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THE PRINCIPAL'S ROLE IN INCREASING TEACHER IMPLEMENTATION OF  
EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES IN MARION COUNTY,  
INDIANA: AN ANALYSIS OF KEY STRATEGIES FOR  
PRINCIPALS IN SUSTAINING SCHOOL CHANGE

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## ABSTRACT

The attributes of an urban principal that make them successful against all odds, in spite of pressure, limited funding, and other dynamics of urban schools, are characteristics that hold true to those who focus their role as instructional leaders. Improvement has been traditionally more difficult to achieve in this day of high-stakes testing and accountability, especially in urban schools. Teachers' perceptions of their principals influence the implementation of school improvement initiatives, which, in turn, influence student achievement and school improvement.

This quantitative study examined principals' and teachers' perceptions of leadership actions that increase the implementation of school improvement initiatives in five school improvement categories. The five school improvement categories—school improvement, principal as instructional leader, creating a culture for learning, professional development and teacher supervision, and sustaining school improvement—were established as a result of discovered themes from current research on factors impacting school improvement.

The sample comprised 206 teachers and 56 principals in five school districts in Marion County, Indiana. A Leadership Action Survey was created using an accumulation of existing surveys in order to measure the perceptions on the importance of leadership actions on school improvement by teachers and principals. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to analyze the research questions.

The study determined that there were minimal differences that exist between the perceptions of principals and teachers on the leadership actions that increase teachers'

implementation of school improvement initiatives. When the teacher group was separated, the analysis found that there were significant differences among novice teachers, experienced teachers, and principals in their perceptions regarding the leadership actions that increase teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives in each of the five school improvement categories. In all school improvement categories, the principals rated the role of the principal significantly higher than the experienced teachers.

## DEDICATION

I thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He has blessed me with the opportunity to pursue and accomplish my dreams despite many obstacles and challenges that I faced over the duration of my life. I thank Him for His grace, love, and mercy.

This dissertation could not have occurred without the love, patience, and understanding of my soul mate, my husband Stan Law, and my pride and joy, my son Kyle Jordan Law. I appreciate the times when I needed a quiet space and time to be alone and it was not a problem. I thank the two of you for enduring those difficult times, the stressful moments, and the endless energy it took for me to finally finish. I could not have done this arduous task without the two of you.

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother Bernice B. Smith, who taught me to have a strong faith in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who taught me to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, who taught me that there is nothing too hard for Him. Thank you for everything you have given me. May you rest in peace.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

When looking at schools that are successful, one often wonders what factors influenced their success. Many schools that have improved student achievement have a well-defined vehicle for improvement and development for all. The days of *leave me alone and let me teach* have diminished over the past 10 years. Schools that allow this philosophy to happen cannot function according to best practices. Effective improvement models impact practice by the way the principal has created a process focused on learning for all.

The purpose of this study was to determine the principal's role in increasing teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives. The study analyzed principals' and teachers' perceptions of leadership actions that are deemed as having an impact on school improvement. Principals are increasingly held accountable for the performance of students (Hall & Hord, 1987). Without the support and guidance of the principal, it is unlikely that improvement will occur. Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) noted that change occurs when leaders assume an active role in improvement. In the meta-analysis study conducted by Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008), they identified five key principal leadership practices that positively impacted student achievement and school success. The five practices are (a) establish goals and expectations, (b) strategic resourcing, (c) planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum, (d)

promoting and participating in teacher learning and development, and (e) ensuring an orderly and supportive environment (Robinson, 2007; Robinson et al., 2008).

Indiana Law PL 221 recognizes the role of professional development in relation to student achievement. The PL 221 law defined professional development activities as high quality, sustained, intensive, and classroom focused in order to have a positive and lasting impact on classroom instruction and teacher performance in the classroom (Indiana Department of Education, 1999). Hirsh (2009) defined professional development as “a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving teachers’ and principals’ effectiveness in raising student achievement” (p. 12). It is also noted that professional development traditionally has been synonymous with workshops, courses, and presentations by experts. The National Staff Development Council’s (NSDC) standards for professional development recognize that sustained, intellectually rigorous professional development is essential for everyone who affects students’ learning (NSDC, 2001). Hattie (2009) stated that professional development has a strong impact on teacher learning ( $d = 0.62$ ). Hattie used  $d$  as a symbol to designate the effect size for various influences that he researched to indicate the impact that those influences had on student achievement. In Hattie’s research, the continuum of effect sizes ranged from  $d = -.34$  to  $d = 1.44$ . Hattie stated that anything with an effect size of over 0.4 or more is likely to have a positive effect on student achievement and anything with an effect size of 0.2 or less has a low effect on student achievement. He also found that professional development must be job-embedded, continuous, rigorous, and challenging for teachers in order to have an impact on their actions (Hattie, 2009). In addition to Hattie, Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, and Orphanos (2009) described effective professional development as intensive, on-going, and connected to instructional practice. They recommend that schools become places where all

teachers learn together during professional development. States and local districts are required to plan systemically for professional learning and to focus their efforts on the improvement of teacher performance and student achievement (Richardson, 2002). Knowing that this is the law, principals must develop models for professional development that include accountability for all, support for all, and high expectations for all.

Studies now associate the principal with increases in student achievement when they focus on improving instruction (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). The principal's role in the creation of professional development is defined as creating the structure, shaping the culture, and motivating the staff. The focus for improvement efforts must come from the principal and the individual organization improvements (Levine & Lezotte, 1990). The state and federal mandates cannot foster an environment where excellence is the target. The commitment to improvement is contingent on decisions and actions from the school improvements (Levine & Lezotte, 1990). It is the leadership at the local school that is in the best position to create a vision of what it seeks to become, to assess areas that must be improved, and to develop the strategies and programs to make those improvements (Levine & Lezotte, 1990).

Business and educational research support that the position of leadership is essential to sustain and endure improvement. It is my belief that the principal is the key player in creating the conditions that result in school improvement. In a study of selected high schools, Boyer (1983) found that in schools with high achievement and a clear sense of community it was invariably the principal who made the difference, a finding consistently supported by the research on effective schools.

Studies of the school improvement process reinforces that the role of the principal is critical to school improvement (DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2005; Hall & Hord, 1987; Kotter,



1996; Lassiter, 2012). Research on effective schools concluded that the conditions necessary for improvement are motivated primarily by the principal (Lieberman & Miller, 1981). Goodlad (1984) charged that the primary reason most schools are unable to achieve at high levels is because the principal lacks the skills of leadership. Research has also shown the importance of the principal playing a major role in determining the ultimate value of a professional development model (Fielding & Schalock, 1985). For better or for worse, the principal is the architect of improvement.

It is imperative that the principal defines and supports the objectives of the professional development model if improvement is going to occur. Nevertheless, in light of these findings, the principal's day seldom reflects the focus of constructing or even supporting the professional development model. Principals have looked at professional development as a secondary consideration and have limited professional development to speakers and in-service programs. The principal as staff developer is an integral part of the concept of the principal as an instructional leader (DuFour & Sparks, 1991). Given the large responsibilities of the principal, it is more complex for principals to give attention to instructional leadership.

It is even more difficult for principals of urban schools to lead schools toward improvement results. The notion of leadership takes on a special meaning in urban schools. Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) stated that the urban principal will be effective at managing conflict and building the capacity to change within the school. With the recent attention to failing urban schools under the mandate of adequate yearly progress (AYP) defined by the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB), it appears that school improvement efforts have been unsuccessful for urban schools and it has been difficult to identify specific actions of urban principals that have led to success (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

### Statement of the Problem

In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) declared that the United States was *at risk* due to the mediocrity in public education (NCEE, 1983). The NCEE called upon state and local officials to initiate and lead the reforms necessary to restore standards and quality to the schools of the nation. Within two years of the report, over 300 national and state task forces had investigated the condition of public schooling in America. In 41 states, legislatures had shown their support for excellence in education by mandating that students take more courses in designated academic areas. In many states, requirements for teacher certification and tenure had been raised, and steps have been taken to standardize curriculum and mandate testing. However, after all these efforts, the U.S. Department of Education acknowledged that the *excellence* initiative had failed to transform the schools; the reform did not yield results significant enough or fast enough (Hoover Institute, 1998). As a result, a decade later launched a follow-up report, *A Nation Still at Risk* (Hoover Institution, 1998). This report was issued to re-address the concerns that were stated in the first report. At this juncture, it should be more apparent than ever that the best hope of genuine, significant school improvement lies not in state mandates, graduation requirements, but in the development of the full potential of the professional staffs and leaders within our schools (DuFour & Sparks, 1991).

Lezotte (1997) stated that the internal stakeholders of the schools are the most qualified and capable people to plan and implement the changes needed for schools to improve. He further stated that effective strategies for initiating and sustaining human changes are the weakest link in the knowledge as it relates to school improvement (Lezotte, 1997). In order for schools to improve based on the effective schools research, educators must attain new knowledge and create the conditions in order to accommodate the new knowledge.

This acquisition of new knowledge must take place in the form of job-embedded, ongoing professional development (Lezotte, 1997). To make the needed changes in the environment, the principal must get directly involved in order to cultivate the necessary conditions for the new learning to take place, create the learning environment, and set an accountability system for the implementation of those best-practices learned. The difficulty with the principal as an instructional leader lies in the fact that the principal's day is typically consumed with managerial tasks, such as maintaining order and completing other administrative duties (Lezotte, 1997). The principal must alter his or her role to be a leader of leaders rather than a leader of followers. Principals have to develop their skills as coaches, partners, and cheerleaders, as well as that of enforcers (Lezotte, 1997). By doing this, the doors will be open to new and constant learning for teachers while improving the learning of students.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine whether there is a significant difference between teachers' and principals' perceptions of the leadership actions that increase teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives regarding five categories: school improvement, principal as instructional leader, creating a culture for learning, professional development and teacher supervision, and sustaining school improvement. This study also examined whether there are significant differences among the perceptions of novice teachers, experienced teachers, and principals regarding the leadership actions that increase teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives regarding same five categories: school improvement, principal as instructional leader, creating a culture for learning, professional development and teacher supervision, and sustaining school improvement.

## Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were

1. Is there a difference between teachers' and principal perceptions of leadership actions that increase teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives regarding the five categories: school improvement, principal as instructional leader, creating a culture for learning, professional development and teacher supervision, and sustaining school improvement?
2. Are there differences among novice teachers, experienced teachers, and principals in their perceptions regarding the leadership actions that increase teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives regarding the five categories: school improvement, principal as instructional leader, creating a culture for learning, professional development and teacher supervision, and sustaining school improvement?

There are several specific questions in the five categories that guided the research and the study.

Those were

### Category 1: School Improvement

1. Why do schools need to be improved?
2. Why do some schools succeed where others fail in similar demographics?
3. Are there characteristics that are particularly important to urban schools in regard to school improvement?

### Category 2: Principal as Instructional Leader

4. What instructional leadership actions make a difference in regard to school improvement?

5. What actions do principals deem as essential to instructional leadership in order to increase achievement?
6. What are the most important actions of school leaders in terms of school improvement?

#### Category 3: Creating a Culture for Learning

7. What needs must be met in terms of adult learners and professional development?
8. What are the different models of professional development in education?
9. What is the role of the principal in creating a professional learning community?

#### Category 4: Professional Development and Teacher Supervision

10. How does a principal measure the phases of change in teacher growth based on the professional growth initiative?
11. Should professional growth be tied to teacher supervision?
12. How does a principal connect professional development to teacher supervision?

#### Category 5: Sustaining School Improvement

13. What is the principal's role in sustaining school improvement?
14. How does a principal sustain school improvement?
15. What are the characteristics of sustainability?

The five classifications guided the research on instructional leadership and its impact on increasing professional expertise of teachers.

### **Null Hypotheses**

H<sub>0</sub>1. There is no significant difference between teachers' and principal perceptions of leadership actions that increase teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives regarding the five categories: school improvement, principal as instructional leader, creating a

culture for learning, professional development and teacher supervision, and sustaining school improvement.

H<sub>0</sub>2. There are no significant differences among novice teachers, experienced teachers and principals in their perceptions regarding the leadership actions that increase teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives regarding the five categories: school improvement, principal as instructional leader, creating a culture for learning, professional development and teacher supervision, and sustaining school improvement.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study focused on how the actions of the principal are critical to school improvement. The current literature promotes the importance of the actions of principals as they relate to improvement in teaching and learning. The research added to the literature on the pivotal role the principal plays in the development of the teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and skills. This study also makes a contribution to building the knowledge of principals as it relates to leadership actions that are contributors to school improvement.

### **Definition of Terms**

For the purpose of better understanding the study, the following definitions of key terms are provided:

*Elementary school* is a unit of schooling for young children, usually beginning in kindergarten or Grade 1 and continuing through Grade 5 or Grade 6. Instruction in the early grades of elementary school emphasizes the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic while also teaching children skills as how to cooperate in a group with others, how to work independently, and how to take care of themselves. These are essential to establish the foundation for later studies of science, history, the arts, and other subjects.

*Evaluation of professional practices* is the systematic determination of merit, worth, and significance of teaching practices. Evaluation often is used to characterize and appraise instructional and managerial practices of teachers.

*Experienced teacher* is a teacher who has more than 15 years of service to the teaching profession.

*Expertise* consists of prolonged or intense experience through practice and education in a particular field. Expertise consists of those characteristics, skills, and knowledge of a person (that is, expert) or of a system that distinguish experts from novices and less experienced people. In many domains there are objective measures of performance capable of distinguishing experts from novices.

*Implementation* is the application or execution of a plan, idea, model, design, specification, or standard.

*Instruction* is individualized learning, structured instruction with feedback to meet student needs, and challenging opportunities to learn.

*Instructional leader* is the principal who acts as an instructional leader by effectively and persistently communicating the mission to the staff, parents, and students. The principal understands and applies the characteristics of standards and instruction to the daily focus on the educational process.

*Leadership* means leading organizational change, providing instructional guidance, and establishing shared mission and goals.

*Novice teacher* is a teacher who has zero to seven years of service to the teaching profession.

*Principal* is the administrative leader of a school.

*Professional community* is teachers collaborating, receiving professional development, and being supported to have influence on school matters.

*Professional development* are programs that allow teachers or administrators to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to perform their jobs successfully.

*School environment* is having parents involved meaningfully, the school culture focused on academic achievement, a safe and orderly climate, and attention to assessment and monitoring.

*Secondary school* is a school that is intermediate in level between elementary school and college and that usually offers general, technical, vocational, or college-preparatory curricula.

*Sustainability* is a characteristic of a process or state that can be maintained at a certain level indefinitely.

*Teacher supervision* is a nonjudgmental, formative process of teachers and administrators working together to enhance instruction for the benefit of students and the school.

*Veteran teacher* is a teacher who has given 15 or more years of service to the teaching profession.

### **Limitations**

Generalizations from the study were limited to the degree that

1. The research was dependent on principals' and randomly selected teachers' being willing to participate in the study.
2. The study is limited based on the truthfulness and/or bias the respondents may have due to outside factors, such as new teacher evaluation systems. The Indiana teacher evaluation—Public Law 90—could account for the attitudes of teachers and principals (Indiana Senate Enrolled Act 001, 2010).



### **Delimitations**

The study was delimited in the following manner:

1. The survey was confined to urban school districts in Marion County in Indianapolis, Indiana. The initial intent of the researcher was to include all the school districts in Marion County, Indiana. However, the research was only able to be conducted in five school districts in Marion County, Indiana. The school districts included the study are following metropolitan school corporations in Marion County, Indiana: Metropolitan School District of Decatur Township, Metropolitan School District of Franklin Township, Metropolitan School District of Perry Township, Metropolitan School District of Pike Township, and Metropolitan School District of Wayne Township.
2. The teacher interview and principal interview responses were collected and scored during the second semester of the 2012-2013 academic school year.
3. The teacher selection was based on the principals' selection of a novice teacher and an experienced teacher in the principal's school.
4. The number included in the sample was limited to the schools from which survey responses were received from the teachers and the principals.

### **Organization of the Study**

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction for the study, a description of the context of the study, a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, null hypotheses, definitions of key terms, and limitations and delimitations. Chapter 2 presents a review of literature that relates to the study. Chapter 3 describes the sample and the instrumentation used to conduct the study. Chapter 4 presents the

data that were gathered from the survey findings in regard to the hypotheses presented in Chapter

1. Chapter 5 summarizes the findings and draws conclusions from the study and offers recommendations as they relate to the study.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Educational experts and federal efforts, such as *Race to the Top*, are emphasizing the importance of effective principal leadership in improving teaching and learning in schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards for School Leaders provide a framework for school leaders to identify knowledge, dispositions, and performances that give direction for implementing explicit and effective practices (Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 1996). Through the updated 2008 ISLLC standards, key aspects of principal leadership have been defined to guide state policies on everything from evaluation systems, licensing, to professional development for principals (CCSSO, 2008).

McEwan (2003a) stated that the principalship has zoomed back into view again. He continued by saying that teachers, tests, and other initiatives cannot produce results without the principal's actions. The principal is needed to promote, coach, and lead the improvement focus.

Principal performance is now measured in meaningful ways based on research and best practices. The principal's role has become all the more essential as the U.S. Department of Education and state education agencies embark on transforming the nation's most troubled schools. This task will be contingent on the knowledge, skills, and abilities of school leaders

(Wallace Foundation, 2012). Leadership is second only to teaching among influences on student achievement (Wahlstrom, Louis, Leithwood, & Anderson, 2010).

DuFour (2002) stated, “The most universally accepted fundamental role of the contemporary principal is serving as the instructional leader of the school” (p. 12). As we consider the role of leadership in increasing teacher expertise in instructional practices and improving student success, we need to redefine the role of the principal to that of the lead teacher and learner in schools. The ISLLC (CCSSO, 1996) identified professional standards for principals. Standard 2 calls for the principal to be an educational leader “who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth” (p. 12).

In the revised definition of staff development, the NSDC assigned “collective responsibility for improved student performance” and specified that professional development should take place at school and be facilitated by “well-prepared school principals” (Hirsh, 2009, p. 12). The result of high levels of learning must be fostered by the formation of an intensive and progressive professional development model. Principals are no longer the *gate keepers* of the web of workshops but principals must be able to identify the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to improve teacher learning of best practices in curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

The only way we’re going to get from where we are to where we want to be is through staff development. . . . When you talk about school improvement you, you’re talking about people improvement. That’s the only way to improve schools. (Boyer as cited in Sparks, 1984, p. 9)

Elmore (2004) stated, “The purpose of leadership is the improvement of instructional practice and performance regardless of role” (p. 66). The work that principals do must result in

improving instruction, which is critical to school improvement. The process of school improvement must be facilitated by the principal. Elmore (2004) went on to say that “instructional improvement requires continuous learning” (p. 67). It is imperative that principals develop a model for professional development that can be sustained over time. Conditions necessary for improvement are motivated primarily by the principal. The principal is the critical person in making change happen (Lieberman & Miller, 1981). Nevertheless, leaders must embrace change themselves. As McNulty and Besser (2011) stated, “If you want different outcomes, lead differently!” (p. 15). It is imperative that principals provide better instructional leadership. They must learn more about instruction, best-practice, and improvement, and at the same time, expect all adults in the organization to do the same (McNulty & Besser, 2011).

The principal’s role in developing school improvement models through professional development is being a change agent with a clear vision. School improvement is not new programs and packages. Procedures and materials do not bring about change; people do (DuFour & Sparks, 1991). The principal is the key figure in determining the ultimate success of any effort to develop school personnel and thus plays a major role in school improvement (DuFour & Sparks, 1991). The principal is the motivator of learning for the adults. The sustainability and effectiveness are determined by the role of the principal. Given the importance of the principal in determining both the effectiveness of a school and the success of a school improvement effort, it is not surprising that the principal has also been found to play the major role in determining the ultimate value of a staff development program (Fielding & Schalock, 1985). Principals typically function as gatekeepers of change and innovation, and the eventual outcome of a staff development initiative often rests upon the guidance and support furnished by the principal (Wood & Lease, 1987). The principal is responsible for the level of

implementation of the professional development initiative. As the instructional leader, the principal must create an environment that supports and fosters change. The organization must also believe in the vision of the change initiative. The principal's role is to communicate the vision to all stakeholders and create a culture where it is the collective wisdom that will move the organization to that vision. Currently we see all too many principals trying to *do it alone*. It is unlikely that widespread school improvements can be successfully begun, let alone sustained, without a broad-based empowerment of all those who are stakeholders in the culture of the school. When we find successful examples of groups of schools that are changing, we generally see widespread *ownership* of both the mission and the strategies for change (Levine & Lezotte, 1990)

The goal of the communication of the vision is to create a shared vision. The shared vision should carry the messages of a shared purpose, shared values, and shared methodologies. The knowledge and skills are simple for a principal to shape; however, the values are more complex. Values deal with beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes that have been engrained over years. Nevertheless, the beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes are what will move a school toward improvement. Peters and Waterman (1982) found the attention to shaping values so prevalent in the companies they studied that they questioned whether it was possible for an organization to be excellent without having the right values and a clear understanding of those values. Sergiovanni (1984) concluded that this attention to shaping values also was the critical element in creating excellent schools. Deal and Peterson (1990) found that a clear and focused sense of values was the critical common factor among the successful principals whom they studied. This research is confounding in the sense that the vision must be created with passion and commitment to the outcomes. The principal's role must be to reflect on the vision on a daily basis and with all

stakeholders. An effective leader helps staff members reflect on instructional practices that improve or impede student achievement.

The beliefs about the leader being the most vital force behind the effectiveness of a school to be true must be considered. In fact, for centuries people have assumed that leadership is critical to the success of any institution or endeavor. This notion about leadership dates back for many centuries. According to Bass (1981), the study of leadership is an ancient art. Discussions of leadership appear in works of Plato, Caesar, and Plutarch. The *Great Man* theory of leadership is depicted by how Moses led the Jewish nation out of Egypt and how Churchill transformed the British (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). There are many theories that support the link between effective organizations and effective leadership. Drucker (2001), management guru, argued that the effectiveness of a principal is a unique characteristic. He stated,

Effectiveness . . . is a habit; that is a complex of practices. And practices can always be learned. Practices are simple, deceptively so; even a seven-year old has no difficulty in understanding a practice. But practices are always exceedingly hard to do well. They have to be acquired as we all learn the multiplication table; that is, repeated ad nauseam until it has become an unthinking, conditioned reflect, and firmly ingrained habit.

(Drucker, 2001, p. 205)

Sergiovanni (2001) provided a more comprehensive description of effectiveness as “achieving higher levels of pedagogical thoughtfulness, developing relationships characterized by caring and civility, and achieving increases in the quality of student performance on both conventional and alternative assessments” (p. 204). At the very core of effectiveness is school

improvement. Effective leaders identify themselves as change agents in the process of school improvement.

### **School Improvement**

Educational research supports the notion that effective principals are responsible for cultivating a school-wide vision of commitment to high expectations and the success of all students. Having high expectations for all students is imperative to school improvement and closing the achievement gap in schools. School improvement is defined as educational reform which attempts to bring about a systemic change in educational theory or practice across a school community (School improvement, 2009). School improvement provides a process for becoming data-driven using a research-based framework for defining and setting goals and objectives for improving student learning by selecting and implementing strategies to improve the instructional and organizational effectiveness of every school (Kentucky Department of Education, 2003).

The ultimate measure of school improvement is a learning community that helps all students, regardless of background or ability, to achieve high standards of scholarship and citizenship. Effective schools and leaders have clearly defined visions for school improvement. A common unifying vision is achieved when the administration, teachers, support staff, students, families, and demographically representative community members are able to clearly communicate that vision through the daily operation of the school. Maxwell (1999) stated that vision comes from several voices; one voice being from those discontented with the status quo. Maxwell also contended that this is the catalyst for vision. Schlechty, author of *Inventing Better Schools*, believed that improvement in schools is usually motivated by one of two conditions; again, vision is one of the conditions needed for improvement. Schlechty (1997) also suggested



that a vision that is so compelling and attractive that the preservation of the status quo and the security of present arrangements pale in significance.

A vision that leads to school improvement stimulates the organization to fully connect with the pieces that are needed to fulfill the aspiration. The creation of a shared vision that describes what the school leader seeks to become provides leaders and stakeholders with insight and guidance on developing a plan to get there. A clear vision is like a road map that guides you to where you need to go and helps you recognize when you get there. The vision allows school leaders to create a compelling view that excites and engages the entire learning community to take responsibility for all students' learning (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2011).

The key components of effective school improvement initiatives have a clearly defined vision not only for the school improvement but also for the improvement of learning for each and every student. The emphasis is solely on performance and achievement. The vision becomes the guiding force when all the educational decisions are based on its framework and goals. The goals stem from academic knowledge, skill, development, and a set of standards. The principal is the main communicator of the goals as well as the monitor of the progress towards the goals. Robinson et al. (2008) emphasized that in organizations where there are a multitude of tasks and responsibilities, goals provide a sense of purpose and priority for educators. They stressed that goals will only motivate if three conditions are met:

1. Teachers must believe they have the ability to meet the goal.
2. Teachers must understand and value the goals.
3. The goals must be specific and not vague. (Robinson et al., 2008)

Lassiter (2012) shared the idea that motivation is the key to improvement. She stated that school leaders must listen to the thoughts, dreams, and visions of the people and connect them to the

goals and purpose of the school. A leader motivates by *inviting* continuous improvement into the organization and by keeping the goals of the organization up front in the minds of the employees and judging the effectiveness of the organizations in terms of the goals.

School improvement is also referred to as continuous improvement. Continuous improvement is derived from the Japanese term *kaizen*, which means the continual and incremental improvement of the critical aspects of the organization by all members of the organization (Masaaki, 1986).

There are only two kinds of schools—improving schools and declining schools (DuFour et al., 2005). Schools with a clear vision, goals, and a purpose were found to be higher performing than those without (Lassiter, 2012). This finding supports the belief that leaders must directly confront an unspoken assumption held by some educators: the assumption of the *status quo school*. The tolerance and acceptance of the status quo school have been replaced with a *failure is not an option* philosophy due to the movement of accountability under NCLB. The standards and other governmental policies have eliminated the status quo option. According to Bowsher (2001) even the highest achieving schools in the United States have upwards of 30% of their students failing to meet the grade-level standards. Within this context, a status quo school would be described as a declining school, and educators clinging to this concept of the status quo school as *average* would be misguided (DuFour et al., 2005).

Most educators would rather be associated with improvement than decline. When a school embraces the notion of a declining school, the conversation moves to school improvement. School improvement embraces reforms and professional development among the staff. The only way we are going to get from where we are to where we want to be is through professional development. “When you talk about school improvement, you’re talking about

people improvement. That's the only way to improve schools." (Boyer as cited in Sparks, 1984, p. 9). Not only are schools expected to improve, but improve rapidly. There is a significant need for the individuals of the organization to take ownership of the impetus for immediate action.

Every adult in the school is an important factor for the improvement. There is a strong argument that the key people for achieving the mission of improvement in the school are the principal and the teachers. In the research with Hall and Hord (1987) they stated in multiple studies,

The studies of principals, whether in leadership studies, the studies of effective principals, or the studies of principals as change facilitators, show that the principal is considered to be a prime factor in the process of change and school improvement. (p. 42)

However, a school's culture is maintained through the actions of virtually every adult in every role in the school (DuFour et al., 2005). As a result the quality of life in a school community is enhanced when all members of that community understand and accept their roles and responsibilities in school improvement and improving the academic success of students. Therefore, if school improvement is to be effectively and efficiently implemented, the change process must reach out and give voice to all keepers of the school culture and community to secure their commitment (DuFour, Eaker, DuFour, & Karhanek, 2004).

School improvement requires that changes be sustained over time and built into the rituals and reward systems of the organization. Managing this improvement process requires the ability to operate within a myriad of paradoxes. Those who attempt to transform their schools should recognize that change is difficult but not impossible. Kotter (1996) stated that principals must be prepared for the anxiety, the discomfort, and the ongoing conflict that always

accompany school improvement initiatives, particularly in the early stages. The most common mistakes that he identified are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

*Kotter's Common Mistakes in Leadership*

Common Leadership Mistakes	Mistake Attributes
Allowing complacency	Moving forward without building a shared sense of urgency.
Failing to create a guiding coalition	Working alone and not creating a culture of distributed leadership.
Underestimating the power of vision	Lacking the creation of a shared vision which causes teachers to “do their own thing”.
Under-communicating the vision	Failing to “over” communicate the vision leads to failed improvement efforts.
Failing to address obstacles that block improvement process	Allowing barriers to impede the implementation of the vision.
Missing opportunities to celebrate short-term wins	Losing momentum in the implementation of the initiative due to the lack of short-term goals and/or celebrating those goals.
Declaring victory too soon	Celebrating a win or declaring a victory before deep implementation can cause regression of that initiative.
Neglecting to establish a culture of improvement	Disregarding that improvement only lasts when it is firmly entrenched in the school's culture can lead to diminished results.

*Note.* Adapted from “Leading Change” by J. Kotter. Copyright 1996 by Harvard Business School Press.

Kotter (1996) was passionate about avoiding these common mistakes associated with improvement efforts. He declared that any one of these mistakes can destroy an improvement

effort. The most compelling question is, What can schools do to avoid these mistakes as it focuses on school improvement? Kotter's stance was that successful improvement initiatives must cultivate a sense of urgency among all stakeholders. Many have argued that schools will never improve unless those within them feel a sense of urgency. DuFour and Eaker (1998) declared that a more enduring catalyst for change is a compelling picture of what the school might become—one that projects positive images and practical alternatives that are clearly superior to the status quo.

To move beyond the status quo is more difficult and does not appear to happen as a result of the adoption of new programs and strategies. It has become increasingly difficult to ask practitioners to conform to even the most well-established elements of good instruction. The principal as the instructional leader must be able to recognize the status quo in their teachers and embrace their role as instructional leaders in order to improve instruction. This emphasis will lead to school improvement because the main goal is on the improvement of people. By this, the principal must be willing to focus his or her time, energy, and efforts on instructional leadership and professional development of the staff. This also means that a principal must possess the knowledge, attitudes, and skills on the practices that are needed to move the organization into improvement.

### **Principal as Instructional Leader**

For centuries many theories of leadership continue to swarm literature. For example, Marzano et al. (2005) stated that there are several ideas that submit leadership as the *great man* theory. This idea suggests that without Moses the Jewish nation would have remained in bondage. They continued sharing that leaders are endowed with qualities that are superior to their followers (Marzano et al., 2005). Leadership has been directly linked to the effective and

successful functioning of organizations. However, prior to 2005, the research on the impact that the principal had as a leader on student achievement had mixed reviews. Nevertheless, since then, there have been both quantitative and qualitative studies identifying the positive effect that principals have on student achievement (McNulty & Besser, 2011). Most recently, student achievement was connected to the success of schools in particular (Marzano et al., 2005). The CCSSO (1996) defined effective school leadership as follows:

Effective school leaders are strong educators, anchoring their work on the central issues of learning and teaching and school improvement. They are moral agents and social advocates for the children and the communities they serve. Finally they make strong connections with other people, valuing and caring for others as individuals and as members of the educational community. (p. 5)

The wealth of recent research is consistent with identifying one finding on principal leadership: “Of all the variables impacting effective schools, the role of the principal as an instructional leader was paramount. They place priority on curriculum and instructional issues” (Smith, 2008, p. 244). Other studies have indicated that principal leadership is second only to classroom instruction as an influence on student achievement and learning (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2007). The body of research on principal instructional leadership identifies principals in schools with higher accountability scores spend more time on day-to-day instruction than those in schools with lower accountability scores.

For over three decades the professional literature on school leadership has referred to the principal as an instructional leader. However, there is a body of research on principal leadership that suggests many different styles and forms of effective leadership qualities. Haberman (1999) advised that regardless of the style, school leadership is the process of putting the best interests

of the school's children ahead of the convenience of the adults. Leithwood et al. (2007) distinguished among the many labels used in the literature. They concluded that the labels essentially capture varied styles and approaches; however, the essence of effective school leadership is the overall objective of the principal which is helping the organization identify the direction of improvement and helping people achieve that improvement. Strong leadership by any name promotes excellence and equity in education and entails projecting, promoting, and holding on to the commitment of the vision.

Clifford (2012) defined an effective instructional leader as one who establishes a strong vision and sets high expectations for all in the organization. The principal as instructional leader also provides opportunities for teachers to engage in reflective practice and collaborative learning around school improvement initiatives and best practices. Clifford continued by stating that the principal as instructional leader must create conditions to model good instructional and coach teachers in implementation of effective practices.

Principals must be willing to have a relentless focus on fulfilling the vision of the school. They must be willing to properly allocate time and resources needed to fulfill the vision. In the research from Robinson et al. (2008), they identified strategic resourcing as a principal leadership practice that had a positive impact on student achievement. This practice was not about the principal securing additional resources as it was more about the principal working to reduce the number of other initiatives in the building and then aligning current resources with the goals and initiatives in the school improvement plan (Robinson et al., 2008). Several researchers, such as Reeves (2006), Elmore (2004), and Fullan (2010), have all cautioned against adopting too many initiatives that detract from the improvement focus. Robinson (2007) even cautioned that "extra resources can have detrimental effects (because) . . . multiple simultaneous

initiatives can reduce the coherence of a teaching program” (p. 13). It is the principal’s role to reduce these distractions and align resources in a strategic manner in order to support the focused goals and strategies.

The communication of the leader echoes the goals of the vision and the progress along the way. The principal as a leader—instructional leader—supports the people through the learning of the practices needed to accomplish the vision, monitors the programs implemented, and oversees the activities implemented to achieve the school’s vision. There is an assumption that principals must work through other individuals to reach students; they must be experts at motivating adults, whether offering support or providing rewards (Haberman, 1999). Effective leadership is essential to the development and continuing improvement of any organization. An instructional leader is needed to focus efforts on excellence, thoughtfulness of actions, and promoting equity in education. Sergiovanni (2000) suggested that increased student performance will be achieved if the level of pedagogical thoughtfulness and develop relationships that are characterized by caring and respect is increased. It is imperative that principals focus on the academic as well as the affective of all in their organizations.

Principals demonstrate knowledge, respect, and responsiveness to the diverse cultures, contributions, and experiences that are part of the school and society. School leaders expect and hold staff accountable for challenging all students with a rigorous, culturally relevant curriculum and for demonstrating high expectations for each student.

It is evident that principals as leaders must be instructional leaders. The highly effective principal as a leader must be an instructional leader (McEwan, 2003b). Instructional leadership has been a major focus in schools today. There is increased emphasis placed on academic achievement of all students and the need for schools to be more accountable. Nevertheless, the



role of the principal still requires leadership in management as well as in instructional leadership. It is obvious that instructional leadership is imperative for school success; however, it tends not to be an intentional focus in the reality of day-to-day leadership. For example, among the many tasks performed by principals, only one-tenth of time is devoted towards providing instructional leadership (Stronge, 1988). In another study, principals spent most of their time in the school office (Hornig, Klasik, & Loeb, 2009).

Even today, school leaders continue to seek a balance in their roles as manager–administrator and instructional leader. Interestingly, among the reasons cited for less emphasis given to instructional leadership is the lack of in depth training for their role as an instructional leader, lack of time to execute instructional activities, increased paper work and the community’s expectation that the principal’s role is that of a manager (Flath, 1989; Fullan, 1991).

An instructional leader is a self-directed educational leader with a strong intellect and personal depth of knowledge regarding research-based curriculum, instruction, and learning who motivates and facilitates the intellectual growth and development of self, students, teachers, and parents (McEwan, 2003b). Being an instructional leader does not require that a principal be the best teacher in the building or know the most about curriculum, instruction, and assessments. It requires making sure the schools spends its resources in a manner that reflects the school’s priorities and school improvement initiatives (Haberman, 1999). McEwan (2003b) devoted an entire chapter in his book to the following attributes of a principal as that of an educator:

1. Believes that all students can learn, and they develop programs to help them succeed;
2. Provides training and support for teachers;
3. Creates cognitive dissonance;
4. Establishes, implement, and achieve academic standards;

5. Focuses on instruction;
6. Models continuous learning;
7. Develops teacher leaders;
8. Pays attention to what matters most; and
9. Creates learning communities.

There are many skills and behaviors that are needed for principals to be instructional leaders. In order to accomplish the nine attributes that McEwan (2003b) suggested, the principal must be the heart of the school. Principals must be highly visible and knowledgeable about the functions of their school. Mendels (2012) summarized five characteristics of effective leadership according to its impact on student learning and achievement:

- Instilling a vision of academic success for all students, based on high standards
- Creating a climate that supports and nurtures the vision through positive interactions
- Building and cultivating leadership capacity in others
- Improving instruction so that students can realize their potential, and
- Managing the people, data and processes to foster school improvement. (p. 55)

According to Mendels (2012), “When principals put each of these elements in place . . . principals stand a fighting chance of making a real difference for students” (p. 55).

Ensuring principals act as instructional leaders is not easy. Many principals have been trained to be managers of organizations not leaders. As Kotter (1996) stated, the point is not that leadership is good and management is bad. The two styles are completely different in their functions. The two serves different purposes in how they tend to organizations. Schools will not improve until the principal functions as an instructional leader. The focus must be on producing useful change. The leader however must be a good manager to decrease chaos during the change

process. In order to decrease the chaos and negative effects of the change process, Bennis and Nanus (1985) stated that the context of leadership for the change process can be summarized under the following: commitment, complexity, and credibility. There has been a decline in the work ethic and commitment to the work that is needed from many educators during the time of change. Bennis and Nanus contended that “leaders have failed to instill the vision, meaning, and trust in their followers during the change process” (p. 8). They believed that the enhancement of human resourcefulness and empowerment is a direct result of leadership. It was their thought that leaders must understand the complexities within the organizations during the change process. As educators we define the complexities of our organizations as low student achievement, limited budgets, toxic climates, and state and federal mandates. Bennis and Nanus insisted that there is a *credibility gap* among leaders during the complex times of change. Their view was that the credibility of leaders was being scrutinized like never before. The knowledge, skills, and actions of leaders are under scrutiny. The attributes of principal leadership are essential for school reform. The principal as leader must be ready to exhibit the characteristics and actions to oversee and improve the instructional quality and educational achievement of our schools.

### **Creating a Culture for Learning**

Culture influences everything that happens in a school. One definition of school culture by Phillips (1996) stated that it is “the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors which characterize a school” (p. 1). People in any healthy organization must have agreement on how to do things and what is worth doing. Fullan (2001) stated that school cultures are not neutral; they either promote or impede student and teacher development. Wagner (2000) conceptualized school culture as shared experiences both in school and out of school (traditions and celebrations), a

sense of community, of family and team. Staff stability and common goals permeate the school. Time is set aside for school-wide recognition of all school stakeholders. Common agreement on curricular and instructional components as well as order and discipline are established through consensus. Open and honest communication is encouraged and there is an abundance of humor and trust. Tangible support from leadership at the school and district levels is also present.

Successful leaders have learned to view their organizations' environment in a holistic way. This wide-angle view is what the concept of school culture offers principals and other leaders. It gives them a broader framework for understanding difficult problems and complex relationships within the school. By deepening their understanding of school culture, these leaders will be better equipped to shape the values, beliefs, and attitudes necessary to promote a stable and nurturing learning environment (Stolp, 1994). According to Deal and Peterson (1993), the term culture has been used synonymously with a variety of concepts, including climate, ethos, and saga. The world of education adopted the concept of culture from the business world; hoping to become more effective and efficient in our learning environment. A more measurable approach to a school culture that is effective is increased student achievement. Heckman (1993) defined culture as "the commonly held beliefs of teachers, students, and principals" (p. 266). The structure of an organization is founded upon its policies, procedures, rules, and relationships (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). They also defined culture as the assumptions, beliefs, values, and habits that constitute the norms for that organization. Norms support how we think, feel, and act. Norms are also defined as shared expectations for behavior and serve as a guide for what is to be done, how it is to be done, and by whom it should be done (DuFour & Sparks, 1991). Cultures have also been described as "the way we do things around here."

Hallinger and Heck (1998) found that a healthy and sound culture correlates with increased student achievement and motivation. Deal and Peterson (1999) found that schools with effective organizational cultures that teachers experienced job satisfaction and increased productivity.

In order to create a culture for learning, for both students and teachers, principals must seek to understand the current culture. Stolp (1994) suggested that at the very core of the organization are the meaningful and long-lasting relationships. He also suggested that reforms should be approached with caution.

Sarason (1996) emphatically stated,

If you want to change and improve the climate and outcomes of schooling, both for students and teachers, there are features of the school culture that have to be changed, and if they are not changed, your well-intentioned efforts will be defeated. (p. 340)

It is imperative that a vision is created to create a healthy school culture. In order for an effective school culture to be created, all stakeholders must be involved. Fullan (1992) stated that principals must create a shared vision that allows for collaborative school cultures. A collaborative school culture is where collaboration is fostered among teachers, students, parents, staff, and the principal.

The research led by Robinson et al. (2008) proved that it is imperative that the principal creates a culture that ensures an orderly and supportive learning environment. This finding involves “creating an environment for both staff and students that makes it possible for important academic and social goals to be achieved” (Robinson et al., 2008, p. 664). The research showed that “there was a strong statistical link between improvements in relational trust and gains in academic productivity” (Robinson, 2007, p. 19). The concept of *relational trust* includes four

aspects: (a) social respect, (b) competence, (c) personal regard for others, and (d) integrity, doing what you say (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

The principal is the architect of building a culture of relational trust. The principal must establish relational trust among the teachers and staff in the school. Research shows that it is possible to develop respect and caring in others. Principals must have the ability to demonstrate respect and care for the people in their schools (McNulty & Besser, 2011). “While no one expects principals to be the source of all knowledge on instruction, it is very reasonable to expect that they, like everyone else, must be willing to actively and publicly learn about instruction” (McNulty & Besser, 2011, p. 96). Creating a culture where instruction is the focus and the responsibility of the lead learner, the principal, builds an environment of trust and respect.

It is the belief of Thompson (1995) that a positive school culture is the perhaps the single most important expression of educational leadership. There is widespread agreement that it is the principal who plays the major role in shaping the culture of the school. An effective culture for learning is created when principals, teachers, and students model the values and beliefs important to the institution. Deal and Peterson (1990) suggested that principals should work to develop shared visions rooted in history, values, and beliefs of what the school should be, hire compatible staff, face conflict rather than avoid it, and use story-telling to illustrate shared values. Principals must also nurture the traditions, ceremonies, rituals, and symbols that already convey and support positive school culture. The principal’s style can shape, reinforce, sustain, or nudge the culture of the school by his or her decisions, actions, and how he or she approaches the everyday situations at his or her school.

School leaders who are in tune with the culture are always alert to the facets that affect school culture. Peterson and Deal (2009) expressed how strong leadership builds tough and solid

cultures. They described the major roles leaders play to shape the culture of the school. The characteristics of leaders are defined as symbolic roles. The symbolic roles are the following:

- Historian: seeks to understand the social and normative past of the school.
- Anthropological sleuth: analysis and probes for the current set of norms, values, and beliefs that define the current culture.
- Visionary: works with other leaders and the community to define a deeply value-focused picture of the future for the school; has a constantly evolving vision.
- Symbol: affirms values through dress, behavior, attention, routines.
- Potter: shapes and is shaped by the school's heroes, rituals, traditions, ceremonies, symbols, brings in staff who share core values.
- Poet: uses language to reinforce values and sustains the school's best image of itself.
- Actor: improves in the school's inevitable dramas, comedies, and tragedies.
- Healer: oversees transitions and change in the life of the school; heals the wounds of conflict and loss. (Peterson & Deal, 2009, p. 207)

These examples of leadership that shape a school's culture are needed when schools are undergoing change. During the time of transformation or change, schools can grow unmotivated and toxic. In order to keep staff motivated, positive, and proactive the school leaders must restore hope, trust, and confidence in the place we call school. Deal and Peterson (1990) advised principals to develop dense leadership by allowing members of the school staff to share leadership in shaping the school culture. They asserted that school cultures are complex systems that need leaders with knowledge, attitudes, and skills in order to be cultural reinforcers. School cultures should be able to motivate staff to pour their hearts into teaching children by focusing on

what matters most: instruction. It is just like how Starbucks' motivate their employees to pour their hearts into what matters most to them: selling coffee.

### **Professional Development and Teacher Supervision**

Professional development is the means by which educators acquire or enhance the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs necessary to create high levels of learning for all students (NSDC, 2001). The council suggested that professional development is essential for all staff that influences student learning. They also proposed that professional development should be rigorous and sustained over time. The U.S. Department of Education (1997) developed 10 characteristics of effective professional development that enhances teaching and improves student achievement as follows:

1. Focuses on teachers as central to student learning, yet includes all other members of the school community.
2. Focuses on individual, collegial, and organizational improvement.
3. Respects and nurtures the intellectual and leadership capacity of teachers, principals and others in the school community.
4. Reflects best available research and practice in teaching, learning, and leadership.
5. Enables teachers to develop further experience in subject content, teaching to high standards.
6. Promotes continuous inquiry and improvement embedded in the daily life of schools.
7. Is planned collaboratively by those who will participate in and facilitate the development.
8. Requires substantial time and other resources.
9. Is driven by a coherent long-term plan.



10. Is evaluated ultimately on its impact on teacher effectiveness and student learning and this assessment guides subsequent professional development efforts.

DuFour (2001) explained how he came to understand that the most significant contribution a principal can make to developing others is creating an appropriate context for adult learning. “It is context that plays the largest role in determining whether professional development efforts will have an impact of that school” (DuFour, 2001, p. 14). Context was defined by DuFour (2001) as “the programs, procedures, beliefs, expectations, and habits that constitute the norm for a given school” (p. 14).

To foster learning that encompasses these attributes, professional development requires an on-going process for adult learning. To achieve this, educators must forfeit the workshop-driven approach. The NSDC (2001) described several components for effective staff development.

The implementation of learning communities satisfies the process for learning that is on-going and even job-embedded. The NSDC’s stance is learning communities are engaging and constantly focused on improvement. DuFour (2001) emphasized that principals need to shift professional development from speakers or trainers to providing opportunities for staff to work together, hence creating learning communities. The work of learning communities should be based on student data and areas of need. The members of the team make significant contributions on the goals of the school improvement plan; they also focus on the school culture, the learning environment, and other issues that affect the operations of the school. The learning teams make it a priority to read current research and keep themselves up-to-date with best-practices for improving teaching and learning. The teams also help to establish what is important learning for the staff based on the knowledge, attitudes, and skills of the staff. During school

reform or major changes, the establishment of learning teams can help create a common focus and clear direction for the staff. This focus and direction can help thwart problems of disconnected efforts.

DuFour (2001) believed that it is the principal who must function as the professional development leader. The principal must create the culture for these learning communities to function effectively. DuFour stated that principals must provide the focus, parameters, and support to the teams. He gave five ways that principals as professional development leaders must help with the learning teams:

1. Provide time for collaboration in the school day and school year. Providing time for teachers to work together does not require keeping students at home and/or an infusion of new resources. Principals as staff development leaders work with staff to identify no-cost strategies that enable teachers to work together on a regular basis while students are on campus.
2. Identify critical questions to guide the work of collaborative teams. The impact of providing time for teachers to engage in collective inquiry will be determined to a great extent by the nature of the questions teachers are considering. Principals must help teams frame questions that focus on critical issues of teaching and learning.
3. Ask teams to create products as a result of their collaboration. The best way to help teachers use their collaborative time productively is to ask them to produce and present artifacts in response to the critical questions of new units to address gaps between state standards and local curriculum, creation of common assessments and improvement plans based on analysis of student achievement data.

4. Insist that teams identify and pursue specific student achievement goals. The driving force behind the effort to create a collaborative culture must be improved results. Principals foster improved results when they ask teaching teams to identify and pursue specific, measurable student achievement goals.
5. Provide teams with relevant data and information. When every teacher has access to information on his or her students' performance in meeting agreed upon standards, on valid assessments, in comparison to other students trying to achieve the same standards, both individual teachers and teams improve their effectiveness. (DuFour, 2001, pp. 15-16)

This intentional professional development leadership from the principal forges professional growth and competency among staff. In order for the principal to organize professional development that is intentional and relevant to the staff, the principal must be abreast of the needs of the school as it relates to student achievement, data analysis, and the strategies needed to improve teacher knowledge and student learning.

Robinson et al. (2008) urged principals not only to organize and promote the professional development but to participate in the professional development. Of all the findings in the meta-analytic study, the variable of promoting and participating in teacher learning and development had the largest effect size in improving student achievement. "This is a large effect and provides some empirical support for calls to school leaders to be actively involved with their teachers as the 'leading learners' of their school" (Robinson et al., 2008, p. 663). The principal's role is as the lead learner in the school among all teachers and teams. Robinson (2007) identified several characteristics on which principals need to focus that were associated with effective professional development, including

- Providing extended time and ensuring effective use of that time;
- Ensuring teachers are engaged during the professional learning;
- Challenging problematic discourses, especially around low expectations for students;
- Providing opportunities to participate in a professional community that focuses on teaching and achievement;
- Involving school leaders in the process of setting and monitoring targets; and,
- Building the leadership of others. (Robinson, 2007, p.17)

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) conducted a meta-analysis study of 35 years of school leadership (Marzano et al., 2005). The research identified 21 leadership responsibilities and 66 leadership practices that have proven to impact student learning and achievement (Marzano et al., 2005). It is more apparent now than ever that the principal's actions can improve student learning and achievement. In fact, one of McREL's conclusions was that principals do matter! This research proved that there are actions of the principal that shape and focus teachers, instructional practices, and the culture so that student achievement is successful.

Principals can no longer cling to the notion that they are instructional leaders if they offer an array of professional development to their staff. The leader must connect the professional development to the needs of the school improvement data and the focuses of the school improvement plan. Stigler and Hiebert (1999) suggested the following criteria in professional development that will be focused on the specific needs of the school:

1. Expect improvement to be continual, gradual, and incremental;
2. Maintain a constant focus on student learning goals;
3. Focus on teaching, not teachers;

4. Make improvements in context;
5. Make improvements in the work of teachers; and
6. Build a system where others can learn from their own experience. (p. 131)

Effective professional development is vital for the improvement of all. DuFour (2002) also asserted that principals must recognize professional development as a means to improved student achievement. He suggested a change from referring to principals as instructional leaders to learning leaders (Dufour, 2002). By implementing specific actions, the principal will keep the focus on student learning (DuFour, 2001). Reeves (2008) saw that one of the most important leadership characteristics of a principal is to reduce the gap between good intentions and actions. Their collective recommendations are compared in Table 2.

Table 2

*Leadership Actions*

DuFour's (2001) Leadership Actions	Reeves (2008) Leadership for Implementation
Involve faculty in identifying specific competencies that are most critical in improving student achievement.	Create objectives that are meaningful, attainable, and provide immediate feedback.
Design purposeful, goal-oriented strategies and programs to develop those specific competencies.	Recognize effective practices throughout the year.
Sustain the commitment to the strategies until staff acquires and implements the critical skills and programs.	Stay focused on supporting the needed changes to improve achievement. Ignore the attitudes about making the needed changes.
Assess the impact of professional development on the basis of improved student results.	Make the need for change compelling and connect it to the passion that brought most educators to teaching in the first place.

DuFour (2001) also stressed the importance of developing not only individual teachers but helped them see how to function in ways that strengthened the entire school team. As principals develop their teachers, it is important that they are actively involved in instructional processes related to the implementation of expectations from the professional development. Effective principals have systems in place that allow them to frequently observe classrooms and provide feedback to teachers on a consistent basis (McNulty & Besser, 2011). Robinson et al. (2008) found that leaders in higher performing schools are distinguished from their counterparts in similar lower performing schools by their personal involvement in planning, coordinating, and evaluating teachers, teaching, and the curriculum.

### **Sustaining School Improvement**

“As long as we have schools that need to be improved or improvements that need to be sustained, the role of the principal will be important” (Lambert, 2003, p. 43). Senge et al. (1999) defined sustainability as “a function of shared vision, systems thinking, team learning, and personal mastery” (p. 530). When one thinks about the word sustain, one thinks of words like maintain, continue, carry on, nourish, help, assist, and support (McNulty & Besser, 2011), all of which are needed for school improvement initiatives being sustained over time. In order to sustain improvement, the principal must focus on the ongoing performance of students and the quality of teaching and learning in the school. At times, it is much easier to start the school improvement change and focus on the implementation than it is to sustain the work. Reeves (2006) identified the following leadership practices that are needed to sustain improvements: (a) monitoring to evaluate, (b) providing ongoing feedback, (c) focusing on results, (d) celebrating small wins, and (e) using data to guide decisions.

The role of the principal has increased in complexity, and the principal's perceived linear conflicts between being inclusive and meeting high standards, between accountability and meeting the diverse needs of students, between being responsive to mandates and being autonomous, and between and among the roles of strategic leader, instructional leader, organizational leader, and political and community leader. (Goodwin, 2004, p. 19)

More than ever before, principals seem to be facing new demands that make this a very challenging time to be a principal. However, this provides principals an opportunity to be influential and make a difference in the lives of their students and the sustained success of their schools.

With the continuous changes in education and the need for improving teaching, learning, and leadership practices, the role of the principal is vital to school improvement and how long that improvement lasts. Principals must be savvy at identifying *what to keep* and *what to throw away*, defining problems, and responding to the problems appropriately. They must acknowledge when there is a time and a need for people to shift their expectations, beliefs and behaviors are all factors to consider when addressing and implementing changes to promote improved teaching and student achievement. McNulty and Besser (2011) claimed "one of the biggest gaps in implementation for most schools is the lack of ongoing monitoring and feedback" (p. 107). Leaders must create an environment of frequent monitoring in order to evaluate the adult actions toward the improvement. White (2009) found that "schools with explicit monitoring achieved at higher levels than schools where monitoring was assumed or implied" (p. 12). However, Fullan (2008) cautioned that negative monitoring systems do not work. If monitoring is seen as an "I got you," then it will build resentment and resistance to the change process. People will respond to fear and persecution just for compliance. To sustain

improvements, leaders must create environments of support during the new learning and implementation, so educators can refine their practices.

Effective leaders sustain the improvement by being actively involved with the instructional process, identifying levels of implementation, and having ongoing conversations about effective instruction and research-based practices. The conversations provide an opportunity for principals to provide feedback on the effectiveness of their implementation. Hattie and Timperley (2007) defined feedback as “information provided by an agent regarding aspects of one’s performance or understanding” (p. 81). Hattie (2009) concluded that feedback has a powerful influence on enhancing achievement for all. Reeves (2006) emphasized to leaders that it is a waste of time to give teachers this level of feedback and they do not act on it. The feedback needs to include next steps in the action of the receiver. In order to provide feedback that has this type of effect, principals must be visible in the classrooms in order for feedback to be immediate and appropriate to each teacher.

Robinson et al. (2008) found that principals in higher performing schools are directly involved with curriculum, instruction, and assessment at every level of their schools. To sustain improvements, the leader must have an ongoing focus of results. They ensure the use of appropriate ongoing assessments in order to analyze student progress, determine the effectiveness of the professional development focus and strategies, and identify what mid-course corrections are needed, if any.

Leaders who use data to sustain the improvement ask these two fundamental questions:

1. Are we making measurable progress? How do we know? What evidence do we have? Do we know why we are making progress?



2. If we are not making measurable progress, do we know why? What is it that is not working? Which specific actions, strategies, or programs are not working? Do we know why? Do we know what to do to change this?

These simple questions help the principal identify the specific adult actions that resulted in the success. By asking these questions, principals are able to understand the next steps in the improvement process. If leaders cannot articulate what caused the gains, then they are not clear as to why progress occurred, resulting in limited or no sustainability of the school improvement. The same holds true for the second question, if leaders cannot articulate what is not working, then they won't know what to stop doing (McNulty & Besser, 2011). "If you don't know why it's not working, then you don't know how to fix it" (McNulty & Besser, 2011, p. 12). Without this level of detail and analysis, it is difficult to sustain improvements. Principals must be able to link success to strategies. Otherwise, they will make decisions based on hunches. Teachers must also see and understand the connections of the improvements to their actions. In this, they will take pride in knowing that their new learning, hard work, and contributions led to the progress toward the school improvement goals.

Reeves (2006) concluded that both causes and effects in a comprehensive accountability improvement system must be evaluated. The causes are defined as adult practices (Reeves, 2006) as reflected in Figure 1.

Y = Effect Data Student Achievement Results	Lucky  High results in achievement (student achievement) Low understanding of causes (adult actions) Replication of success unlikely	Leading  High results in achievement (student achievement) High understanding of causes (adult actions) Replication of success is likely
	Losing Ground  Low results in achievement (student achievement) Low understanding of causes (adult actions) Replication of failure likely	Learning  Low results in achievement (student achievement) High understanding of causes (adult actions) Replication of mistakes unlikely
X = Cause Data Antecedents - Adult Actions		

*Figure 1.* Leadership and learning matrix. Adapted from “The Learning Leader: How to Focus School Improvement for Better Results” by D. B. Reeves, 2006. Copyright 2006 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

The Leadership and Learning Matrix is a visual representation that leaders can use when identifying where they are in the school improvement process. In Reeves’s earlier work, he referred to the lack of collecting both student achievement data and adult action (cause) data as a malpractice (Reeves, 2002). The matrix can help principals identify specific teaching and leadership actions that create improvements and/or gains. By identifying what worked, leaders can replicate those actions for sustainability.

Principals who use data analysis as the core of sustainability understand the direct relationship to the actions of the adults and the achievement of the school improvement goals (Reeves, 2002). As leaders create a data-driven culture for sustainability, they must keep the *big ideas* at the center of the improvement process:

- Teachers and leaders matter in making progress and achieving the goals of the school;
- It is what teachers and leaders do that matter most;

- The greater the focus, the better the outcomes;
- The main focus should be on instruction;
- Monitoring, feedback, and support go hand in hand; and
- Data should guide the entire process. (McNulty & Besser, 2011; Reeves, 2002; White, 2009)

The inclusion of these big ideas throughout the improvement process will naturally lead the school to sustainability (McNulty & Besser, 2011; Reeves, 2002; White, 2009).

Leaders sustain the work by aligning the school improvement goals with professional development; then they must create a culture that supports, coaches, and evaluates the implementation of the initiative. The work is then sustained when the instructional leader monitors the improvement and provides ongoing feedback relating to the improvement of teaching, learning, and leadership practices. The feedback includes the acknowledgement of small wins which leads the school to celebration of every gain toward the school improvement goals.

### **Summary**

Identifying the principal's roles in increasing the teacher implementation in school improvement initiatives and research-based practices was the focus of this study. By focusing on specific actions of the principal that both teachers and principals deem important to school improvement provided some insight on how principals should use their time, resources, and energies. Secondly, determining if novice teachers, experienced teachers, and principals have different perceptions in the leadership actions of principals that are deemed important to the implementation of school improvement initiatives was another focus of the study. The intention of the survey was to determine what teachers and principals deem important when it comes to the

leadership actions that lead to the implementation of school improvement initiatives. The survey was also used to determine what teachers deem as important actions of principals that help with their implementation of best practices, which includes assisting with increasing their levels of knowledge and the implementation of new learning. The principal's survey was used to measure leadership actions of principals that principals deem important to teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives and increasing their depth of the knowledge and understanding needed as it relates to the school improvement initiatives and instructional best practices.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS

A review of the literature revealed the importance of instructional leadership on behalf of the school principal in regards to teacher implementation of best practices and sustaining school improvement. The research questions that guided this study were

1. Is there a difference between teachers' and principal perceptions of leadership actions that increase teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives regarding the five categories: school improvement, principal as instructional leader, creating a culture for learning, professional development and teacher supervision, and sustaining school improvement?
2. Is there a difference between novice teachers, experienced teachers, and principals in their perceptions regarding the leadership actions that increase teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives regarding the five categories: school improvement, principal as instructional leader, creating a culture for learning, professional development and teacher supervision, and sustaining school improvement?

There are several specific questions in the five categories that guided the research and the study. These guiding questions were listed in Chapter 1. The five categories served as research on the actions of leaders and their impact on school improvement.

## Research Methods

This study used a quantitative approach to data collection. The quantitative research method relied on numerical data collection in order to isolate variables and identify trends, relationships, and patterns (Creswell, 2003). Principals from Metropolitan School Districts in Marion County, Indiana, were selected to participate in this study. Principals and randomly selected experienced and novice teachers in the school districts of Metropolitan School District of Decatur Township, Metropolitan School District of Franklin Township, Metropolitan School District of Perry Township, Metropolitan School District of Pike Township, and Metropolitan School District of Wayne Township were surveyed (Appendix A) using critical questions adapted from current literature resources. The resources included the *Technical Report for the Teacher Survey of Principal Leadership* (Germuth, 2006), the *Audit of Principal Effectiveness* (Valentine & Bowman, 1984), the *RISE Principal Evaluation and Development System* (Indiana Senate Enrolled Act 001, 2010), and *Assessing Educational Leaders* (Reeves, 2009).

The first research question required the statistical technique of inferential analysis to determine if there was a difference in the perceptions of principals and teachers regarding the leadership actions that increase teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives regarding the five categories of school improvement, principal as instructional leader, creating a culture for learning, professional development and teacher supervision, and sustaining school improvement. To analyze this question, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to assess whether the means of the principals and teachers were statistically different from each other due to having multiple dependent variables.

The second research question required the statistical technique of inferential analysis to determine if there was a difference in the perceptions of principals, novice teachers, and

experienced teachers regarding the leadership actions that increase teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives regarding the five categories of school improvement, principal as instructional leader, creating a culture for learning, professional development and teacher supervision, and sustaining school improvement. To analyze this question, a MANOVA was also used to assess whether the means of novice teachers and experienced teachers were statistically different from each other due to having multiple dependent variables.

### **Description of the Sample**

The school districts selected to participate in the study included schools in the Metropolitan School Districts of Indianapolis, Indiana. The sample included experienced and novice teachers and principals who voluntarily completed the survey that was sent to them via Survey Monkey during the second semester of the 2012-2013 school year. The sample included novice, middle-experienced, and experienced teachers and principals from both elementary and secondary schools in the districts of Metropolitan School District of Decatur Township, Metropolitan School District of Franklin Township, Metropolitan School District of Perry Township, Metropolitan School District of Pike Township, and Metropolitan School District of Wayne Township. The sample included both elementary and secondary educators from schools in Marion County, Indiana.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Self-administering surveys were used to determine teachers' and principals' perceptions of leadership actions that increase teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives. A survey conducted utilizing Survey Monkey was emailed to each of the principals of all 156 schools in the study. The randomly selected teachers also received the survey utilizing Survey Monkey to complete. The elementary teachers were randomly selected based on his or her years

of experience. I asked the principal of each school to select a teacher in their building with the fewest years of experience in teaching and one teacher in his or her building with the most years of teaching experience. The teacher with the least experience was defined as the novice teacher.

All novice teachers had experience levels between zero and seven years in the teaching field.

The teacher with the most years of experience was defined as the experienced teachers with all of them having at least 15 years of experience. Therefore, two teachers from each elementary school and two teachers from each secondary school were asked to participate in the study.

Once the Institutional Review Board granted exemption for the study to be conducted, (Appendix B), the following procedures were used to request participation in the study

1. A letter (Appendix C) via an email attachment was sent to all eight superintendents in the Metropolitan School Districts in Marion County, Indiana, seeking approval to conduct the study. Once approval was granted (Appendix D) an email was sent that explained the questionnaire and detailed information of the confidentiality of the study as well as the anonymity of all survey participants and their answers. The email also included information about the time required for completing the survey and sending it back via Survey Monkey. The survey required each principal of all the elementary and secondary schools to complete the information in the survey.
2. The principals were sent an email invitation to explain the study, share the purpose of the study, and request their input on the selection of the novice and experienced teachers needed to participate in the study.
3. Once the principals selected the teachers to participate, the teachers were sent an email invitation to explain the study, share the purpose of the study, and stated how they were randomly selected to participate in the study.



4. The selected teachers and principals, if they agreed to participate in the study, were sent the survey on Survey Monkey via an email link.
5. The recipients of the survey were asked to complete the survey within seven business days upon the receipt of the email.

### **Description of Instrumentation**

Multiple surveys from current research were used in this study. *The Technical Report for the Teacher Survey of Principal Leadership* (Germuth, 2006), the *Audit of Principal Effectiveness* (Valentine & Bowman, 1984), *RISE Principal Evaluation and Development System* (Indiana Department of Education, 2011a), and *Assessing Educational Leaders* (Reeves, 2009) were adapted and used to guide this study. The survey asked the principals and randomly selected teachers to respond to 25 questions about their perceptions of leadership actions that increased teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives. The survey used a 6-point Likert scale to rate the frequency of each statement that was true about the principal. The Likert scale consisted of the following ratings: 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *somewhat disagree*, 3 = *disagree*, 4 = *somewhat agree*, and 5 = *agree*, and 6 = *strongly agree*.

The responses to each item on the scale were averaged to obtain a composite score. The values were used in a mathematical formula to produce a single numerical value or score for each respondent.

### **Summary**

Identifying leadership actions that increase teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives is important in improving student achievement. As stated in research, leadership is second only to teaching among factors that influence student achievement (Wahlstrom et al., 2010). The study focused on determining whether there were differences on

the leadership actions that teachers and principals deemed important in increasing teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives.

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine whether there is a significant difference between teachers' and principals' perceptions of the leadership actions that increase teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives regarding five categories: school improvement, principal as instructional leader, creating a culture for learning, professional development and teacher supervision, and sustaining school improvement. This study also examined whether there is a significant difference between the perceptions of novice teachers and experienced teachers, and principals regarding the leadership actions that increase teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives regarding same five categories: school improvement, principal as instructional leader, creating a culture for learning, professional development and teacher supervision, and sustaining school improvement.

This chapter presented that the study is quantitative in nature. The data collection and design were described. A descriptive analysis is the statistical method to determine if there is a difference in the teachers' perceptions and principals' perceptions of leadership actions that increase teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives. This chapter identified that the participants investigated were from both elementary and secondary schools in five school districts in Marion County. The development and the procedures for scoring the survey were identified and described. This study provides research for teachers and principals on increasing the implementation of school improvement initiatives and sustaining the change in order to be more effective when it comes to instructional leadership.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH RESULTS

Chapter 4 reports the results of the survey and describes the statistical analysis of the resulting data. The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine whether there is a significant difference between teachers' and principals' perceptions of the leadership actions that increase teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives regarding five categories: school improvement, principal as instructional leader, creating a culture for learning, professional development and teacher supervision, and sustaining school improvement. This study also examined whether there is a significant difference between the perceptions of novice teachers, experienced teachers, and principals regarding the leadership actions that increase teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives regarding same five categories: school improvement, principal as instructional leader, creating a culture for learning, professional development and teacher supervision, and sustaining school improvement.

The first part of the chapter reintroduces each research question and reports the descriptive data from the sample. The analysis of the data included is presented describing the type of tests used to conduct the research. The results of the leadership actions survey are presented with the inferential statistical analysis of the findings. The chapter then concludes with the findings of the research study and a summary of the chapter.

### **Research Questions**

The reported findings are directly related to the following two research questions:

1. Is there a difference between teachers' and principal perceptions of leadership actions that increase teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives regarding the five categories: school improvement, principal as instructional leader, creating a culture for learning, professional development and teacher supervision, and sustaining school improvement?
2. Is there a difference between novice teachers, experienced teachers, and principals in their perceptions regarding the leadership actions that increase teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives regarding the five categories: school improvement, principal as instructional leader, creating a culture for learning, professional development and teacher supervision, and sustaining school improvement?

### **Sample of the Participants**

The participants of this study were drawn from Indianapolis, Indiana, educators in metropolitan, urban schools. The educators in this sample of research made up four categories: building principals, novice teachers with less than seven years of teaching experience, teachers with eight to 14 years of experience, and experienced teachers with 15 or more years of experience.

The responses from the participants included a total frequency of 262 respondents. The principal group had 56 respondents comprising 21% of the total sample. The novice teacher group had 60 respondents comprising 23% of the total sample. The 8-14 years of experience

teachers had 73 respondents comprising 28% of the total sample. The experienced teachers had 73 respondents comprising 28% of the total sample.

The entire participant sample of educators responded to survey questions regarding the actions of principals that they perceived that led to school improvement. The survey used a Likert scale with a minimum of 1.00 and a maximum of 6.00. The educators were asked to rate 25 statements of actions of principals that they perceived as important to school improvement with 1 being *strongly disagree* and 6 being *strongly agree*. The statements represented the five categories that related to school improvement. There were a total of five statements of actions for each of the five categories.

### **Description of the Sample**

The entire sample of participants indicated the following five actions of the principal as having the highest level of importance to school improvement. The statement of action that had the highest mean score was “the principal provides teachers with time to collaborate with each other” ( $M = 5.70$ ,  $SD = .70$ ). The second highest statement of action was “the principal uses data to drive the school improvement goals” ( $M = 5.46$ ,  $SD = .78$ ). The statement of action with the third highest mean score was “the principal provides timely feedback on student achievement practices” ( $M = 5.43$ ,  $SD = .67$ ). The statement of action with the fourth highest mean score was “the principal ensures teacher priorities connect to the school improvement goals” ( $M = 5.42$ ,  $SD = .69$ ). The statement of action with the fifth highest mean score was “the principal observes instructional and assessment practices and provides timely feedback” ( $M = 5.39$ ,  $SD = .78$ ). The top two statements of actions with the highest mean scores were actions that were from the school improvement category. The statements with the second highest mean scores were actions

form the principal as a leader category. The statement of action with the fifth highest mean score was an action from the professional development and teacher supervision category.

The entire sample of participants responded to the following three actions of the principal as having the lowest level of importance to school improvement. The statement of action that had the lowest mean score was “the principal involves teachers who don’t otherwise participate in discussions” ( $M = 5.00$ ,  $SD = .99$ ). The second lowest statement of action was “the principal engages in instructional coaching with teachers” ( $M = 5.06$ ,  $SD = .92$ ). The statement of action with the third lowest mean score was “the principal informs teachers of best practices” ( $M = 5.11$ ,  $SD = .79$ ). The bottom three statements of actions with the lowest mean scores were all from the category of creating a culture for learning.

The five categories in the research represented areas of school improvement. The information below is based on the descriptive statistics of the entire sample. The descriptive statistics indicate the range of responses for each category starting with the minimum and ending with the maximum. The school improvement composite score had a range score from 2.40 to 6.00 with a mean score of 5.42 ( $SD = .55$ ). The principal as instructional leader composite score had a range score from 3.60 to 6.00 with a mean score of 5.30 ( $SD = .58$ ). The creating a culture for learning composite score had a range score from 2.20 to 6.00 with a mean score of 5.14 ( $SD = .67$ ). The professional development and supervision composite score had a range score from 3.40 to 6.00 with a mean score of 5.28 ( $SD = .58$ ). The sustaining school improvement composite score had a range score from 3.00 to 6.00 with a mean score of 5.21 ( $SD = .61$ ).

### Descriptive Data for the Principals

The descriptive data for the principals show the range of responses starting with the minimum to the maximum. The mean and standard deviation for each statement of action are also included in the descriptive data for the principals reflected in Table 3.

Table 3

#### *Descriptive Data for Principals*

Statements of Action	Minimum	Maximum	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Creates a vision/mission connecting SIP goals	2.00	6.00	5.38	.93
Monitors instructional and organizational systems	3.00	6.00	5.59	.63
Provides teacher collaboration time	4.00	6.00	5.75	.51
Uses data to drive SIP goals	4.00	6.00	5.75	.48
Communicates the vision/mission	4.00	6.00	5.43	.68
Ensures teacher priorities connect to SIP goals	4.00	6.00	5.59	.56
Guides staff through SIP	4.00	6.00	5.45	.66
Knows the Indiana state standards and instructional process	4.00	6.00	5.27	.73
Provides timely feedback on student achievement practices	4.00	6.00	5.52	.57
Monitors teacher instructional time	3.00	6.00	5.46	.76
Engages in instructional coaching with teachers	3.00	6.00	5.29	.73
Exhibits school improvement skills	4.00	6.00	5.46	.60
Involves teachers who don't participate in meetings	3.00	6.00	5.18	.83

Table 3 (continued)

Statements of Action	Minimum	Maximum	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Informs teachers of best practices	3.00	6.00	5.05	.77
Implements a multi-faceted professional development model	4.00	6.00	5.46	.66
Observes instructional and assessment practices and provides timely feedback	4.00	6.00	5.70	.57
Identifies instructional strengths of teachers	3.00	6.00	5.38	.75
Identifies instructional weaknesses of teachers and suggests professional development	2.00	6.00	5.21	.89
Ensures urgency and celebrates progress	4.00	6.00	5.45	.60
Meets regularly with leadership team to discuss SIP	2.00	6.00	5.54	.79
Shares current research and data on best practices	4.00	6.00	5.27	.62
Establishes SIP activities for teachers	2.00	6.00	5.45	.63
Ensures professional development relates to SIP goals	2.00	6.00	5.38	.84
Uses data to drive all practices	4.00	6.00	5.48	.66
Works with leadership team to promote educational goals	2.00	6.00	5.25	.86

The descriptive data for the principal group indicated the following actions of the principal as having the highest level of importance to school improvement. The statement of action that had the highest mean score for the principal group was “the principal provides teachers with time to collaborate with each other” ( $M = 5.75$ ,  $SD = .51$ ). The second highest



statement of action for the principal group was “the principal uses data to drive the school improvement goals” ( $M = 5.75, SD = .48$ ). The statement of action with the third highest mean score for the principal group was “the principal observes instructional and assessment practices and provides timely feedback” ( $M = 5.70, SD = .67$ ). The statement of action with the fourth highest mean score for the principal group was “the principal monitors instructional and organizational systems” ( $M = 5.59, SD = .63$ ). The statement of action with the fifth highest mean score for the principal group was “the principal ensures teacher priorities connect to SIP goals” ( $M = 5.59, SD = .56$ ). The top statements of actions with the highest mean scores were actions that were from all the categories with the exception of the sustaining school improvement category.

The sample of participants from the principal group responded to the following three actions of the principal as having the lowest level of importance to school improvement. The statement of action that had the lowest mean score for the principal group was “the principal informs teachers of best practices” ( $M = 5.05, SD = .77$ ). The second lowest statement of action for the principal group was “the principal involves teachers who do not participate in discussions” ( $M = 5.18, SD = .83$ ). The statement of action with the third lowest mean score for the principal group was “the principal identifies instructional weaknesses of teachers and suggests professional development” ( $M = 5.21, SD = .89$ ). The bottom three statements of actions with the lowest mean scores were from both categories of creating a culture for learning and professional development and teacher supervision.

The descriptive data for the principal group compared to the whole sample identified different statements of actions of the principal as having the highest level of importance to school improvement. The following are the top five statements of actions of the principal that

had the highest mean difference above the whole sample. The statement of action with the highest mean score above the whole sample was “the principal monitors teacher instructional time.” This statement of action had a mean difference of +.34. The next two statements of actions both had the second highest mean scores above the whole sample. The first statement of action tied with the second highest mean score above the whole sample was “the principal observes instructional and assessment practices and provides timely feedback.” This statement of action had a mean difference of +.30. The next statement of action was “the principal uses data to drive SIP goals.” This statement of action also had a mean difference of +.30. The statement of action with the fourth highest mean score above the whole sample was “the principal uses data to drive all practices.” This statement of action had a mean difference of +.24. The statement of action with the fifth highest mean score above the whole sample was “the principal implements a multi-faceted professional development model.” This statement of action had a mean difference of +.23. The top statements of actions with the highest mean scores above the whole sample were actions were from all five categories.

The descriptive data for the principal group compared to the whole sample also identified statements of actions of the principal as having the lowest level of importance to school improvement. The statement of action with the lowest mean score compared to the whole sample was “the principal informs teachers of best practices.” This statement of action had a mean difference of -.06. The statement of action that had the second lowest mean scores compared to the whole sample was “the principal provides teacher collaboration time.” This statement of action had a mean difference of +.06. The statement of action with the third lowest mean score compared to the whole sample was “the principal knows the Indiana Standards and instructional process.” This statement of action had a mean difference of +.07. These statements

of actions were actions were from the principal as a leader and the creating a culture for learning categories.

### **Descriptive Data for the Novice Teachers**

The descriptive data for the novice teachers show the range of responses starting with the minimum to the maximum. The mean and standard deviation for each statement of action are also included in the descriptive data for the novice teachers as reflected in Table 4.

Table 4

#### *Descriptive Data for Principals by Novice Teachers*

Statements of Action	Minimum	Maximum	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Creates a vision/mission connecting SIP goals	4.00	6.00	5.28	.64
Monitors instructional and organizational systems	1.00	6.00	5.27	.83
Provides teacher collaboration time	1.00	6.00	5.75	.75
Uses data to drive SIP goals	3.00	6.00	5.48	.77
Communicates the vision/mission	1.00	6.00	5.30	.85
Ensures teacher priorities connect to SIP goals	3.00	6.00	5.43	.72
Guides staff through SIP	3.00	6.00	5.32	.75
Knows the Indiana state standards and instructional process	2.00	6.00	5.23	.83
Engages in instructional coaching with teachers	2.00	6.00	4.97	1.00
Exhibits school improvement skills	3.00	6.00	5.20	.82
Involves teachers who don't participate in meetings	3.00	6.00	5.05	.89
Informs teachers of best practices	3.00	6.00	5.22	.74
Provides timely feedback on student achievement practices	4.00	6.00	5.38	.69

Table 4 (continued)

Statements of Action	Minimum	Maximum	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Monitors teacher instructional time	2.00	6.00	5.00	.97
Implements a multi-faceted professional development model	2.00	6.00	5.23	.95
Observes instructional and assessment practices and provides timely feedback	4.00	6.00	5.30	.74
Identifies instructional strengths of teachers	2.00	6.00	5.27	.88
Identifies instructional weaknesses of teachers and suggests professional development	3.00	6.00	5.20	.77
Ensures urgency and celebrates progress	3.00	6.00	5.32	.70
Meets regularly with leadership team to discuss SIP	4.00	6.00	5.37	.66
Shares current research and data on best practices	2.00	6.00	5.18	.85
Establishes SIP activities for teachers	3.00	6.00	5.22	.78
Ensures professional development relates to SIP goals	3.00	6.00	5.33	.71
Uses data to drive all practices	3.00	6.00	5.23	.74
Works with leadership team to promote educational goals	3.00	6.00	5.25	.75

The descriptive data for the novice teacher group indicated the following actions of the principal as having the highest level of importance to school improvement. The statement of action that had the highest mean score for the novice teacher group was “the principal provides teachers with time to collaborate with each other” ( $M = 5.75$ ,  $SD = .75$ ). The second highest statement of action for the novice teacher group was “the principal uses data to drive the school

improvement goals” ( $M = 5.48, SD = .77$ ). The statement of action with the third highest mean score for the novice teacher group was “the principal ensures teacher priorities connect to SIP goals” ( $M = 5.43, SD = .72$ ). The statement of action with the fourth highest mean score for the novice teacher group was “the principal provides teachers with timely feedback on student achievement practices” ( $M = 5.38, SD = .69$ ). The statement of action with the fifth highest mean score for the novice teacher group was “the principal meets regularly with leadership team to discuss the SIP” ( $M = 5.37, SD = .66$ ). The top statements of actions with the highest mean scores from the novice teacher group were actions that were from all the categories with the exception of the sustaining school improvement category.

The sample of participants from the novice teacher group responded to the following three actions of the principal as having the lowest level of importance to school improvement. The statement of action that had the lowest mean score for the novice teacher group was “the principal engages in instructional coaching with teachers” ( $M = 4.96, SD = 1.00$ ). The second lowest statement of action for the novice teacher group was “the principal monitors instructional and organizational systems” ( $M = 5.00, SD = .97$ ). The statement of action with the third lowest mean score for the novice teacher group was “the principal involves teachers who don’t participate” ( $M = 5.05, SD = .89$ ). The bottom three statements of actions with the lowest mean scores were from both categories of principal as a leader and creating a culture for learning.

The descriptive data for the novice teacher group compared to the whole sample identified different statements of actions of the principal as having the highest level of importance to school improvement. The following are the top five statements of actions of the principal that were above the means of the whole sample. The statement of action with the highest mean score above the whole sample was “the principal works with leadership team to

promote educational goals.” This statement of action had a mean difference of +.11. The statement of action with the second highest mean score above the whole sample was “the principal informs teachers of best practices.” This statement of action had a mean difference of +.10. The statement of action with the third highest mean score above the whole sample was “the principal identifies instructional weaknesses of teachers.” This statement of action also had a mean difference of +.06. The statement of action with the fourth highest mean score above the whole sample was “the principal ensures urgency and celebrate progress.” This statement of action had a mean difference of +.05. The statement of action with the fifth highest mean score above the whole sample was “the principal identifies instruction strengths of teachers.” This statement of action had a mean difference of +.04. The top statements of actions with the highest mean scores above the whole sample were actions were from all five categories.

The descriptive data for the novice teacher group compared to the whole sample also identified statements of actions of the principal as having the lowest level of importance to school improvement. The statement of action with the lowest mean score compared to the whole sample was “the principal monitors instructional and organizational systems.” This statement of action had a mean difference of -.13. The statement of action that had the second lowest mean scores compared to the whole sample was “the principal monitors teacher instructional time.” This statement of action had a mean difference of -.12. The statement of action with the third lowest mean score compared to the whole sample was “the principal exhibits school improvement skills.” This statement of action had a mean difference of -.10. These statements of actions were from school improvement and principal as instructional leader categories.

### Descriptive Data for the Middle Experienced Teachers

The descriptive data for the teachers with 8 to 14 years of experience show the range of responses starting with the minimum to the maximum. The mean and standard deviation for each statement of action are also included in the descriptive data for the middle experienced teachers as presented in Table 5.

Table 5

*Descriptive Data for Teachers with 8 to 14 Years Experience*

Statements of Action	Minimum	Maximum	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Creates a vision/mission connecting SIP goals	4.00	6.00	5.26	.94
Monitors instructional and organizational systems	1.00	6.00	5.43	.60
Provides teacher collaboration time	1.00	6.00	5.72	.73
Uses data to drive SIP goals	3.00	6.00	5.42	.84
Communicates the vision/mission	1.00	6.00	5.38	.72
Ensures teacher priorities connect to SIP goals	3.00	6.00	5.38	.79
Guides staff through SIP	3.00	6.00	5.45	.76
Knows the Indiana State Standards and instructional process	2.00	6.00	5.15	.88
Provides timely feedback on student achievement practices	4.00	6.00	5.55	.60
Monitors teacher instructional time	2.00	6.00	5.19	.81
Engages in instructional coaching with teachers	2.00	6.00	5.18	.81
Involves teachers who don't participate in meetings	3.00	6.00	5.03	1.00
Informs teachers of best practices	3.00	6.00	5.26	.76

Table 5 (continued)

Statements of Action	Minimum	Maximum	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Implements a multi-faceted professional development model	2.00	6.00	5.25	.97
Exhibits school improvement skills	3.00	6.00	5.33	.90
Exhibits school improvement skills	3.00	6.00	5.33	.90
Observes instructional and assessment practices and provides timely feedback	4.00	6.00	5.42	.78
Identifies instructional strengths of teachers	2.00	6.00	5.26	.83
Identifies instructional weaknesses of teachers and suggests professional development	3.00	6.00	5.15	.84
Ensures urgency and celebrates progress	3.00	6.00	5.32	.76
Meets regularly with leadership team to discuss SIP	4.00	6.00	5.44	.69
Shares current research and data on best practices	2.00	6.00	5.19	.74
Establishes SIP activities for teachers	3.00	6.00	5.26	.75
Ensures professional development relates to SIP goals	3.00	6.00	5.40	.76
Uses data to drive all practices	3.00	6.00	5.34	.79
Works with leadership team to promote educational goals	3.00	6.00	5.14	.93

The descriptive data for the middle experienced teacher group indicated the following actions of the principal as having the highest level of importance to school improvement. The statement of action that had the highest mean score for the middle experience teacher group was “the principal provides teachers with time to collaborate with each other” ( $M = 5.73$ ,  $SD = .73$ ). The second highest statement of action for the middle experienced teacher group was “the



principal provides timely feedback on student achievement practices” ( $M = 5.55, SD = .60$ ). The statement of action with the third highest mean score for the middle experienced teacher group was “the principal guides staff through the SIP” ( $M = 5.45, SD = .76$ ). The statement of action with the fourth highest mean score for the middle experienced teacher group was “the principal meets regularly with leadership team to discuss SIP” ( $M = 5.44, SD = .69$ ). The statement of action with the fifth highest mean score for the middle experienced teacher group was “the principal uses data to drive the SIP goals” ( $M = 5.42, SD = .85$ ). The top statements of actions with the highest mean scores were actions that were from all the categories with the exception of the sustaining school improvement category.

The sample of participants from the middle experienced teacher group responded to the following three actions of the principal as having the lowest level of importance to school improvement. The statement of action that had the lowest mean score for the middle experienced teacher group was “the principal involves teachers who don’t participate in discussions” ( $M = 5.03, SD = 1.00$ ). The second lowest statement of action for the middle experienced teacher group was “the principal works with leadership team to promote educational goals” ( $M = 5.14, SD = .93$ ). The statement of action with the third lowest mean score for the middle experienced teacher group was “the principal identifies instructional weaknesses of teachers and suggests professional development” ( $M = 5.15, SD = .84$ ). The bottom three statements of actions with the lowest mean scores were from categories of sustaining school improvement, creating a culture for learning and professional development and teacher supervision.

The descriptive data for the middle experienced teacher group compared to the whole sample identified different statements of actions of the principal as having the highest level of

importance to school improvement. The following are the top five statements of actions of the principal that were above the means of the whole sample. The statement of action with the highest mean score above the whole sample was “the principal ensures teacher priorities connect to SIP goals.” This statement of action had a mean difference of +.16. The statement of action with the second highest mean score above the whole sample was “the principal informs teachers of best practices.” This statement of action had a mean difference of +.15. There were three statements of actions that tied with the third highest mean score above the whole sample. The first that was tied was “the principal engages in instructional coaching with teachers.” This statement of action had a mean difference of +.11. The next statement of action with the third highest mean score above the whole sample was “the principal provides timely feedback on student achievement practices.” This statement of action also had a mean difference of +.11. The next statement of action with the third highest mean score above the whole sample was “the principal guides staff through SIP.” This statement of action also had a mean difference of +.11. The top statements of actions with the highest mean scores above the whole sample were actions were from three of the five categories. The categories were school improvement, principal as a leader, and creating a culture for learning.

The descriptive data for the middle experienced teacher group compared to the whole sample also identified statements of actions of the principal as having the lowest level of importance to school improvement. The statement of action with the lowest mean score compared to the whole sample was “the principal creates vision/mission that connects to SIP goals.” This statement of action had a mean difference of -.04. The statement of action that had the second lowest mean scores compared to the whole sample was “the principal uses data to drive SIP goals.” This statement of action had a mean difference of -.03. The statement of

action with the third lowest mean score compared to the whole sample was “the principal involves teachers who don’t participate in discussions.” This statement of action had a mean difference of -.02. These statements of actions were actions were from the school improvement and creating a culture for learning categories.

### **Descriptive Data for the Experienced Teachers**

The descriptive data for the teachers with 15 or more years of experience show the range of responses starting with the minimum to the maximum. The mean and standard deviation for each statement of action are also included in the descriptive data for the experienced teachers as presented in Table 6.

Table 6

#### *Descriptive Data for Experienced Teachers*

Statements of Action	Minimum	Maximum	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Creates a vision/mission connecting SIP goals	4.00	6.00	5.29	.79
Monitors instructional and organizational systems	1.00	6.00	5.18	.86
Provides teacher collaboration time	1.00	6.00	5.59	.76
Uses data to drive SIP goals	3.00	6.00	5.23	.83
Communicates the vision/mission	1.00	6.00	5.26	.75
Ensures teacher priorities connect to SIP goals	3.00	6.00	5.33	.65
Guides staff through SIP	3.00	6.00	5.18	.79
Knows the Indiana State Standards and instructional process	2.00	6.00	5.15	.76
Provides timely feedback on student achievement practices	4.00	6.00	5.29	.75
Monitors teacher instructional time	2.00	6.00	4.90	1.03

Table 6 (continued)

Statements of Action	Minimum	Maximum	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Engages in instructional coaching with teachers	2.00	6.00	4.85	1.04
Exhibits school improvement skills	3.00	6.00	5.23	.84
Implements a multi-faceted professional development model	2.00	6.00	5.04	1.03
Observes instructional and assessment practices and provides timely feedback	4.00	6.00	5.20	.88
Identifies instructional strengths of teachers	2.00	6.00	5.03	.91
Involves teachers who don't participate in meetings	3.00	6.00	4.81	1.14
Informs teachers of best practices	3.00	6.00	4.93	.84
Identifies instructional weaknesses of teachers and suggests professional development	3.00	6.00	5.01	.82
Ensures urgency and celebrates progress	3.00	6.00	5.02	.87
Meets regularly with leadership team to discuss SIP	4.00	6.00	5.25	.66
Shares current research and data on best practices	2.00	6.00	4.98	.90
Establishes SIP activities for teachers	3.00	6.00	5.07	.87
Ensures professional development relates to SIP goals	3.00	6.00	5.07	.93
Uses data to drive all practices	3.00	6.00	4.97	.93
Works with leadership team to promote educational goals	3.00	6.00	4.96	.89

The descriptive data for the experienced teacher group indicated the following actions of the principal as having the highest level of importance to school improvement. The statement of action that had the highest mean score for the experienced teacher group was “the principal provides teachers with time to collaborate with each other” ( $M = 5.59, SD = .76$ ). The second highest statement of action for the experienced teacher group was “the principal ensures teacher priorities connect to SIP goals” ( $M = 5.33, SD = .67$ ). The statement of action with the third highest mean score for the experienced teacher group was “the principal observes instructional and assessment practices and provides timely feedback” ( $M = 5.29, SD = .75$ ). The statement of action with the fourth highest mean score for the experienced teacher group was “the principal creates vision/mission that connects to SIP goals” ( $M = 5.29, SD = .79$ ). The statement of action with the fifth highest mean score for the experienced teacher group was “the principal communicates vision/mission” ( $M = 5.59, SD = .56$ ). The top statements of actions with the highest mean scores were actions that were from two of the five categories. The categories represented were school improvement and principal as a leader.

The sample of participants from the experienced teacher group responded to the following three actions of the principal as having the lowest level of importance to school improvement. The statement of action that had the lowest mean score for the experienced teachers’ group was “the principal involves teachers who don’t participate” ( $M = 4.80, SD = 1.14$ ). The second lowest statement of action for the experienced teacher group was “the principal engages in instructional coaching with teachers” ( $M = 4.85, SD = 1.03$ ). The statement of action with the third lowest mean score for the experienced teachers’ group was “the principal informs teachers of best practices” ( $M = 4.93, SD = .84$ ). The bottom three statements of actions with the lowest mean scores were all from the category of creating a culture for learning.

In the descriptive data for the experienced teacher group, the means for this group were all below the means of the whole sample. There were no statements of actions that scored higher than the means of the whole sample. The following are the statements of actions of the principal that were below the means of the whole sample. The statement of action with the lowest mean score compared to the whole sample was “the principal uses data to drive all practices.” This statement of action had a mean difference of  $-.27$ . The statement of action with the second lowest mean score compared to the whole sample was “the principal ensures urgency and celebrates progress.” This statement of action had a mean difference of  $-.24$ . The next three statements of actions had the third lowest mean scores compared to the whole sample. The first statement of action tied with the third lowest mean score compared to the whole sample was “the principal ensures professional development relates to SIP goals.” This statement of action had a mean difference of  $-.22$ . The next statement of action was “the principal exhibits school improvement skills.” This statement of action also had a mean difference of  $-.22$ . The next statement of action with the third lowest mean score compared to the whole sample was “the principal monitors teacher instructional time.” This statement of action also had a mean difference of  $-.22$ . These statements of actions were from four of the five categories. The categories represented in this data set are school improvement, principal as a leader, professional development and teacher supervision, and sustaining school improvement.

### **Hypotheses Testing**

The first null hypothesis examined whether there was a significant difference between teachers’ and principals’ perceptions of the leadership actions that increase teachers’ implementation of school improvement initiatives regarding five categories: school improvement, principal as instructional leader, creating a culture for learning, professional

development and teacher supervision, and sustaining school improvement. To answer this question the data were analyzed using a one-way MANOVA test. A one-way MANOVA was the methodology due to multiple dependent variables being examined for significant difference on at least two groups. The multiple dependent variables were the school improvement categories that were school improvement, principal as a leader, professional development and teacher supervision, and sustaining school improvement.

When looking at the assumptions of a one-way MANOVA, I first looked to see if there were any outliers. To determine if outliers existed, examination of box plots occurred. With no data points occurring exceeding  $1.5 SD$  above or below the box plot, it was determined that the data were free from outliers.

The assumption of normality was examined using the Shapiro-Wilk test for each dependent variable. This assumption seeks to determine whether the dependent variables found within this test is equal to a normal distribution. The five categories that served as the dependent variables were normally distributed for each independent variable group as determined by a non-significant Shapiro-Wilk test with all tests having  $p > .05$ .

Within a one-way MANOVA one typically likes to see that dependent variables are moderately correlated with one another. The assumption of no multicollinearity looks to ensure the dependent variables found within this test are not too heavily correlated as to impact one's test results. This assumption was tested using Pearson correlation coefficient. Ideally, one would like to see Pearson correlation coefficients somewhere between .3 and .7. All Pearson correlation coefficients among the five dependent variables were found within the .3 and .7 range, thus indicating this assumption has been met.

Within a one-way MANOVA it is important that a linear relationship between the dependent variables and each group of the independent variables be linear in nature or else the power of this test will be reduced. To test this assumption, a scatterplot matrix for each group of the independent variables was run. A linear relationship for the dependent variables on each level of the independent variables was determined because the scatterplot matrix demonstrated data points approximating a straight line. This assumption was met.

The one-way MANOVA also requires checking for multivariate outliers to determine whether there are unusual combinations of values for the five dependent variables. This was examined using the Mahalanobis distance to determine whether any cases could be viewed as a multivariate outlier. The results indicated no Mahalanobis distance that exceeded the critical value on chi-square distribution with 5 degrees of freedom. There was no evidence of multivariate outliers within the data as all Mahalanobis distances had  $p > .05$ .

The assumption of homogeneity of variances and covariances looks to ensure that the one-way MANOVA has similar variances and covariances. This assumption was tested using a Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices. There was no evidence of violation for this assumption with a non-significant Box's test with  $p = .168$ .

The results of the one-way MANOVA for the first research question that examined whether there was significant difference between teachers' and principals' perceptions of the leadership actions that increase teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives regarding five categories—school improvement, principal as instructional leader, creating a culture for learning, professional development and teacher supervision, and sustaining school improvement—indicated that there was not a significant difference,  $F(5, 252) = 2.115, p = .064$ ,



partial  $n^2 = .042$ . The Pillai's trace statistic was utilized due to unequal sample sizes among the two groups, the teachers and the principals.

The second null hypothesis examined whether there were significant differences among novice teachers, experienced teachers, and principals in their perceptions regarding the leadership actions that increase teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives regarding five categories: school improvement, principal as instructional leader, creating a culture for learning, professional development and teacher supervision, and sustaining school improvement. To answer this question the data were analyzed using a one-way MANOVA test. A one-way MANOVA was the methodology due to multiple dependent variables being examined for significant difference on at least two groups.

When looking at the assumptions of a one-way MANOVA, one first looks to see if there are any outliers. To determine if outliers existed, examination of box plots occurred. With no data points occurring exceeding  $1.5 SD$  above or below the box plot, it was determined that the data were free from outliers.

The assumption of normality was examined using the Shapiro-Wilk test for each dependent variable. This assumption seeks to determine whether the dependent variables found within this test is equal to a normal distribution. The five categories that served as the dependent variables were normally distributed for each independent variable group as determined by a non-significant Shapiro-Wilk test with all tests having  $p > .05$ .

Within a one-way MANOVA, one typically likes to see that dependent variables are moderately correlated with one another. The assumption of no multicollinearity looks to ensure the dependent variables found within this test were not too heavily correlated as to impact test results. This assumption was tested using the Pearson correlation coefficient. Ideally, one would

like to see Pearson correlation coefficients fall somewhere between .3 and .7. All Pearson correlation coefficients among the five dependent variables were found within the .3 and .7 range, thus indicating this assumption was met.

Within a one-way MANOVA it is important that a linear relationship between the dependent variables and each group of the independent variables be linear in nature or else the power of this test will be reduced. To test this assumption, a scatterplot matrix for each group of the independent variable was run. A linear relationship for the dependent variables on each level of the independent variables was determined because the scatterplot matrix demonstrated data points approximating a straight line. This assumption was met.

The one-way MANOVA also requires checking for multivariate outliers to determine whether there are unusual combinations of values for the five dependent variables. This was examined using the Mahalanobis distance to determine whether any cases could be viewed as a multivariate outlier. The results indicated no Mahalanobis distance that exceeded the critical value on chi-square distribution with 5 degrees of freedom. There was no evidence of multivariate outliers within the data as all Mahalanobis distances had  $p > .05$ .

The assumption of homogeneity of variances and covariances looks to ensure that the one-way MANOVA has similar variances and covariances. This was tested using Box's test of equality of covariance matrices. There was no evidence of violation for this assumption with a non-significant Box's test,  $p = .168$ .

The Pallai's trace statistic was utilized due to unequal sample sizes among the three groups: the novice teachers, experience teachers, and the principals. The results of the one-way MANOVA that examined whether significant differences existed on the five dependent variables

among novice teachers, experienced teachers, and building principals was significant,  $F(10, 338) = 2.149$ ,  $p = .021$ , partial  $n^2 = .060$ .

With a significant MANOVA result, a post-hoc test for each dependent variable was run to determine where significant differences among the three groups existed. The assumption for univariate tests were met except for the assumption of homogeneity on the school improvement composite score dependent variable due to a significant Levene's test of equality of error variance,  $p = .030$ . Due to this violation, a Games-Howell post-hoc test was run because it does not assume equal variances. The other four dependent variables utilized a Tukey HSD post-hoc test as all Levene's tests were non-significant,  $p > .05$ .

Within the school improvement composite score, principals ( $M = 5.62$ ,  $SD = .39$ ) were significantly higher than experienced teachers ( $M = 5.36$ ,  $SD = .51$ ). The Games-Howell post-hoc test was significant,  $p = .006$ . All other comparisons found within the Games-Howell post-hoc test were non-significant,  $p > .05$ .

Within the principal as instructional leader composite score, the principals ( $M = 5.49$ ,  $SD = .44$ ) scored significantly higher than the experienced teachers ( $M = 5.23$ ,  $SD = .54$ ). The Tukey HSD was significant for the test,  $p = .012$ . All other comparisons found within the Tukey HSD post-hoc were non-significant,  $p > .05$ .

Within the creating a culture of learning composite score, the principals ( $M = 5.32$ ,  $SD = .43$ ) scored significantly higher than the experienced teachers ( $M = 5.09$ ,  $SD = .57$ ). The Tukey HSD was significant for the test,  $p = .040$ . All other comparisons found within the Tukey HSD post-hoc were non-significant,  $p > .05$ .

Within the professional development and teacher supervision composite score, the principals ( $M = 5.50$ ,  $SD = .41$ ) scored significantly higher than the experienced teachers ( $M =$

5.15,  $SD = .60$ ). The Tukey HSD was significant for the test,  $p = .001$ . All other comparisons found within the Tukey HSD post-hoc were non-significant,  $p > .05$ .

Within the sustaining school improvement composite score, both the principals ( $M = 5.40$ ,  $SD = .46$ ) and novice teachers ( $M = 5.37$ ,  $SD = .46$ ) scored significantly higher than the experienced teachers ( $M = 5.10$ ,  $SD = .58$ ). The Tukey HSD was significant for both tests,  $p = .004$  and  $p = .010$ , respectively. All other comparisons found within the Tukey HSD post-hoc were non-significant,  $p > .05$ .

### Summary

The results indicated overall there were no significant differences between teachers' and principals' perceptions of the leadership actions that increase teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives regarding five categories: school improvement, principal as instructional leader, creating a culture for learning, professional development and teacher supervision, and sustaining school improvement. The inferential testing indicated that there was a significant difference between novice teachers, experienced teachers, and principals in their perceptions regarding the leadership actions that increase teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives regarding the five categories: school improvement, principal as instructional leader, creating a culture for learning, professional development and teacher supervision, and sustaining school improvement. In all improvement categories, the principals rated the role of the principal significantly higher than the experienced teachers. The novice teachers rated the role of the principal as significantly higher than the experienced teachers in the improvement category of sustaining school improvement. The study provided me with information to allow for conclusions on perceived leadership actions that increase teachers'

implementation of school improvement initiatives. Chapter 5 presents conclusions, implications, and recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is organized into eight sections: a summary, limitations of the study, results, discussion, conclusions, practical recommendations, and recommendations for future research. The dissertation is completed with concluding remarks.

#### **Summary**

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine whether there was a significant difference between teachers' and principals' perceptions of the leadership actions that increase teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives regarding five categories: school improvement, principal as instructional leader, creating a culture for learning, professional development and teacher supervision, and sustaining school improvement. This research also looked to determine whether there was a significant difference between the perceptions of novice teachers, experienced teachers and principals regarding the leadership actions that increase teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives regarding same five categories: school improvement, principal as instructional leader, creating a culture for learning, professional development and teacher supervision, and sustaining school improvement.

Schools have been challenged to improve in all academic areas and forced to ensure the success of all students as stated in No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). These improvements have emphasized the role of the school principal as

instructional leader. The research presented by the Wallace Foundation (2012) has shown that efforts to improve education relate directly to the quality of leadership provided by the school principal. This research indicated the role of leadership in improving learning is second only to teaching among school-related factors in its impact on student learning (Wallace Foundation, 2012). The research from Action in Excellence showed that the one determinant of excellence in the schools is the leadership of the individual school principal (Hunt, 1983).

Sebring and Bryk (2000) posited that “the behaviors and practices of the school principal have influence on all aspects of the learning community, which leads to school success” (p. 441). School leadership has become a priority in our educational policies and has been widely accepted as a key factor in improving school performance by developing and promoting a positive academic school climate, by inspiring and motivating teachers, and influencing teacher and leadership practices (Pont, Nusche, & Moorman, 2008). As the literature stated, the daily actions and activities of the principal reflect the pervasive focus of school improvement and instructional leadership. The role of the principal today is viewed as both manager and instructional leader. Due to the increasing pressures of accountability systems and the need to improve student data, principals have taken on different roles and responsibilities than the principals of the past.

Consistent with the purpose of this study, the following research questions guided the investigation of this study:

1. Is there a difference between teachers’ and principal perceptions of leadership actions that increase teachers’ implementation of school improvement initiatives regarding the five categories: school improvement, principal as instructional leader, creating a culture for learning, professional development and teacher supervision, and sustaining school improvement?

2. Is there a difference between novice teachers, experienced teachers, and principals in their perceptions regarding the leadership actions that increase teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives regarding the five categories: school improvement, principal as instructional leader, creating a culture for learning, professional development and teacher supervision, and sustaining school improvement?

Research substantiates the impact of the principal's role as an instructional leader of the school. This study attempted to provide insight on how the role of the principal and his or her leadership actions influence school improvement and the implementation of school improvement initiatives.

Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) stated that school leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to student achievement. They also indicated that leadership effects are usually greatest where and when they are needed most. They further suggested that principals must create an environment that fosters change. The vast research that has been conducted on the leadership practices that impact student achievement aided in the formation of the five dependent variables found within the study. Chapter 2 of this study emphasized the importance of the identified leadership practices that increase teacher implementation and student achievement. Levine and Lezotte (1990) reported that the principal is responsible for the level of implementation of school improvement initiatives. The five dependent variables are referred to as school improvement categories by me. The school improvement categories are labeled school improvement, principal as instructional leader, creating a culture for learning, professional development and teacher supervision, and sustaining school improvement. I named the



categories by grouping the common practices of principals that are necessary and lead to school improvement.

The school improvement dependent variable was highly supported by the research from Schlechty (1997), which stated that improvement in schools is usually motivated by the conditions needed for improvement. Schlechty's research emphasized the role of the principal is imperative to school improvement. The Principal as Instructional Leader dependent variable was created from using the research of Marzano et al. (2005), who stated that leadership qualities impact the effectiveness and success of organizations. The creating a culture for learning dependent variable was reinforced by the research from Fullan (2001), who stated that school cultures are not neutral; they either promote or impede student and teacher development. The professional development and teacher supervision dependent variable was shaped by the research from DuFour (2001), who explained that the most significant contribution a principal can make in developing others is creating an appropriate professional development model. DuFour suggested that professional development plays the largest role in impacting teaching and learning. The sustaining school improvement dependent variable was framed by the research from Reeves (2002), who specified the importance of replicating the antecedents of excellence, the leadership and teacher actions that worked in order to sustain school improvement.

The information in this study will benefit district administrators, professional development consultants, higher education professors, school administrators, and teachers. By examining the data in this research, I identified actions that the principals deem as important to increase school improvement and student achievement.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The limitations of this research study were discussed in Chapter 1. After completion of the research, there were additional limitations discovered through the data collection and analysis process.

This study has limits on generalizability because the research comprised only public schools in Marion County, Indiana. Public schools outside of Marion County, Indiana, charter schools, private schools, and alternative schools were not included in the research. The findings of this study cannot be generalized to other areas in Indiana, other regions of the United States, or other countries of the world. Data from just one geographical area cannot be generalized to another geographical area due to variables such as work conditions, student achievement scores, school mandates, school climate, the culture of schools, teacher and principal dynamics, and other influences and factors.

An additional limitation of the study was the assumption that the teachers and principals self-reported the items in the survey honestly and without bias. There was no manner in which to verify the accuracy of the responses. It is an assumption that the timing of the survey and the implementation of the new teacher evaluation systems impacted the sample size. The participation of districts, principals, and teachers were not fully represented based on the size of districts and schools in Marion County, Indiana. The small sample size of the principals also limited confidence in the findings for the principal group.

### **Results**

The findings of this study were presented in the previous chapter. The study investigated the leadership actions that principals and teachers perceive as increasing teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives. Two questions were addressed:

1. Is there a difference between teachers' and principal perceptions of leadership actions that increase teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives regarding the five categories: school improvement, principal as instructional leader, creating a culture for learning, professional development and teacher supervision, and sustaining school improvement?
2. Is there a difference between novice teachers, experienced teachers, and principals in their perceptions regarding the leadership actions that increase teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives regarding the five categories: school improvement, principal as instructional leader, creating a culture for learning, professional development and teacher supervision, and sustaining school improvement?

The results of this study indicated that there was not a significant difference between the teachers' and principals' perceptions of leadership actions that increase teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives. However, when looking at the teachers based on experience, the principals' composite score was significantly higher than experienced teachers' score in the following dependent variables: school improvement, principal as instructional leader, creating a culture for learning, professional development and teacher supervision. the sustaining school improvement composite scores for both principals and novice teachers were significantly higher than experienced teachers.

Throughout the inferential data there was no significant difference as indicated from the results of the Null Hypothesis 1 that stated, "There is no significant difference between teachers' and principal perceptions of leadership actions that increase teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives regarding the five categories: School improvement, principal as

instructional leader, creating a culture for learning, professional development and teacher supervision, and sustaining school improvement.”

When the teachers were split into novice and experienced categories significant differences for all five dependent variables were found. Principals rated their role in the five areas as significantly higher than experienced teachers. Within the sustaining school improvement, novice teachers rated the leadership actions as significantly higher than the experienced teachers.

### **Discussion**

Due to the increasing pressures of accountability systems and the need to improve student data, principals have taken on different roles and responsibilities than the principals of the past. The accountability measures have led to higher expectations and greater focus on student achievement for all in the system. Urban school principals have the challenge of being held accountable to turning around low-performing schools. Their focus must be primarily on instruction and improvement and not just on management and other administrative issues. The role of the principal has shifted in the 21st century. The whole idea of instruction being the heart of the principal's job is new to many educators even though there has been a plethora of research conducted that has found the link between school leadership and student achievement. School leaders are the driving force of sustainable educational initiatives and improvements (Fullan, 2001). Success starts with switching from a managerial style of leadership to a leadership style that embraces a common purpose to increase student achievement. Principals are empowered to be the instructional leaders of their schools due to several accountability measures.

The results in this research demonstrate that principals perceive their role as significant in increasing teachers' expertise and the implementation of school improvement initiatives in urban

schools in Indianapolis, Indiana. One accountability measure for the state of Indiana that requires principals to identify effective instruction and give specific and timely feedback on instructional practices is the Indiana Teacher Evaluation—Public Law 90 (Indiana Senate Enrolled Act 001, 2010). Principals in the state are required through Public Law 90 to guide their teachers to improved teaching performance. Public Law 90 (Indiana Senate Enrolled Act 001, 2010) requires an annual evaluation for every teacher, regardless of experience. Feedback on teachers' performance is also a required component of the Indiana teacher evaluation model. The evaluations must include student growth data and should be focused on student improvement. Public Law 90 requires a thorough evaluation system that includes multiple measures of teacher performance in order to empower teachers to perform at the highest level of teaching. The implementation of the four levels of evaluation in the required model of Public Law 90 (Indiana Senate Enrolled Act 001, 2010) helps support and improves the principal's instructional leadership as well as strengthens the principal's capacity in instruction, supervision, evaluation, and teacher development.

Although student growth is the second accountability measure for gauging teacher effectiveness, the link between teaching performance and student achievement has led to the most aggressive accountability measure in the state, the labeling of schools by assigning them letter grades with ratings from A to F (Indiana Department of Education, 2011b). Student achievement on state-mandated assessments and school performance indicators in non-academic areas, such as student attendance and discipline data, determine a school's grade. With this accountability measure in mind, principals must shift their leadership focus to improving teacher instructional practices in order to improve student achievement.

The results in this research illustrated that experienced teachers perceive the role of the principal as not as significant in increasing teachers' expertise and the implementation of school improvement initiatives in urban schools in Indianapolis, Indiana. There are several factors that are possibly impacting the experienced teachers' perceptions of their principals as instructional leader. The changes in the expectations of teachers as it relates to accountability systems such as the implementation of the compensation model could have a negative impact on experienced teachers' perceptions of their principals. Teachers may feel that the principal does not really know what is actually going on in their classrooms and ultimately with their instruction. They might have legitimate suspicions of principal favoritism. The notion of data analysis in evaluations then linked to a compensation model faces stiff opposition from teacher organizations that contend that this practice could lead to unfair practices of the principal. One of the concerns of unfair practices of the principal is that there is no clear definition of what constitutes a *good teacher* and even with compensation criteria principals will still be subjective in their rating of teachers.

The Indiana evaluation system requires school leaders to spend the majority of their time in classrooms and to be honest and accurate in their feedback to teachers (Indiana Senate Enrolled Act, 2010). This requires teachers to be open to a level of feedback that many experienced teacher have never received before and they must be willing to improve their practice based on that feedback. This shift in leadership practice may have influenced how the experienced teachers perceive the actions of the principal when it comes to the instructional leadership of the principal.

Many improvement models require an increase in professional development for teachers. The experienced teachers have not always experienced on-going, job-embedded professional

development. The days of just let me teach are over! Most experienced teachers consider the principal's role in the school as a manager and not as an instructional leader. This mindset may have affected the experienced teachers' views of what principals' responsibilities are in running the school.

This day in education has required the experienced teachers to see and experience many changes in what is required of them such as the potential implementation of the Common Core state standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010), the implementation of the 90-minute reading and math blocks, the implementation of student interventions, the reductions in funding, the increases in class sizes, and the cuts in benefits may have influenced how they perceive the leadership actions of the principal that increase teacher implementation of school improvement initiatives.

The results in this research highlighted that novice teachers perceive the role of the principal as important in increasing teachers' expertise and the implementation of school improvement initiatives in urban schools in Indianapolis, Indiana. It is assumed that best practices in instruction are more current in novice teachers than in experienced teachers, so their mindset of the principal's role in increasing teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives may be more positive than experienced teachers. Another factor impacting the data in this research may be that the novice teachers have not experienced all the reforms and changes in education that have caused some of the frustrations that the experienced teachers may have with education today. It can also be presumed that novice teachers respect and value principals. The relationship between the principal and novice teacher is usually a tight bond. In many cases, the principal has been a mentor, coach, and developer of the novice teacher, which fosters an attitude of appreciation and admiration for the role of the principal.

There are many factors that contribute to educators' perceptions of the leadership actions that are necessary for school improvement. However, one's perception is one's reality!

### **Conclusions**

Considering the data in this study and the previous relevant research presented in Chapter 2, increasing student achievement is the ultimate goal of all educators. This study supports the need for principals to have a knowledge and understanding of what it means to be an instructional leader and communicate that knowledge and those actions to their staff. School improvement efforts must not only address teacher practices but include a focus of improving leadership capacities. Principals have the potential to influence student achievement through their leadership actions as well as impact the actions of teachers' implementation of best practices. School leaders have the capacity to positively or negatively influence the practices of their teachers. Leadership behaviors influence student improvement through their teachers (Blasé & Blasé, 1999). This study also reinforces the need for principals to embrace the concepts of collaboration, shared or distributed leadership, and professional learning communities (DuFour et al., 2004). District leaders should consider the development and training of principals in leadership actions that impact and increase the implementation of school improvement initiatives.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This quantitative study addressed the research questions posed in Chapter 1. Future research is recommended based on the findings of this study. I recommend that this study be replicated through private and charter schools to obtain a broader sample of principal and teacher perceptions. I recommend that further research should utilize more than one county in the state. The random selection of districts in scattered geographic areas would add to the fidelity of the



study. This action would provide for more accurate generalization of the findings. I also recommend that a future researcher investigate the socioeconomic conditions and the size of the schools in a study to determine if the conditions effect the teachers' perception of the actions of principals that impact school improvement initiatives.

Another recommendation is to conduct this study each year for 10 years to determine if perceptions change based on mandates and policies in education. To enhance this study a future researcher could conduct this study in another urban district in a similar county of a different state to compare the perceptions of principals and teachers different states or conduct this study in all urban districts in the state to significantly increase the population of the study.

I also recommend the following:

- replicate the study and add the teacher's teaching assignment and length of certification in their current field to create a "qualification" measure for the teacher to the current study design,
- replicate the study and add the student test scores for the school,
- replicate the study and add the principal's demographic information such as years as a leader, awards and level of education to the current study design, and
- replicate the study and add the level of principal pay and teacher pay as compared to peers in school districts across the state to the study design.

A future researcher may consider conducting this study in a suburban or rural county in the state to examine what principals and teachers perceive as important leadership actions that increase teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives. A future study could utilize a mixed study method using quantitative and qualitative measures that examine what

teachers and principals perceive as important leadership actions that increase teachers' implementation of school improvement initiatives.

### **Concluding Remarks**

In the era of school improvement and accountability, leadership matters! Being an effective building manager used to be good enough for school principals. The principal of today must be the teacher of teachers and the leaders for student learning. The principal has a significant role in increasing teacher expertise in schools. As Leithwood et al. (2004) stated, "leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school" (p. 7). Leadership is the catalyst to school improvement. Now more than ever schools, especially urban schools, need great leaders. As the reform movements and accountability systems continue impact our schools more eyes will be on the principal. Knowing the increased demands and challenges that principals face, there must be job-embedded training and on-going support. As cited by Sparks (1984), when we talk about school improvement we're talking about people improvement. That's the only way to improve schools. We must help our principals improve in their leadership actions that lead to school improvement, so we can help our schools improve.

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## APPENDIX A: SURVEY

## Survey Directions:

This survey will approximately take 10 minutes to complete. There are 25 questions that relate to principals' actions that are necessary for school improvement.

Please take a few minutes to read each statement and mark the answer that best fit the statement. Think about each specific skill statement as you respond. Please do not generalize and respond to a specific item based upon your overall perception of your principal's ability. All responses will be reported as a group, not individual, data. Please be honest and candid in your responses.

This study recognizes the fact that teachers work more closely with principals than any other professional group in the school. In addition to this, the teachers' perceptions are particularly important, because perception is one's reality.

For each item, mark the number on the answer sheet which corresponds to leadership actions that are deemed necessary for school improvement. Please use the following 6-point scale as the measure of effectiveness:

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

1. Create a vision and/or mission based on a focused set of annual school improvement goals that are specific, measurable, rigorous, and timely
2. Ensure instructional and organizational systems are regularly monitored and modified, as needed, to support student performance

3. Encourage and provide teachers with time to collaborate, analyze data, plan, reflect, and problem solve in order to enhance student learning
4. Use data on student performance when developing the school improvement goals
5. Communicate the school's vision and/or mission effectively to members of the school community in a variety of ways, such as in classrooms, newsletters, and conversations with teachers and students
6. Ensure that the priorities of teachers are consistent with the goals and directions of the school
7. Guide the staff through the school improvement process and the implementation of practices
8. Demonstrate an extensive knowledge of the Indiana State Standards and the instructional process, and can provide assistance and resources to staff in their use
9. Provide prompt and actionable feedback to teachers on effective use of instructional time aimed at improving student outcomes based on observations and student performance data
10. Monitors whether teachers efficiently uses instructional time to maximize student learning
11. Engage in coaching to encourage teachers to try new methods of instruction to improve teaching and learning
12. Exhibit the skills necessary to lead a continuous school improvement process focused on the school improvement goals
13. Involve teachers in the discussion during meetings who might not otherwise participate
14. Inform teachers of new developments and ideas in education

15. Implement a professional development model that provides learning opportunities aligned to professional needs based on student academic performance data and the school improvement plan; the model includes all teachers
16. Participate in the observation and assessment of classroom instruction, including teaching strategies and student learning and specific feedback is given in a timely manner
17. Point out specific strengths in teacher's instructional practices in post-observation feedback then suggest how the teacher can assist with the professional development of other staff members
18. Point out specific weaknesses in teacher's instructional practices in post-observation feedback and then suggest a model for professional development
19. Ensure the culture of urgency is created and sustained by celebrating progress while maintaining a focus on continued improvement
20. Create and meet with leadership team comprised of teachers to discuss school improvement initiatives
21. Build awareness and knowledge of teacher leaders of recent research and data on instructional best-practices
22. Promote opportunities for teachers to participate in instructional improvement activities such as programs and curricular planning, and monitoring of student outcomes
23. Ensure that professional development activities attended by teachers are consistent with the school improvement goals
24. Use various forms of data to make changes in curriculum, professional development initiatives, staffing, and teaching and leadership practices

25. Work with the leadership team to promote the development of educational goals and objectives which reflect societal needs and trends



## APPENDIX B: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD EXEMPTION LETTER

*Institutional Review Board*

Terre Haute, Indiana 47809  
 812-237-3092  
 Fax 812-237-3092

DATE: February 25, 2013

TO: Nicole Law, Bachelor's in Science in Elementary Education and Master's in Science in Educational Administration and Supervision

FROM: Indiana State University Institutional Review Board

STUDY TITLE: [409582-2] THE PRINCIPAL'S ROLE IN INCREASING TEACHER IMPLEMENTATION OF EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES IN MARION COUNTY, INDIANA: AN ANALYSIS OF KEY STRATEGIES FOR PRINCIPALS IN SUSTAINING SCHOOL CHANGE

SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS

DECISION DATE: February 25, 2013

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category # 2

Thank you for your submission of Revision materials for this research study. The Indiana State University Institutional Review Board has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations (45 CFR 46). You do not need to submit continuation requests or a completion report. Should you need to make modifications to your protocol or informed consent forms that do not fall within the exempt categories, you will have to reapply to the IRB for review of your modified study.

**Internet Research:** Although your study is exempt from IRB review, if you are using an internet platform to collect data on human subjects ISU has specific policies about internet research that you should follow to the best of your ability and capability. Please review Section L. on Internet Research in the IRB Policy Manual.

**Informed Consent:** All ISU faculty, staff, and students conducting human subjects research within the "exempt" category are still ethically bound to follow the basic ethical principles of the Belmont Report: a) respect for persons; 2) beneficence; and 3) justice. These three principles are best reflected in the practice of obtaining informed consent.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Vicki Hammen within IRBNet by clicking on the study title on the "My Projects" screen and the "Send Project Mail" button on the left side of the "New Project Message" screen. I wish you well in completing your study.

## APPENDIX C: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

January 24, 2013

Nicole Law  
8803 Birkdale Circle  
Indianapolis, IN 46234

Dear Dr. Butts,

I am currently pursuing my PhD in Education Administration and Supervision from Indiana State University. I will be conducting my research in eight school districts in Marion County. With this in mind, I seek your permission to conduct some of my research in the M.S.D. of Wayne Township.

I would be grateful for your permission and support of this study. The focus of the research is to identify teacher perceptions and principal perceptions of leadership actions that lead to an increase in implementation of school improvement initiatives. My study is entitled, "The Principal's Role In Increasing Teacher Implementation of Effective Instructional Practices in Marion County, Indiana: An Analysis of Key Strategies for Principals Sustaining School Change".

This study has been approved by my committee members who are professors at Indiana State University. I am awaiting exempt determination from the Indiana State University Institutional Review Board. My faculty advisor is Dr. Robert Boyd and my committee members are Dr. Terry McDaniel and Dr. Susan Page. Results of the research will contribute to the research base addressing key leadership actions that lead to implementation of school improvement initiatives.

The study will require the completion an electronic survey, which should require no more than ten to fifteen minutes of participants time. The responses will be anonymous and no information identifying participants will be collected. All responses, per Indiana State University guidelines and practices, will be kept strictly confidential and non-accessible to anyone other than the researcher. No individuals will be identified in any reports on the research. The purpose of the survey is to describe the leadership actions that are deemed important by teachers and principals. The survey solicits strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, disagree, somewhat disagree, and strongly disagree responses.

Please indicate your approval of this research being conducted in the M.S.D of Wayne Township via a scanned email attachment of the document.

I appreciate your consideration of my study being conducted in your school district. I look forward to your response of my request.

Professionally,

Nicole Law

Researcher: Mrs. Nicole Law

APPENDIX D: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

**The Metropolitan School District of Wayne Township**

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Email: jeff.butts@wayne.k12.in.us

Education Center  
1220 South High School Road  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46241



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**Jeffrey K. Butts, Ph.D.**  
Superintendent of Schools

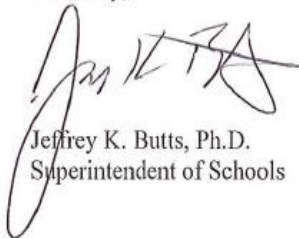
January 30, 2013

To Whom It May Concern,

Study Title: "The Principal's Role In Increasing Teacher Implementation of Effective Instructional Practices in Marion County, Indiana: An Analysis of Key Strategies for Principals Sustaining School Change".

I, Dr. Jeffrey K. Butts, as the Superintendent and Chief Executive Officer of the M.S.D. of Wayne Township, give permission to Mrs. Nicole Law to conduct this research in the M.S.D. of Wayne Township.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey K. Butts, Ph.D.  
Superintendent of Schools