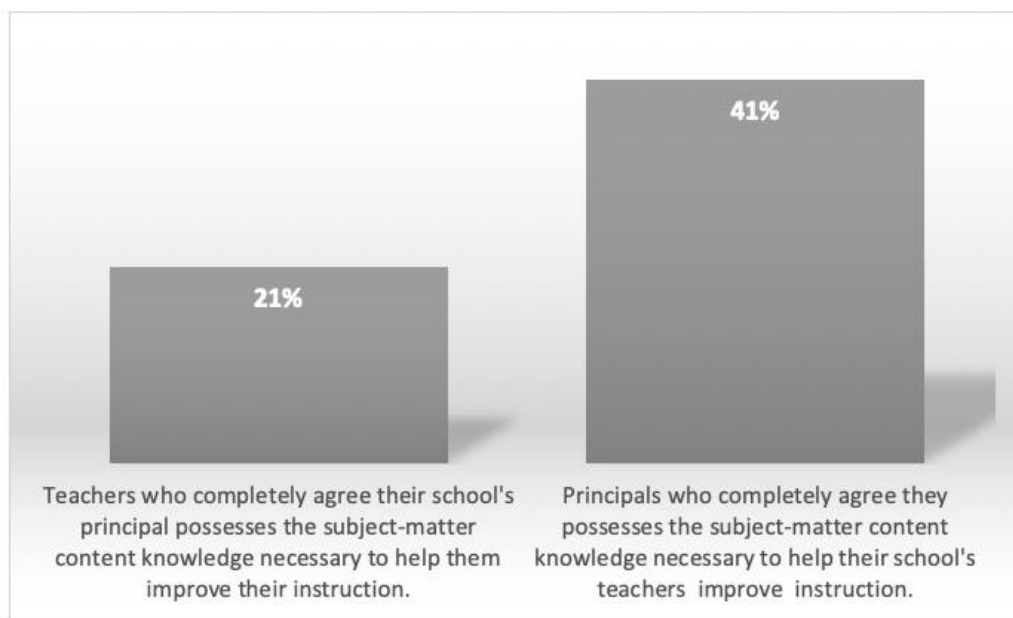
An analysis of the data showed that the most prevalent shared perception between teachers and principals is the belief that the principal must use his/her knowledge of the predominant instructional practices in the school to improve teaching. This perception correlates most closely to Domain 2, Element 2, of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model.

Study participant perceptions capturing the essence of Domain 2, Element 2, of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model are also found within the domains and elements of the Charlotte Danielson's teacher evaluation framework (Danielson, 2013). That said, some teachers' perceptions reflected some measure of importance related to the principal's capacity to, or inability to, provide knowledgeable feedback.

Classroom walk-throughs provide principals the opportunity to offer teachers timely and meaningful feedback relative their instructional practices, implementation of the curriculum and other predetermined look fors (Kachur, Stout, & Edwards, 2013). The vast majority of study participants, both teachers and principals, indicated that informal and formal classroom visits and observations benefit teachers' instructional practices in the classroom.

There's broad consensus that principals need deep knowledge in three broad areas: curriculum and pedagogy; assessments for student learning; and classroom environment and culture (Superville, 2019). That said, there is a discrepancy between teachers' perceptions of their principal's requisite subject matter knowledge to help them improve

their instruction than principals' perceptions of their own requisite subject matter knowledge to help their teachers improve instruction (see Figure 7)



Source: Education Week Research Center, 2019.

Figure 7. Teacher and Principal Perceptions of Principal Requisite Content Knowledge

A principal's lack of content knowledge, however, doesn't necessarily negatively impact the relationship between the teacher and the principal. Teachers, for the most part, already know what their principals taught, and principals who admitted to some weaknesses and were interested in learning alongside teachers added to the principal's credibility culture (Superville, 2019).

To attain a more nuanced look at teaching in an area outside of the principal's own expertise, Jimerson suggests that principals:

- Choose one subject area a year and dig deeper into it.

- Subscribe to a practitioner journal in one content area, such as the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics' journal. Principals should read it monthly, and discuss it with their teachers.
- Make the learning public. Teachers and other experts in the building and districts should know that principals are engaging in this process.
- Have conversations with teachers about what you're reading and ask to visit classrooms to see in practice what you've just read.
- Work with the district's instructional coaches and content experts in the area of focus. Visit classrooms with them to see and learn good teaching practices in that subject area.
- Read one or two well-respected practitioner books in that content area. Attend professional learning community meetings in that subject area, not as a leader, but as a co-learner. (Jimerson & Fuentes, 2019)

Theme 2

An analysis of the data showed that the second most prevalent common perception between teachers and principals is the belief that the principal must have the capacity to effectively hire, support and retain personnel who continually demonstrate growth through reflection and growth plans. This perception correlates most closely to Domain 1, Element 3, of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model.

Relative to hiring excellent teachers, districts and schools need to recognize that building their teaching force is imperative to their success and to the success of their students and must design and execute a recruitment strategy with the same level of fierceness as other industries that compete for candidates with similar mindsets, skills,

and passions. And, to recognize that actively recruiting top talent and making the job search professional and exciting will help better serve students and build the culture of prestige the teaching profession deserves (Herrmann, 2018).

The reality, though, is that there is an insufficient number of teachers are coming into teaching and excessive numbers of teachers quitting the profession due to myriad reasons such as worsening working conditions. The result is a rapidly dwindling teacher candidate pool nation-wide, which raises additional concerns: a potential change or decline in the qualifications of the teaching workforce; difficulty filling vacancies, pressuring schools to hire less qualified teachers with fewer credentials and thus affected the overall qualifications of the teaching workforce; and high-poverty schools, especially being more likely to have vacancies and have a hard time filling vacancies and more likely to fill positions with first-year teachers, who are more likely to leave the school or leave the profession (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Therefore it stands to reason that Districts and schools must support, develop and retain teachers who are already employed.

Relative to supporting teachers, research has shown that effective school leadership is among the strongest predictors of teacher retention. How principals engage their teachers matters in terms of whether they will stick around (Will, 2018). When teachers feel respected, valued, and empowered, there is a higher level of commitment, less turn-over, and greater school stability .

Perceptions of novice teachers reveal a need for the principal's emotional support and safety, someone who motivates and encourages collaboration rather than being their critic. Perceptions of mid-career teachers reveal their need to be respected as professionals and their high interest in mentoring new teachers. Perceptions of veteran

teachers reflects their need for respect for their knowledge and experience. Praise is relatively unimportant for the veteran teacher, but a wise principal will ask their opinion, value their input, and give them opportunities for decision-making (Richards, 2007).

Regardless years' experience, teacher perceptions identify the same five principal behaviors most valued by teachers, juxtaposed with principal perceptions (see Table 3):

Table 3

Comparison of the Top Five Principal Behaviors

<u>Teacher Ranking Order</u>	<u>Principal Ranking Order</u>
1. Respects and values teachers as professionals.	1. Encourages teachers to improve in areas of teaching practice and professional development.
2. Supports teachers in matters of student discipline.	2. Holds consistent, high standards for all members of the school family.
3. Has an open-door policy.	3. Respects and values teachers as professionals.
4. Is fair, honest and trustworthy.	4. Is fair, honest and trustworthy.
5. Supports teachers with parents.	5. Has an open-door policy.

Source: EdWeek: How Effective Principals Encourage Their Teachers.

Relative to developing and retaining teachers, how practitioners define instructional leadership is still being explored. Although educators do not necessarily agree on what instructional leadership looks like in a school setting, a study of principals and teachers from 20 countries, resulted in the finding that the school leaders' definition of instructional leadership focused on: setting goals and vision for the organization; promoting and leading professional development of teachers; and supervising instruction (Urick & Bowers, 2017; Vogel, 2018).

In education, research has shown that teaching quality and school leadership are the most important factors in raising student achievement. For teachers and school and district leaders to be as effective as possible, they must engage in professional development activities on the continuum in order to continually expand their knowledge and skills to implement the best educational practices. Through ongoing, effective and timely professional development, educators learn to help students learn at the highest levels (Mizell, 2010).

Theme 3

An analysis of the data showed that the greatest discrepancy between teacher and principal perceptions relative to the principal practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement pertains to the principal's transparency, ability to communicate effectively, and continued demonstration of professional growth. This perception correlates most closely to Domain 5, Element 1, of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model.

Transparency and integrity are the cornerstones of good governance (Starr, 2016). The principal must cultivate a culture of transparency in order to ensure the entire staff knows what is happening and why, and establish a sense of team working together for a better school (Nolting, 2017).

Cultivating a school culture of transparency requires principals to build trust, be open, be honest and lead with integrity. The school principal must give honest feedback to teachers, err on the side of disclosure, stand up for important values, keep promises and follow through on commitments. Creating an environment of transparency requires that principals be good listeners, take issues head on and lead courageously (Saphier,

2018). Effective principals practice a transparent leadership style, admit that their school isn't perfect, and include staff and parents in a mission to make the school as great as it can be (Bagin, 2005).

You cannot be a great school leader without communication. Clear, positive communication with a focus on students, teaching, and learning builds confidence in the principal and the school. Common themes identified by parents and other community leaders about district and school building communication include:

- School newsletters are the most read vehicles for parents.
- Teachers are the key credible influentials when talking about your school.
- Parents are less concerned about overall national or state test scores than most of us think.
- Parents are more concerned about the progress, accomplishments, and challenges of their children.
- Schools are primarily judged on how their staff and principals interact with students and parents. (Bagin, 2005)

In her qualitative study, Tyler (2016) identifies 11 specific leadership communication behaviors (see Table 4).

Principals who demonstrate effective communication know that: personal relationships beat paper just about every time; healthy, respected relationships are critical to communication; perception is reality; first graders like surprises, the superintendent doesn't; an invitation to everyone is an invitation to no one; the best way to eat crow is fast; people support what they help create; it is more important to reach the people who count than to count the people you reach; comments taken out of context are those for

which a context was not clearly provided; and that when you create a communication void, your critics will surely fill it and flaunt it (Bagin, 2005).

Table 4

Leadership Communication Behaviors

Behavior	Key Element
1. Relationship building with teachers	1. Takes time
2. Earned trustworthiness	2. Transparency and honesty
3. Student-centered decision making processes	3. Involve teachers
4. Mentor experience	4. Purposeful and prior to becoming principal
5. Mindful listening practices	5. Includes body language and patience
6. Face-to-face communication	6. Daily, formal and informal with teachers
7. Written communication	7. Weekly email with key management items only
8. Visibility	8. Limited office time and frequent walk-throughs
9. Collaborative decision-making	9. Teacher leaders
10. Small group meetings	10. Weekly with rare whole faculty meetings
11. Positive communication	11. Acknowledge teachers in writing

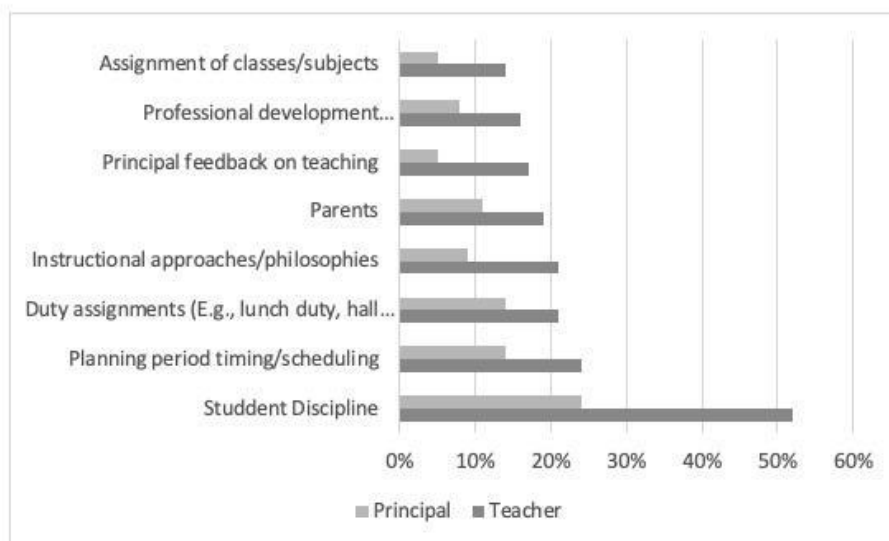
Source: Tyler, 2016, p. 8.

Principal leadership is a package of skills of which communication is only one element and without strong communication skills, relationships could be difficult to establish (Tyler, 2016). Principals are the main creators of a culture of communication in their schools. Good, two-way communication becomes the standard when principals serve as role models, provide resources and training, and hold staff members accountable for their communication efforts and results (Bagin, 2005).

Theme 4

An analysis of the data showed that the second greatest discrepancy between teacher and principal perceptions relative to the principal practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement pertains to the principal's capacity to foster positive relationships and gain trust from the staff and school community that all decisions are guided by what is best for each student. This perception correlates most closely to Domain 5, Element 2, of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model.

Teacher-principal relationships strongly and directly affect attitudes, which in turn define a school's climate and this climate effects the school's effectiveness (Price, 2012). Veteran teachers giving advice to principals on fostering positive teacher-principal relationships and meaningful buy-in from teachers shared these do's and don'ts: don't come to a new school and immediately make change; do consider what's already working well; don't ignore the veteran teachers; do prioritize building relationships with teachers; don't get too cocky; do get out of your office; don't ignore teachers' suggestions and input; and do tap teacher-leaders to pilot a new initiative before rolling it out to the rest of the staff (Will, 2019). Teacher-principal relationship sources of friction include (see Figure 8):

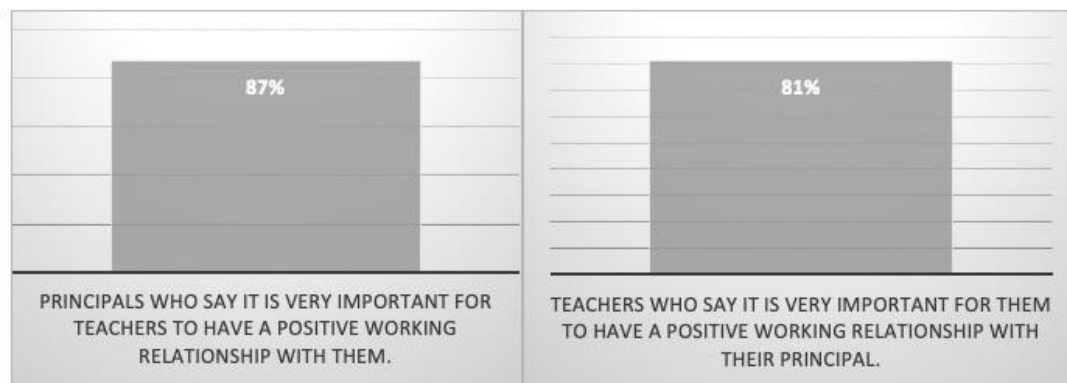


Source: Education Week Research Center, 2019.

Figure 8. Teacher Principal Relationship Sources of Friction

Trust is the foundation for collaboration, and collaboration is what makes organizations excel and builds an atmosphere within which teachers are willing to take the risks that new learning requires (Modoono, 2017). Schools with high relational trust are more likely to make marked improvements in student learning (Bryk & Schneider,

2003). Education Week conducted a study on teacher-principal relationships that shared the perceptions of both teachers and principals relative to the importance of such relationships (see Figure 9).



Source: Education Week Research Center, 2019.

Figure 9. Teacher and Principal Perceptions of Importance of Relationships

Principal trustworthiness can be measured by five key traits:

- **Benevolence:** Having confidence that another party has your best interests at heart and will protect your interests is a key ingredient of trust.
- **Reliability:** Reliability refers to the extent to which you can depend upon another party to come through for you, to act consistently, and to follow through.
- **Competence:** Similar to reliability, competence has to do with belief in another party's ability to perform the tasks required by his or her position. For example, if a principal means well but lacks necessary leadership skills, he or she is not likely to be trusted to do the job.
- **Honesty:** A person's integrity, character, and authenticity are all dimensions of trust. The degree to which a person can be counted on to represent

situations fairly makes a huge difference in whether or not he or she is trusted by others in the school community.

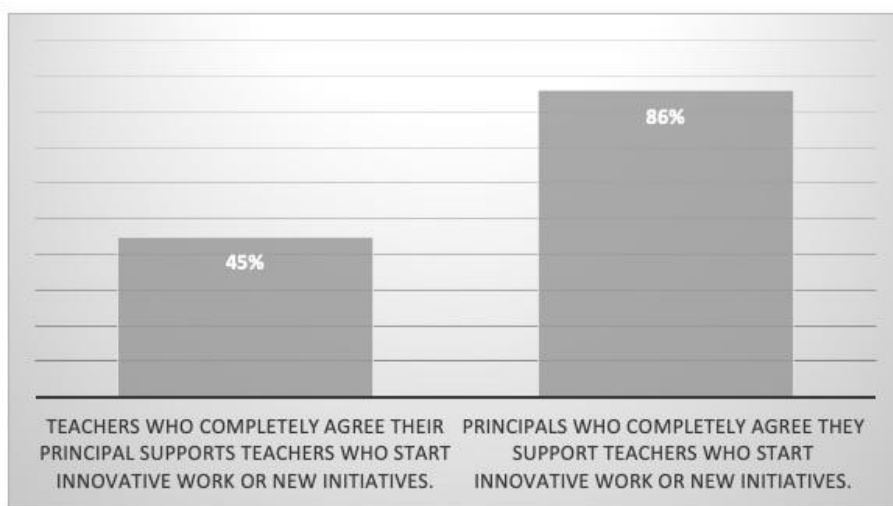
- Openness: Judgments about openness have to do with how freely another party shares information with others. Guarded communication, for instance, provokes distrust because people wonder what is being withheld and why. Openness is crucial to the development of trust between supervisors and subordinates, particularly in times of increased vulnerability for staff.

(Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998)

Building trust between educators—whether teacher to teacher or teacher to administrator—is rarely a simple matter. Obstacles to trust such as top-down decision making that is perceived as arbitrary, misinformed, or not in the best interests of the school and ineffective communication are, unfortunately, easy to come by, particularly in schools that have experienced high turnover in school leadership, repeated layoffs and budget shortfalls and/or widespread differences of opinion regarding curricula, teaching practices, school policies, or other matters affecting students, faculty, and staff (Brewster & Railsback, 2003).

In order to prepare the foundations for teacher-principal trust, researchers, professors of education, and practitioners suggest to principals that they: demonstrate personal integrity; show that they care; are accessible; facilitate and model effective communication; involve staff in decision making; celebrate experimentation and support risk; express value for dissenting views; reduce teachers' sense of vulnerability; ensure that teachers have basic resources; and are prepared to replace ineffective teachers (Brewster & Railsback, 2003). Relative to support, there is a notable discrepancy

between teacher and principal perceptions relative to principal support for teachers who start innovative work or new initiatives (see Figure 10).



Source: Education Week Research Center, 2019.

Figure 10. Perceptions of Principal Support for Teacher Innovation and New Initiatives

Theme 5

An analysis of the data showed that the greatest discrepancy between principal and teacher and perceptions relative to the principal practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement pertains to the principal's capacity to ensure equity in a child-centered school with input from staff, students, parents, and the community. This perception correlates most closely to Domain 4, Element 3, of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model.

Whether teachers are working on instruction, developing curriculum, or discussing students, they value the opportunity to collaborate (MODOONO, 2017). Principals recognize the importance of working with teachers in PLCs, data teams, or school leadership teams to identify student learning needs and develop instructional responses (Vogel, 2018). Schools and teachers that have better quality collaboration

across instructional domains also have higher achievement gains, and usually at statistically significant and meaningful levels (Ronfeldt, Owens Farmer, & Grissom, 2015).

The greatest discrepancy between principal and teacher perceptions relative to the principal practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement pertains to the principal's capacity to ensure equity in a child-centered school with input from staff, students, parents, and the community. An analysis of the inductively coded transcription excerpts of all study participant interviews revealed 26 principal and four teacher references to Domain 4, Element 3, of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model.

Theme 6

An analysis of the data showed that the second greatest discrepancy between principal and teacher and perceptions relative to the principal practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement pertains to the principal's capacity to provide a clear vision for how instruction should be addressed in the school. This perception correlates most closely to Domain 2, Element 1, of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model.

Instructional leadership is about cultivating the expertise within the building. It is about creating a culture of collaboration where teachers learn from one another and inspire one another. A principal's job is valuable inasmuch as teachers are enabled to be more effective. Teachers do the core business of the school, and the job of school leader is to remove barriers from instruction and provide teachers with the tools and resources needed to be successful (Steele & Whitaker, 2019). An analysis of the inductively coded

transcription excerpts of all study participant interviews revealed 42 principal and 21 teacher references to Domain 2, Element 1, of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model.

Additional Data Collected: Social Emotional Competence and Empathy

Teacher and principal interview participants identified two principal leadership practices they perceived to have a strong relationship to student achievement that had no direct correlation to the study's conceptual framework, the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model. The principal leadership practices identified by three or more teacher and/or principal interview participants with no direct correlation to the study's conceptual framework were social-emotional competence and empathy.

Although the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model is void of principal leadership practices directly related to empathy and other social-emotional learning competencies, Marzano does acknowledge the need for principals to create conditions within the school for social emotional learning (Marzano & Dujon, 2018). Using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as a framework, Marzano outlines specific needs and goals and identifies activities that schools and teachers can implement to address individual student needs at a school and classroom level that include: physiological needs—periodically assess the needs of students relative to hunger, sleep, mental health, physical health and homelessness; safety needs—including both physically and psychologically; belonging needs—creating a school environment of respect, affection and cooperation; esteem needs—provide opportunities for students to share personal experiences with their peers and celebrate their successes outside of school; self-actualization goals—opportunities for students to examine and develop their images of

their possible selves; and connecting to something greater than self—providing students opportunities to engage in altruistic projects (Marzano & Dujon, 2018).

School principals have substantial impacts on many aspects of their schools, including school climate and culture, teacher well-being and retention, and students' school success. As such, the principal must be mindful of both personal social and emotional competence including the ability to handle stress and model caring and culturally competent behaviors with staff and students and recognize their responsibility to ensure that all staff, students, parents, and community members feel safe, cared for, respected, and valued (Mahfouz, Greenberg, & Rodriguez, 2019).

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) identifies five social and emotional skills which include the ability to regulate their emotions and behavior, increase their social awareness, cultivate healthy relationships, and improve their decision-making skills (see Figure 11). By honing these skills principals can increase their effectiveness and develop the skills to lead the implementation of social emotional learning programs, policies, and practices in their buildings and throughout the school community (Elias, Utne O'Brien, & Weissberg, 2006).

Empathy is a social and emotional learning competency identified by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) that is most closely associated with social awareness (CASEL, 2017). At its core, *empathy* suggests an ability to understand and share another person's feelings and emotions—to see things from the perspective of another and understand another's point of view. This requires all school stakeholders to seek to know those around them beyond the surface. Often when

there's a difference of opinion, people—adults and children—choose to interact with those who support and reinforce their biases (Hoerr, 2018).

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Competencies		
<p>Self-Awareness</p> <p>The ability to accurately recognize one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior. The ability to accurately assess one's strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a "growth mindset."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying emotions • Accurate self-perception • Recognizing strengths • Self-confidence • Self-efficacy 	<p>Social Awareness</p> <p>The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. The ability to understand social and ethical norms for behavior and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perspective-taking • Empathy • Appreciating diversity • Respect for others 	<p>Responsible Decision-Making</p> <p>The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. The realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and a consideration of the well-being of oneself and others.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying problems • Analyzing situations • Solving problems • Evaluating • Reflecting • Ethical responsibility
<p>Self-Management</p> <p>The ability to successfully regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations — effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating oneself. The ability to set and work toward personal and academic goals.</p> <p>Impulse control</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress management • Self-discipline • Self-motivation • Goal-setting • Organizational skills 	<p>Relationship Skills</p> <p>The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. The ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Social engagement • Relationship-building • Teamwork 	

Source: CASEL, 2017.

Figure 11. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Capacities

Empathy requires listening, infusing lives with meaning and purpose and creating classrooms, meetings, and informal spaces characterized by dialogue rather than monologue. Teachers in such places would consistently give students voice in what they learn, how they learn, and how they might best show what they know. They would look for the problem behind misbehavior rather than seeing the child as a problem—and find solutions to the problem rather than punishments. Principals in these contexts would join with teachers to craft spaces and schedules that invite learning, account for human variance, and anticipate the need for flexibility. Teachers and principals alike would focus on assets rather than deficits, helping others identify their strengths and use those strengths as launching pads for further growth (Tomlinson & Murphy, 2018).

Implications of Research

A focus on principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement is important because great schools do not exist apart from great leaders and principal development remains a low priority on most education policy agendas (Hall, Childs-Bowen, Pajardo, & Cunningham-Morris, 2015).

The component parts of this study's conceptual framework, the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model, were influenced by the multi-year investigation, titled *Investigating the Links to Improved Student Learning* (Final report of research findings), which found that teachers in high-performing and high student achievement schools of all grade levels, K-12, report high levels of Instructional Climate, and principals whose teachers rate them high on Instructional Climate emphasize the value of research-based strategies and are able to apply them in their own school setting. This multi-year investigation further identified three specific principal leadership practices that make significant contributions to the improvement of instructional practices: Focusing the school on goals and expectations for student achievement; keeping track of teachers' professional development needs; and creating structures and opportunities for teachers to collaborate (Final report of research findings).

This multi-year investigation, which significantly influenced the design of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model and analysis of this study's findings identifies two significant principal leadership practices, reflected in both teacher and principal perceptions, having the strongest relationship to student achievement, specifically: that the principal must possess knowledge of the predominant instructional practices in the school and use that knowledge to improve teaching and provide timely

and meaningful feedback to teachers regarding these predominant instructional practices; and that the principal must make good hires, provide timely and meaningful job-embedded professional development and grow strong teachers who continue to demonstrate reflection and growth as a result of their support.

Implications for Practice

In order to better equip principals with the knowledge and skills to be effective, aspiring and practicing principals need to demonstrate principal leadership practices relative to all of the domains and elements within the of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model. That the study findings isolated a limited few of these domains and elements as being most critical implies that the principal study participants were so well grounded in the other domains and elements, that those domains and elements were perhaps second nature to them to the extent that they are now able to focus their energies on those domains and elements that have the strongest relationship to student achievement. All teacher and principal study participants were white and the schools represented by study participant teachers and principals had an average of 16% economically disadvantaged students and 21% minority student enrollment. The researcher's professional experience as a teacher, principal and superintendent in both affluent and economically disadvantaged school districts, all of which having produced students achievement scores reflecting a positive trajectory, makes clear that the principal leadership practices identified by this study's six themes transcend racial and economic barriers.

When you have principals who consistently exhibit strong principal leadership practices, particularly as they pertain to: providing meaningful feedback to teachers

regarding predominant instructional practices; providing support and job-embedded professional development; communicating clearly and positively with an emphasis on teaching and learning; making student-focused decisions; building trust and positive relationships with all school constituent groups; and promoting a collegial and collaborative environment in which collectively solve problems and make decisions, the implication is that high student achievement occurs when these principal leadership practices are demonstrated by principals and there is an alignment between these principal leadership practices and teachers' perceptions of those practices.

There is a progression from low levels of knowledge and implementation of principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement to high levels of knowledge and implementation of principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement. Figure 12 below shows this progression, illustrating how as principals move from Quadrant IV to Quadrant I, demonstrating increased capacities to implement essential principal leadership practices, student achievement increased.

This study's participant sample drew from teachers and principals whose students were already achieving at high levels. That is, 80% of their students achieving at grade-level proficiency or above. In addition, participants had to have a minimum of five years' teaching experience, five years' principal experience or both. By setting the criteria for study participation high, it became clear through the analysis of the data that teacher and principal study participants can identify which principal leadership practices have the strongest relationship to student achievement. These teachers and principals

impressed upon the researcher, they know exactly what they're doing, why they're doing well and can replicate their resulting success over time.

	High Student Achievement	Improved Student Achievement
High Principal Leadership Practices	<p>Principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement have been identified and fully implemented, resulting in high student achievement.</p> <p>I</p>	<p>Principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement have been identified, are more consistently and fully implemented, resulting in higher student achievement.</p> <p>II</p>
Low Principal Leadership Practices	<p>Principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement have neither been identified nor implemented, resulting in low student achievement.</p> <p>IV</p>	<p>Principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement have been identified, are inconsistently and only partially implemented, resulting in higher student achievement.</p> <p>III</p>
	Low Student Achievement	Improved Principal Leadership Practices

Source: The Data Tool\kit, adapted.

Figure 12. Progression of Principal Practices Impact of Student Achievement

The six themes that emerged from the analysis of the data most closely correlated to Domains 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model, which implies that the most essential principal leadership practices leading to high student achievement are found within the identified specific elements within these four Domains. This does not preclude interview participants response excerpts correlating to Domains I and VI, however of the 842 codes, each representing a separate domain and element of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model, assigned to the 474

excerpts from the study's teacher and principal participant interview responses, fewer were correlated to Domains I and VI. Most notably, only seven excerpts from all interview participants responses correlated to Domain 6, Resource Management. This realization reinforces the aforementioned evolution of the principal from manager to instructional leader, as the elements of Domain VI pertain more to managerial principal practices than instructional leadership principal practices such as: ensuring management of the fiscal, technological, and physical resources of the school; utilizing systematic processes to engage district and external entities; and ensuring compliance to district, state, and federal rules and regulations. This realization further suggests that management related principal leadership tasks are second nature to truly effective principals, allowing them to focus their time and energy on the most important matters of teaching and learning. That said, the researcher's immediate application of the study's findings, in the role of principal coach, will be to more narrowly focus the scope of individual principal growth goals and principal professional development opportunities to place greater emphasis on the principal leadership practices most closely related the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model domains and elements identified by the study's six themes.

Recommendations for Future Research

While the researcher still believes that the use of a qualitative interviewing methodology was most appropriate for this qualitative research study and the best means by which to obtain teacher and principal perceptions relative to the principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement, more credibility to this study might be given if combined with quantitative research methodologies. Quantitative

research methodologies applied to a significantly larger sample size that capture hard facts through surveys or other means, and subsequent thorough statistical analysis, might offer more valid or reliable evidence to strengthen the data discovered using a qualitative interviewing methodology.

More research is needed to better understand the course design of university principal leadership preparation programs relative to essential principal leadership practice and their actual application in the field. In addition, more narrowly focused principal evaluation frameworks and rubrics might result from in depth studies of high performing principals and their high performing schools as evidenced by high levels of student achievement to reflect an even further finite set of essential principal leadership practices most closely related to high student achievement.

Conclusion

As the roles and responsibilities of the principal have evolved overtime, from manager to instructional leader, so too has the expectation that principals possess myriad skills, knowledge and capacities in order to demonstrate essential principal leadership practices as they perform their day-to-day duties as school leader to positively impact student achievement.

The perceptions of high performing teachers and principals in high performing schools, as evidenced by already high achieving students, reveal specific principal leadership practices to account for that high level of achievement, which include: providing meaningful feedback to teachers regarding predominant instructional practices; providing teacher support and job-embedded professional development; communicating clearly and positively with an emphasis on teaching and learning; making student-

focused decisions; building trust and positive relationships with all school constituent groups; and promoting a collegial and collaborative environment within which to collectively solve problems and make decisions.

APPENDIX A

MSTEP AND IAR SCORE RANGES AND PSAT/SAT BENCHMARK VALUES

MSTEP & IAR Performance Level Scale Score Ranges

		MSTEP Level 3 Proficient	MSTEP Level 4 Advanced	IAR Level 4 High Level Readiness	IAR Level 5 High Level Readiness
ELA	3	1300-1316	1317-1357	750-809	810-850
	4	1400-1416	1417-1454	750-789	790-850
	5	1500-1523	1524-1560	750-798	799-850
	6	1600-1623	1624-1655	750-789	790-850
	7	1700-1725	1726-1753	750-784	785-850
	8	Not tested	Not tested	750-793	794-850
Math	3	1300-1320	1321-1361	750-789	790-850
	4	1400-1419	1420-1455	750-795	796-850
	5	1500-1514	1515-1550	750-789	790-850
	6	1600-1613	1614-1650	750-787	788-850
	7	1700-1715	1716-1752	750-785	786-850
	8	Not tested	Not tested	750-800	801-850

The Values of the College and Career Readiness Benchmarks

Across the SAT Suite of Assessments, the benchmark scores* are as follows:

Assessment – Grade Level	Evidence-Based Reading and Writing Benchmark	Math Benchmark
SAT	480	530
Grade 11	460	510
Grade 10	430	480
Grade 9	410	450
Grade 8	390	430

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Initial Questions for Interviews

1. You signed your consent indicating your willingness to participate in this study and have been made aware that this interview will be audio recorded. Can you please confirm your consent?
2. Without naming specific schools, districts or locations, can you give a summary of your career roles and responsibilities? Please include position, grade levels, subject matter, and the number of years in each position.

Study Questions for Interviews

1. What do you perceive to be the most important roles and responsibilities of a school principal?
2. What would you say are the most important things a school principal should do as a leader?
3. What role do you believe the school principal plays in improving student learning?
4. What factors do you think contribute most to teachers' growth? How or what does the principal contribute in developing these factors?
5. What are the qualities of an effective teacher? Give an example of how principals affect growth in any of these qualities.
6. Describe how principal-teacher relationships affect teacher growth?
7. What should/do teachers expect from their principal?
8. What should/do teachers expect after a walkthrough/observation from their principal?
9. In your own opinion, what helps you grow the most as a teacher/principal?
10. Which principal leadership practices do you believe have the strongest relationship to student achievement?

APPENDIX C
NON-DISCLOSURE FORM



Loyola University Chicago
School of Education

Michael Conran
121 E. Hoover Ave.
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
conranm@gmail.com
847-650-4866

Non-Disclosure

Student First Name: Michael

Student Last Name: Conran

Title of Dissertation: TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL PERCEPTIONS OF PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES HAVING THE STRONGEST RELATIONSHIP TO STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Type of Assistance: Transcribing interview audio recordings.

Name of Service Provider: Scribie Transcription Services

Address: 44 Tehama St. San Francisco, CA 94105

I hereby agree not to disclose or share any confidential information pertaining to the above-referenced research study obtained in the process of providing the services identified above. Confidential information includes but is not restricted to research participants' names, demographic characteristics, or any other personally identifying information; assessment instrument responses or scores; participants' ratings, narrative responses, or comments, whether in response to questions or spontaneous; and/or any other information that might compromise the confidentiality or anonymity of the participants. I hereby agree to refrain from discussing with or disclosing any confidential information regarding research participants to any persons other than the researcher. All research materials in my possession will be stored securely and no other parties will have access to them. I agree to report immediately to the researcher any breach, whether suspected or known, of this confidentiality statement regarding the above research project.

Signature: _____

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jmgmog".

Date: 12/20/2019

Print Name: Judith Mogamog, Operations Manager

APPENDIX D
PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



Michael Conran
 Loyola University Chicago, Doctoral Candidate
 121 E. Hoover Ave.
 Ann Arbor, MI 48104
 conranm@gmail.com
 847-650-4866

Date: _____

RE: Permission to Conduct Research Study

Dear _____,

My name is Michael Conran and I am a Doctoral candidate from Loyola University Chicago. I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study with teachers and principals from your district who meet study participant criteria. My faculty sponsor within the Loyola University Chicago School of Education is Dr. Eilene Edejer. I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study on teacher and principal perceptions relative to the principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement. The study's sample is deliberately drawn from a population of two elementary (K-5), two middle (6-8) and two high (9-12) school teachers, and two elementary (K-5), middle (6-8) and two high (9-12) principals for a total of 12 participants.

Teacher study participants are teachers who have taught for a minimum of five years and state assessments indicate that 80% or more of your students scored proficient (3) for advanced (4) on the MTEP, or Level 4 or Level 5 on the IAR, in English Language Arts or Math, or reached or exceeded "benchmark" values at grade level on the PSAT or SAT in English Language Arts or Math. Principal study participants are principals who taught for a minimum of five years prior to becoming a principal and have served as principal for a minimum of five years and whose students during tenure as a principal (80% or higher) scored proficient (3) for advanced (4) on the MTEP, or Level 4 or Level 5 on the IAR, in English Language Arts or Math, or reached or exceeded "benchmark" values at grade level on the PSAT or SAT in English Language Arts or Math. I understand that as a result of this study sample criteria, not all study participants will be from one district. However, I am hopeful that your administration will allow me to recruit as many district teachers and principals meeting the established criteria as possible.

Teacher and Principal study participants will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview with me. The interview will last approximately one hour, during which they will be asked to respond the questions relative to their perceptions of which principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement. The interviews will be held virtually, using Zoom. These interviews will be recorded in order that following the interviews I am able to systematically analyze responses to construct new knowledge from data collected from all of my interview respondents. All recordings will be kept secure and confidential and will be destroyed following transcription.

If you agree, please email me a date and time that we can discuss, over the phone or in person, the process by which you would like me to reach out to your eligible teachers and principals. I will make myself available at your convenience. If you agree, I will also be requesting a signed letter of permission on your institution's letterhead acknowledging your consent and permission for me to conduct the interviews with your district's eligible teachers and principals.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Michael C. Conran

APPENDIX E
LETTER OF COOPERATION



Loyola University Chicago, Doctoral Candidate
121 E. Hoover Ave.
Ann Arbor, MI 48104 conranm@gmail.com
847-650-4866

Letter of Cooperation

Please consider this information carefully before deciding whether to participate in this research.

Project title: TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL PERCEPTIONS OF PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES HAVING THE STRONGEST RELATIONSHIP TO STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Researcher: Michael Conran, Ed.D. Candidate, School of Education, Loyola University Chicago

Faculty sponsor: Dr. Eileen Edejer, Faculty, School of Education, Loyola University Chicago

Purpose of the research: To generate new knowledge relative to principal leadership practices, as perceived by teacher and principal perceptions, that have the strongest relationship to student achievement.

What you will do in this research: If you decide to volunteer, you will be asked to participate in one interview. You will be asked several questions relative to your perceptions of principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement. I will audio record the interview. You will not be asked to state your name on the recording.

Time required: The interview will take approximately 1 hour.

Risks: There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.

Benefits: Although there would be no direct benefit to you as a study participant, several stakeholder groups may benefit from this study on teachers' and principals' perceptions relative to the principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement. Using this study's results, universities may better design principal preparation programs to focus more intentionally on teaching the principal leadership practices most closely related to positive student achievement. This case study may also benefit scholars in the development of principal performance frameworks and rubrics that better target specific principal leadership practices aimed at teacher quality and the improvement of instruction.

Confidentiality: The audio recording of your responses to interview questions, and any field notes, will be kept confidential. At no time will your actual identity be revealed. Pseudonyms, as well as the replacement of names of specific people, groups, or places that could disclose confidentiality to other readers will be used, while avoiding loss of context in the interview. For transcription purposes, you will be assigned a random numerical code. The professional transcription service will only know you by this code. The recording will be kept secure and confidential on a hard drive to which only the researcher has access and will be destroyed as soon as it has been transcribed. The transcript, without your name, will be kept on a hard drive to which only the researcher has access until the research is complete.

The key code linking your name with your number will be kept in a locked file cabinet in a locked office, and no one else will have access to it. It will be destroyed upon completion of my dissertation. The data you give me will be used for the completion of my Doctoral dissertation and may be used as the basis for articles or presentations in the future. I won't use your name or information that would identify you in any publications or presentations.

Participation and withdrawal: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study. If you choose to withdraw from the study at any point during the interview, you will have the option to remove any information already collected from use in this project. You may skip any question during the interview, but continue to participate in the rest of the study.

Contacts and Questions: If you have questions about this research study, please contact Michael Conran by email at mconran@luc.edu or Dr. Eileen Edejer at eedejer@luc.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Compliance Manager in Loyola's Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

Agreement: Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Signature

Date

Name (print)

Loyola University Chicago: Lakeside Campuses Institutional Review Board for
The Protection of Human Subjects
Date of Approval: 11/22/2019
Approval Expires: 11/22/2020

APPENDIX F
STUDY PARTICIPANT CONSENT TEACHER



Michael Conran
 Loyola University Chicago, Doctoral Candidate
 121 E. Hoover Ave.
 Ann Arbor, MI 48104
 conranm@gmail.com
 847-650-4866

Date: _____

Dear _____,

My name is Michael Conran and I am a Doctoral candidate from Loyola University Chicago. My faculty sponsor within the School of Education is Dr. Eilene Edejer. I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study on teacher and principal perceptions relative to the principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement. You're eligible to be in this study because you have taught for a minimum of five years and state assessments indicate that 80% or more of your students scored proficient (3) for advanced (4) on the MTEP, or Level 4 or Level 5 on the IAR, in English Language Arts or Math, or reached or exceeded "benchmark" values at grade level on the PSAT or SAT in English Language Arts or Math.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview with me. The interview will last approximately one hour, during which you will be asked to respond the questions relative to your perceptions of which principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement. The interview would be held virtually, using Zoom, for which I would provide you a link. You would need a computer with a microphone. I would like to record the interview, audio only, in order that the interview be transcribed, allowing me to systematically analyze your responses to construct new knowledge from data collected from all of my interview respondents. All recordings will be kept secure, confidential and anonymous.

Your participation in my study is completely voluntary. You can choose to be in the study or not. If you would like to participate in my study, please contact me via email at conranm@gmail.com or by phone at 847-650-4866. If you have any questions about this research study you may also contact Dr. Edejer at ecdejer@luc.edu.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Print Name: _____

APPENDIX G
STUDY PARTICIPANT CONSENT PRINCIPAL



Michael Conran
 Loyola University Chicago, Doctoral Candidate
 121 E. Hoover Ave.
 Ann Arbor, MI 48104
 conranm@gmail.com
 847-650-4866

Date: _____

Dear _____,

My name is Michael Conran and I am a Doctoral candidate from Loyola University Chicago. My faculty sponsor within the School of Education is Dr. Eilene Edejer. I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study on teacher and principal perceptions relative to the principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement. You're eligible to be in this study because you have taught for a minimum of five years, have been a principal for a minimum of five years and state assessments indicate that 80% or more of your students scored proficient (3) for advanced (4) on the MTEP, or Level 4 or Level 5 on the IAR, in English Language Arts or Math, or reached or exceeded "benchmark" values at grade level on the PSAT or SAT in English Language Arts or Math.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview with me. The interview will last approximately one hour, during which you will be asked to respond the questions relative to your perceptions of which principal leadership practices having the strongest relationship to student achievement. The interview would be held virtually, using Zoom, for which I would provide you a link. You would need a computer with a microphone. I would like to record the interview, audio only, in order that the interview be transcribed, allowing me to systematically analyze your responses to construct new knowledge from data collected from all of my interview respondents. All recordings will be kept secure, confidential and anonymous.

Your participation in my study is completely voluntary. You can choose to be in the study or not. If you would like to participate in my study, please contact me via email at conranm@gmail.com or by phone at 847-650-4866. If you have any questions about this research study you may also contact Dr. Edejer at eedejer@luc.edu.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Print Name: _____

APPENDIX H
IRB APPROVAL



OFFICE OF RESEARCH SERVICES

Printed on: Friday, January 24, 2020

Dear Michael Conran,

On Friday, November 22, 2019 the Loyola University Chicago Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and approved your Initial application for the project titled **"TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL PERCEPTIONS OF PRINCIPAL INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES HAVING THE STRONGEST RELATIONSHIP TO STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT"**. Based on the information you provided, the IRB determined that:

- the risks to subjects are minimized through (i) the utilization of procedures consistent with sound research design and do not unnecessarily expose participants to risk, and (ii) whenever appropriate, the research utilizes procedures already being performed on the subjects for diagnostic or treatment purposes
- the risks to participants are reasonable in relation to anticipated benefits, if any, to participants, and the importance of the knowledge that may reasonably be expected to result
- the selection of subjects is equitable
- informed consent be sought from each prospective subject or the subject's legally authorized representative, in accordance with, and to the extent required by §46.116
- informed consent be appropriately documented, in accordance with, and to the extent required by §46.117
- when appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of subjects
- when appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of data
- when some or all of the subjects are likely to be vulnerable to coercion or undue influence, such as children, prisoners, pregnant women, mentally disabled persons, or economically or educationally disadvantaged persons, additional safeguards have been included in the study to protect the rights and welfare of these subjects

Documented consent will be obtained from all subjects enrolled.

This review procedure, administered by the IRB, in no way absolves you, the researcher, from the obligation to adhere to all Federal, State, and local laws and the Loyola University Chicago policies. Immediately inform the IRB if you would like to change aspects of your approved project (please consult our website for specific instructions). You, the researcher, are respectfully reminded that the University's ability to support its researchers in litigation is dependent upon conformity with continuing approval for their work.

Please notify the IRB of completion of this research and/or departure from the Loyola University Chicago by submitting a Project Closure Report using the CAP system. In all correspondence with the IRB regarding this project, please refer to IRB project number #2813 or IRB application number #6453.

The IRB approval granted for this project expires on **11/22/2020 12:00:00 AM**

If you have any questions regarding this approval, the IRB, or the Loyola University Chicago Human Subject Protection Program, please phone the Assistant Director for Research Compliance at (773) 508-2689 or email the IRB at irb@luc.edu.

Best wishes for your research,

Noni Gaylord-Harden, Ph.D.
Chairperson, Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX I
IRB AMENDED APPROVAL



OFFICE OF RESEARCH SERVICES

Printed on: Friday, January 24, 2020

Dear Michael Conran,

On Tuesday, January 21, 2020 the Loyola University Chicago Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and approved your Amendment application for the project titled **"TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL PERCEPTIONS OF PRINCIPAL INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES HAVING THE STRONGEST RELATIONSHIP TO STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT"**. Based on the information you provided, the IRB determined that:

- the risks to subjects are minimized through (i) the utilization of procedures consistent with sound research design and do not unnecessarily expose participants to risk, and (ii) whenever appropriate, the research utilizes procedures already being performed on the subjects for diagnostic or treatment purposes
- the risks to participants are reasonable in relation to anticipated benefits, if any, to participants, and the importance of the knowledge that may reasonably be expected to result
- the selection of subjects is equitable
- informed consent be sought from each prospective subject or the subject's legally authorized representative, in accordance with, and to the extent required by §46.116
- informed consent be appropriately documented, in accordance with, and to the extent required by §46.117
- when appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of subjects
- when appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of data
- when some or all of the subjects are likely to be vulnerable to coercion or undue influence, such as children, prisoners, pregnant women, mentally disabled persons, or economically or educationally disadvantaged persons, additional safeguards have been included in the study to protect the rights and welfare of these subjects

Documented consent will be obtained from all subjects enrolled.

This review procedure, administered by the IRB, in no way absolves you, the researcher, from the obligation to adhere to all Federal, State, and local laws and the Loyola University Chicago policies. Immediately inform the IRB if you would like to change aspects of your approved project (please consult our website for specific instructions). You, the researcher, are respectfully reminded that the University's ability to support its researchers in litigation is dependent upon conformity with continuing approval for their work.

Please notify the IRB of completion of this research and/or departure from the Loyola University Chicago by submitting a Project Closure Report using the CAP system. In all correspondence with the IRB regarding this project, please refer to IRB project number #2813 or IRB application number #6669.

The IRB approval granted for this project expires on **11/22/2020 12:00:00 AM**

If you have any questions regarding this approval, the IRB, or the Loyola University Chicago Human Subject Protection Program, please phone the Assistant Director for Research Compliance at (773) 508-2689 or email the IRB at irb@luc.edu.

Best wishes for your research,

Noni Gaylord-Harden, Ph.D.
Chairperson, Institutional Review Board

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VITA

Michael Conran was born in Chicago and was raised in Winnetka, Illinois. Before attending Loyola University Chicago, he attended National Louis University, Evanston, where he earned a Masters of Education in Administration and Supervision. Michael also attended National College of Education, Evanston, where he received a Bachelor of Arts in Education.

Over the course of his 32 year career in education, Michael has been a teacher, principal, Central Office Director and Superintendent. As a teacher, principal and Superintendent, Michael, and his schools, have received numerous recognitions, honors and awards. Michael was principal of the number one ranked high school in the state of Colorado, where he also received the Governor's award with distinction and was listed on the AP honor roll. In addition, Michael's schools in Illinois all ranked in the top 1% of the state and his three high schools in Michigan were ranked among the top 10 in the state by the Mackinac Center for Public Policy.

Michael is an active and participating member of numerous state and national education associations and has presented at numerous national education conferences on the topic of educational leadership. Currently, Michael is Superintendent of Schools with Global Educational Excellence in Ann Arbor, Michigan. He lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

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