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A Multiple Case Study of Principals' Instructional Leadership in "Level 5" Schools of Excellence for Improvement

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A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY OF PRINCIPALS' INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP
IN "LEVEL 5"
SCHOOLS OF EXCELLENCE FOR IMPROVEMENT

A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY OF PRINCIPALS' INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP IN
"LEVEL 5"
SCHOOLS OF EXCELLENCE FOR IMPROVEMENT

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

By

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ABSTRACT

After 28 years of federal and state policy development, regional and local initiatives and various budgetary appropriations, the status of American schools continues to decline. Lyne (2001) reported that Finland, Japan and Korea had the world's highest literacy in reading, math, and science, while the United States ranked 15 in reading literacy, 19 in mathematical literacy, and 14 in scientific literacy. Many factors may contribute to the decline in America's schools. However, with the prevailing economic decline in the United States schools continue to struggle with student achievement, especially students with who are low socio-economic. In addition, to meeting the needs of this perverse challenge schools are expected to ensure that all students learn and become proficient by 2014.

This qualitative multiple case study explores the instructional leadership behaviors of three principals of elementary schools in Arkansas with a percentage of 50 or above low socio-economic students, in three different geographical regions, and with a student population of 500 or more. In addition, the three schools were ranked "Level 5" schools of excellence for improvement in 2008. Data were collected through structured in-depth interviews with the principals and teachers to discover the instructional behaviors for leadership. Hoy and Hoy's (2006, 2009) principals' instructional leadership behaviors were used as the theoretical framework: 1) academic excellence, 2) instructional excellence, 3) instructional improvement, 4) the providing of support, 5) intellectual leaders, and 6) recognition and celebration of academic excellence. This research study describes how the principals' instructional leadership behaviors are articulated in the schools to promote academic excellence in schools with similar factors of poverty.

This dissertation is approved for recommendation
to the Graduate Council.

Doctoral Dissertation Director:

Dr. Carleton Holt

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DEDICATION

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"Dare to Dream"

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Status of the Issue

Public schools across the country continue to struggle to develop students that are prepared for the academic requirements that the 21st century demands. Educational reform as a national agenda can be traced to President Reagan in 1983 and President Clinton in 2000 and continues with President Obama today. *A Nation at Risk* (1983, April) and *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB, 2002) suggested that America's deteriorating educational system impairs the country's economic prosperity, its social fabric, and ultimately its national security. After 28 years of federal and state policy development, regional and local initiatives and various budgetary appropriations, the status of American schools continues to decline. Lyne (2001) reported that Finland, Japan and Korea had the world's highest literacy in reading, math, and science, while the United States ranked 15 in reading literacy, 19 in mathematical literacy, and 14 in scientific literacy. In 2005, Lagorio (2005) suggested that, despite the financial and legislative support of school reform, America's educational slide persists as its global peers make gains in student achievement and school graduation. Acknowledging that "the achievement gap is widening, with U.S. students falling farther and farther behind their foreign counterparts in science and math", President Barrack Obama suggested that school reform is an "economic issue when countries that out-educate us today will out-compete America tomorrow" (United Press International, 2010, p. 1). To understand the complex amalgam that threatens public education requires looking beyond the school system to the various socio-economic factors that influence academic success. These factors are discussed below.

Poverty

Jensen (2009) identified six types of poverty: that include situational, generational, absolute, relative, urban, and rural. The socio-economic index for poverty is defined as a family of four earning less than \$21,000 a year. Other indicators of poverty are malnutrition, poor health care, and exposure to environmental toxin, inadequate child care, homelessness, birth weight, lead poisoning, and student mobility (Wikipedia, 2009). According to Stanley and Plucker (2008) students from low-income families are less likely to complete high school than their peers. Also, graduation rates were lowest in urban and rural areas with high concentration of poverty. Jensen (2009) stated that urban poverty happens in metropolitan areas with a population of at least 50,000 and rural poverty happens in non-metropolitan areas with populations below 50,000. Poverty has an impact on the education of students that are identified as low-income (Stanley, & Plucker, 2008).

Schools and Poverty

In 2006, of the nearly 37 million Americans living in poverty, 12.8 million were under the age of 18 (Lyon, 2010). In Arkansas, the number of children living in poverty continues to increase and the state exceeds the national average for children living in poverty. In 2008, 24.9 percent of Arkansas children lived in poverty as compared to 22.6 percent in 1979 (Lyon, 2010). According to the *National Center for Education Statistics*, the 2000 census report stated that 52.9 percent of Arkansas' student population is low-income. The student poverty rate report (Federal Education Budget Project, FEBP, 2007) cited that Arkansas ranks 3rd in student poverty and Lyon (2010) reported that Arkansas' poverty rate for children is higher than the poverty rate for adults.

Johnson, Howley, and Howley's (2002) Arkansas study revealed smaller schools performed better and were more effective against poverty when located in small school districts. The study also revealed that poverty dampened student achievement most in larger districts. In addition, the study was a direct contradiction to the prevailing thinking that consolidation of smaller schools and districts leads to better outcomes for students and achievement.

School Assessments

Equipping and meeting the diverse student population for the 21st century and beyond has been a challenge for America's educational system (Mulford, Kendall, Ewington, Edmunds, Kendall, & Silins, 2008; Symonds, 2001; Wagner, Kegan, Lahey, Lemons, Garnier, Helsing, Howell, & Rasmussen, 2006). In response to this challenge, NCLB has forced schools to provide accountability systems for student achievement. Compliance with NCLB requires that all student groups must be proficient or on grade level in reading and math by 2014 (2002, NCLB). Since the 1983 Arkansas Supreme Court's *Lake View* case found the state's school funding system unconstitutional, Arkansas has made strides to produce a better educational system to ensure equity and adequacy in funding for poorer districts (Executive Summary, 2008). Consequently, the *Arkansas Comprehensive Testing, Assessment, and Accountability Program* (ACTAAP) was established in the 2001-2002 school year to begin tracking student performance. The goals for the ACTAAP are: "... to improve classroom instruction and learning; to support public accountability by exemplifying expected achievement levels and reporting on student and school performance; to provide program evaluation data; and to assist policymakers in decision-making" (Arkansas Department of Education (ADE), 2008, p. 1).

Models of Assessments

The Status Model Assessment

The *status model* is one type of assessment that was developed in Arkansas to compare one cohort of students' scores to those of the previous year's class using the ACTAAP scores for measurement and establishment of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for each school. For each school, the percent of students who are proficient or grade level is determined by dividing the sum of all eligible students tested in mathematics and literacy who scored at or above the proficient level by the total number of students enrolled. According to Arkansas Department of Education, W. (2008) a school may use a percentage for a singular year or may use the percentage representing a three-year average. Schools may be placed in school improvement (SI) status based on the percentages of students at proficient or above. The categories for the school improvement status are as follows (1) year one/alert status, (2) year two/school improvement status, (3) year three/school improvement status, (4) year four/corrective action status, and (5) year five/ reconstruction status.

The 2008 report of Arkansas' educational progress reported the state's mandated test ACTAAP results, 633 (61.7 percent) of low-income schools in Arkansas made adequate yearly progress, 239 (21 percent) schools in need of improvement and 53 (4 percent) schools in restructuring. The National Center of Education Statistics (NCES) reported the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading achievement for fourth graders in 2006-2007 for low-income students in Arkansas was 47 percent and math achievement for low-income 4th grade students in Arkansas was 55 percent.

A comparison of 2006-2007 data showed 30 percent of Arkansas schools were on the School Improvement (SI) list for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). That represented an increase of schools in academic trouble of over 8 percent by 2008. Approximately seven percent of

Arkansas schools are in a restructuring phase of school improvement as reported by the Office for Education Policy (2008). Mulvenon, Wang, McKenzie, and Airola (2006) reported that the impoverished southeast section of Arkansas lags academically behind the rest of Arkansas. Some districts with at least 33 percent and above of students participating in Federal Free and Reduced Lunch Program (FRLP) also performed academically below the state average. Furthermore, Mulvenon, Wang, McKenzie, Airola (2006) concluded that poverty as measured by participation in FRLP, is not isolated to the Delta region of Arkansas, but is a greater systemic problem in performance even beyond this region.

The status model mandates that schools have an increasing percentage of their students scoring proficient on the state's Benchmark Exams each year so that by the 2013-2014 school year, all students score proficient. The percentage of students scoring proficient is measured by one cohort of students to next year's cohort of the same grade level (Arkansas Department of Education, 2009). For example, the scores of this year's third grade students with the scores of last year's third grade students. Consequently, there is no effort to track changes of individual students from one year to the next. This system also tracks the change in number of students who are proficient and above for each year tested would be compared (Vansickle, 2008).

Subsequently, the growth model ensures accountability under the NCLB Act with the measurement of individual students' achievement gains from year to the next. This model also provides a visual for growth on a continuum over time (Hoff, 2007). In addition, the growth-model creates opportunities for state and local districts to track student growth to determine if the student is achieving expected goals. Vansickle (2008) reported that the growth model or growth scores are not new. The norm-referenced tests have had a growth score or scale score as an integral part of reporting.

Growth Model Assessment

Arkansas' Act 35 of the Second Extraordinary Session of 2003 mandated the state's academic standards and accountability system requirements to include the following: 1) content standards, 2) assessment, 3) state's accountability system – status and a gains model, and 4) professional development for teachers and administrators (Arkansas Department of Education (ADE), Smart Accountability, 2009). Arkansas initially used the status model Act 35 which opened the door to use the growth model as part of NCLB Act accountability system. The states had requested a growth model and this request was considered in 2006 (Vansickle, 2008). Thus, it was hoped that creating this growth model would make NCLB better, more fair, because of the ability to track individual students over time and also create the potential for changing schools, districts, and other states.

In a fundamental shift for evaluating schools under the NCLB law, Arkansas proposed a *growth-model assessment* and developed a rating system to determine whether schools, school districts, and the state were making adequate yearly progress under NCLB for the 2006-2007 school year. Submitting the Growth-Model assessment for approval to the United States Education Department, Arkansas Commissioner of Education Kenneth James suggested that the model would "...strengthen our accountability system" and subsequently improve the system's ability to achieve its fundamental purposes of closing the achievement gap based on race, ethnicity, and poverty (Arkansas Department of Education, November 21, 2006). Thus, the federal No Child Left Behind Act (2002) assumed the task of closing the achievement gap by requiring states to disaggregate student achievement data so that performance gains can be tracked (Education Week, 2004).

A majority of education lobbyists, researchers, and lawmakers came to agree that growth models should be the standard way of deciding whether a school or district is making adequate yearly progress (Hoff, 2006). Arkansas was one of only nine states to receive permission from the U.S. Education Department to develop the gains growth model for reporting its accountability results which correlate to Academic Yearly Progress (AYP). Schools using the growth model could be ranked by the following ratings:

1. “Level 5” schools of excellence for improvement
2. “Level 4” schools exceeding improvement standards
3. “Level 3” schools meeting improvement standards
4. “Level 2” schools on alert or
5. “Level 1” schools in need of immediate improvement.

The growth model was implemented during the 2006-2007 school year and was another approach to evaluate schools adequate yearly progress based on individual students’ academic growth. “Under a growth-model, a school is held accountable for increasing individual students’ achievement from one school year to the next,” (Hoff, 2007, p.2).

A 2008 report by the Office for Education Policy (OEP) indicated that Arkansas schools were making progress in addressing the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students. However, despite current efforts, it appears the achievement gap in Arkansas still exists between minority, low socio-economic students and their Caucasian counterparts (Associated Press, 2009). The OEP (2008) compared the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) performance for those students eligible for the FRLP to students who are not eligible as a way to illustrate the achievement gap. The students’ free and reduced lunch status is the tool used for poverty index measurement. For the purpose of this multiple case study the FRLP

percentages were used to determine schools eligible for the study. The FRLP status of 50 percent or more of students enrolled in the schools is considered as high population of low socio-economic students.

Factors that Influence the Success of Principals as Instructional Leaders

Both *A Nation at Risk* (1983) and NCLB (2002) stressed the importance of sound leadership on student achievement. Subsequent studies reported that educational reform in America has articulated that leadership is valuable for student achievement. Competent leadership of school principals is the key factor for successful change, school improvement, or school effectiveness (Hallinger, 2003); Jacobson, Brooks, Giles, Johnson, and Yilmaki (2007); Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2005); Murphy, Goldring, and Porter (2007). Jacobson (et al., 2007) reported that three principals of high-poverty urban elementary schools experienced improved student achievement. The multiple case study illustrated how the three principals responded to the challenges of their high poverty communities and were exemplary leaders with a very strong and positive influence on their constituents.

In addition, Jacobson et al. (2007) reported from their case study that principals' leadership focusing on creating a right environment for students, parents, and staff was crucial for student achievement. Further, schools' student population and staff size were factors that influence principal leadership. Building relationships in a small environment was more beneficial to students who are struggling academically. Furthermore, principals in high-need schools not only have to deal with poor student achievement, but they must do this while concentrating on issues of competition, shared decision making, and improvement planning (Jacobson et al., 2007).

Student Mobility Affects the School

Children who are shuffled into different schools and/or homes experience a negative impact on their academic achievement (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, NCREL, 2004). Principals consistently deal with multiple issues that directly affect student performance. For example, high mobility is often associated with high poverty. Highly mobile students include the homeless, those from military families, or those from migrant families. Frequent moves into different schools and/or homes have a negative impact on student achievement (Paik, & Phillips, 2002). Paik and Phillips (2002) reported that forty-one percent of highly mobile students were low achievers compared with twenty-six percent of stable students. In addition, transient students impacted the composition of the classroom, school budgets, teachers, students, and leadership. Establishing an academic environment that is conducive to learning poses an added burden for teachers to maintain curricula continuity and coherence even when students are regularly moving in and out of the school. Changing demographics, high mobility, high poverty and ethnic diversity challenge 21st century schools and their principals to meet the educational needs of a broad and dynamic student body.

Effective Teachers

Effective leadership can be a positive influence in schools serving low socio-economic students. Children of poverty are often plagued with poor nutrition, inadequate health services, absenteeism, discipline issues, high rates of illiteracy, and criminal activities. Acquiring effective teachers for the schools becomes a task because of these factors associated with poverty (Jacobson, 2005). Oftentimes the community is plagued with poverty, and teachers commute to find homes suitable for their families. Teachers and their families prefer living in homes that are valued at the middle class range and safe from frequent crime. Children of poverty are inundated

with family issues such that the mere struggle for survival is top priority. Parents are often concerned about making ends meet and entrusting the school officials to take care of the educational aspects of their children. These issues affect the time teachers have to spend on social skills and academics. Thus, many teachers are faced with integrating social literacy instructional strategies with the grade level assigned curriculum implementation.

Diversity and Second Languages

Latino students and students with limited English proficiency perform worse in elementary and secondary school than Caucasian students on measures of academic achievement (Jesse, Davis, & Pokorny, 2004). To meet the needs of the students with second languages, utilizing principals as the instructional leader is important (Jesse et al., 2004). Effective principals create and support by maintaining focus and pulling school staff together for collaboration and organize an effective structure for student achievement. School leadership is vital for learning. Sergiovanni (2001) suggested that principals' evolving leadership behaviors should be explored to understand better effective practices for producing high achievement across all student populations.

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative multiple case study will explore the principals' role as instructional leader in "Level 5" schools of excellence that have high percentages of low socio-economic students with diverse ethnicity from three distinct geographical regions of Arkansas. For the purpose of this study, instructional leadership is defined as leadership behaviors that positively shape campus culture and climate, high poverty is defined as 50 percent or above Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) eligible students. Using these definitions, the researcher will investigate

how three principals from “level 5” schools demonstrate effective instructional leadership despite a high-poverty and highly diverse student population.

Problem Statement

Many schools with high poverty and highly diverse students are failing to meet the academic achievement set forth by NCLB (2002). However, three principals of high poverty schools in Arkansas are achieving success. In 2008-2009, eight elementary schools in Arkansas rated as schools of excellence for improvement with a student population over 500, and 50 percent or higher low-income students. For the purpose of this study three schools were selected based on the following criteria: 50 percent or above low socio-economic students, three different geographical locations serviced by different Cooperative Services, different ethnic groups of poverty (African Americans, Hispanics, and Caucasians), principals served at least two years at the school, elementary school with 2 or more tested grade levels, student population of 500 or more, and rated “Level 5” school of excellence for improvement. With the barriers associated with high poverty and low student achievement, these schools are anomalies worth investigating to understand better how these principals lead successful schools with satisfactory student achievement. Therefore, this study will explore the phenomena of principals’ leadership behaviors as they relate to student population with high poverty, ethnic diversity and positive student achievement.

Research Question

The primary purpose of this study is to explore the behaviors of three principals that influence instructional excellence and environments of academic success despite high poverty and ethnically diverse populations. What phenomena of leadership are present in successful schools with high poverty and diverse students in different geographical locations? Specifically,

this study will explore what instructional leadership behaviors are of three principals in three “Level 5” schools of excellence for improvement in Arkansas. The primary purpose of this study is to explore instructional excellence of leadership in environments for academic success in high poverty, ethnically diverse schools.

Significance of the Study

Much has been written about the failing academic success of high poverty, ethnically diverse schools in Arkansas. This study explores factors that contribute to positive academic outcomes in schools with these criteria. As educational communities and funding streams demand more accountability measures that require the principal to articulate and implement the vision of an effective instructional environment for the success of all students (Mackey, Pitcher, & Decman, 2006). This study will provide insights into the combined factors that influence success despite obstacles. Nationwide there are many school districts who are experiencing change in their populations. Most of this change involves a rapid growth in students of color and the subsequent cultural and language barriers accompanying these changes. Adding to this change in the student body is the low socio-economic dynamics the families bring with them (Howard, 2007, p. 16). To address these changes, it is important to identify and describe those educational leadership skills of excellence required to enhance the academic performance of these students.

Research Design

Qualitative methods will be used to explore why three schools with high poverty and ethnically diverse students are able to achieve academic success when most schools with similar demographics are failing. Case study design is appropriate for this study because through dialogue and reflection, individuals associated with the phenomenon (leadership) share their

diverse insights and understanding of what contributed to the event. Also, a case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system such as a setting of a school (Creswell, 2007). Finally, multiple bounded systems (cases) can be explored over time through detailed, in-depth data collection. The issue of student achievement will be explored through multiple cases.

Theoretical Framework

This multiple-case study developed an in-depth description of principals' instructional leadership in "Level 5" schools of excellence for improvement in Arkansas using Hoy and Hoy's (2006) leadership behavior model which proposes six observable and measurable behaviors that are essential to successful instructional leadership. These behavioral roles ensure a learning environment that is orderly, serious, and focused on high but achievable academic goals with the principal as a strong motivating force. Hoy and Hoy's (2006) model for instructional leadership include the following activities:

- (1) The instructional leader should ensure a learning environment that is orderly, serious, and focused on high but achievable academic goals. The principal must demonstrate, in both words and actions, a belief that all students can achieve, while developing a school culture in which teachers and students alike respect hard work and academic success.
- (2) Instructional excellence and continuous improvement are ongoing and cooperative activities by instructional leaders and teachers.
- (3) The teachers are at the center of the instructional improvement, and teachers must decide that they want to improve.

- (4) Principals must provide beneficial support and acquire the resources and materials necessary for teachers to be successful in the classroom.
- (5) Principals should be intellectual leaders who keep abreast of the latest developments in teaching, learning, motivation, classroom management, and assessment, and share best practices in each area with teachers.
- (6) The principal should take the lead in recognizing and celebrating academic excellence among students and teachers because such activities reinforce a vision and culture of academic excellence. (p. 3)

While Hoy and Hoy (2006) suggest that instructional leadership should emerge from both the principal and teachers; the principal establishes the culture and climate that influences teacher productivity and subsequent student achievement. This study will focus on the behaviors of three elementary principals with a school configuration of kindergarten through sixth grade, located in the River Valley, Ozark, and Delta Regions of Arkansas, and high poverty Caucasian, African American and Hispanic students.

Limitations

This study is limited in the following ways:

1. The study was limited by the minimum number of schools that met the criteria and rated “Level 5” school of excellence for improvement in Arkansas.
2. Another limitation was the selection of appropriate definitions for certain terms that many educators today do not agree upon.
3. The selected elementary “Level 5” school of excellence for improvement may not have the configuration of kindergarten through sixth grade student population.
4. There were variations with the student population as related to number of students.

5. Schools may not have met adequate yearly progress status and may be on school improvement. However, they were rated “Level 5” school of excellence for improvement as measured by student gains in 2008.
6. Study schools may not maintain “Level 5” rating status from the 2008 to the completion of study.
7. Study schools decreased in student enrollment after 2008 due to mobility and Assistant Principal was reassigned because of student enrollment under 500.

Delimitation

This study recognized the following delimitations:

1. Schools that are rated “Level 5” school of excellence for student improvement.
2. Schools with a “Level 5” rating for in 2008.
3. Schools identified with a population of students that can be recognized as impoverished (i.e., approximately 50 percent or more of the student population receiving free or reduced lunch defines this.)
4. Elementary schools with three or more grades tested on the state’s benchmark.
5. Elementary schools which have 500 or more student population.
6. Elementary schools which are located in different regions of Arkansas.

Definitions of Terms

The following definitions provide clarification and understanding as they apply to this study:

- Organization Climate: The “basic behavior that exists in the organization that refers to teachers’ perceptions of the school’s work environment including formal organization,

informal organization, and politics, all of which the motivations and behaviors of teachers” (Hoy, & Hoy, 2006, p. 312).

- Organizational Culture: “A pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaption and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, so be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (Schein, 2004, p. 17).
- Effective schools: Effective schools are successful with improvement in student achievement as measured by the Arkansas Accountability System rated by either growth or gains. The rating of “level 5” schools of excellence for improvement is an effective school of improvement.
- Elementary school: An elementary school is comprised of a configuration of kindergarten through fifth or sixth grade.
- Instructional leader: Instructional leader (principal or specific group of instructional leaders) creates an instructional environment that is conducive to learning.
- Leadership is school principals or teams who guide school planning and decision-making.
- Low socioeconomic is the lower social class as determined by factors such as wealth, occupation, education or family background. This is determined in the study by the percentage of free and reduced school status as ranked in the Arkansas Department of Education school accountability report.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The principal's role is becoming complex because the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002) and state demands of accountability measures are encouraging schools to reform. The Arkansas accountability measures student performance on the Arkansas Comprehensive Testing Assessment and Accountability Program (ACTAAP). Consequently, Arkansas has developed a performance growth model to identify schools needing improvement. Arkansas schools are placed in five levels of performance. They are: level 5- schools of excellence for improvement, level 4 - schools exceeding improvement standards, level 3 - schools meeting improvement standards, level 2 - schools on alert, or level 1: schools in need of immediate improvement. These ratings have created a need for principals who understand instruction and student learning. The research literature has revealed the importance of the role of the principal as an instructional leader. This chapter discusses 1) the methodology for selecting and evaluating the research for review, 2) a look at the last half century perspective of the effective school movement, 3) effective school movement, 4) organizational leadership for learning, 5) instructional leadership, 6) organizational climate and culture, and 6) summary. Thus, this literature review will provide the foundation or conceptual framework for this multiple case study of the perceptions of the instructional leadership of principals of a "Level 5" school of excellence for improvement in Arkansas (Arkansas Department of Education, Normes, 2009).

Uncovering the phenomenon of student achievement of "level 5" schools impacted by principals' instructional leadership roles and analyzing their leadership behaviors that the teachers perceive as important, will be instrumental in this multiple case-study. This review of literature and research relates to 1. principals as instructional leaders, 2. principals as school

culture and climate builders, 3. principals as leaders of effective schools, 4. principals as creators of positive learning environments, and 5. principals' effects on student achievement.

Methodology for Selecting and Evaluating Research for Review

The literature review included studies that meet a set of specific criteria. The selections were selected based on the following three general criteria: (a) relevance, (b) scholarship, and (c) empirical nature. To assess the relevance of the study, the focus was to determine whether it provides insight into recent issues surrounding principals' instructional leadership and the educational leadership linked to our age of accountability as outlined by No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (2002). A connection and comparison of the methodology of past studies was related to educational instructional leadership and effective schools. Scholarship is assessed by the selection of works that have been through a peer-reviewed process. Only studies that are empirical in nature—that is, either quantitative or qualitative, or both—were considered for conclusions. *Ebsco Academic Search Premier* and *ProQuest Direct* were used for accessing the databases of ERIC and ProQuest operating through the University of Arkansas library system. Further, dissertations and government documents were evaluated.

A Look at the Last Half Century Perspective of the Effective School Movement

To investigate American schools, a historical perspective of effective schools was needed to provide background knowledge. This perspective helped facilitate the goals of this study by describing the foundation of instructional leadership roles of principals in schools of excellence for improvement. A 1984 National Commission on Excellence in Education study alerted this nation that American schools were in trouble. The cited reasons were that both “society and its educational institutions revealed a loss of vision in the basic purpose of schooling and of the high expectation and disciplined effort needed to obtain the” (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1984, p. 5). The recommendations with regards to leadership were that principals and superintendents must engage in the crucial role of developing school and community support for proposed reforms, and that school boards must provide all stakeholders with the professional development and other support required to perform their leadership role effectively. The Commission stressed the distinction among leadership skills of persuasion, goal setting and development of consensus community support, and managerial and supervisory skills. Managerial and supervisory skills were necessary. In addition, the commission believes that school boards must intentionally develop leadership skills at the school and district levels if the reforms proposed were to be achieved.

In contrast, Gordon (2003) reported a weakness of *A Nation at Risk*. The hypothesis of *A Nation at Risk* was that knowledge is acquired on how to improve the public school system but the desire to improve was deficient. The challenge of students’ achievement for public schools was evident for the last two decades. The principal as the key factor on the school scene and as the producer of school improvement is not new (Gordan, 2003). For this reason, the challenge for

principals is complicated by our understanding of what knowledge is and how its acquisition has advanced quickly.

Gordon (2003) stated that strong instructional leadership consists of principals who have a clear theory of action, observe and analyze instruction with accuracy, define clear steps for improving what they observe and analyze, analyze how a school uses resources and aligns those resources with improving academic achievement, focuses on improving instruction, provides consistent opportunities to learn together, and challenges district rules and cultural norms.

School restructuring created new expectations of those who are in school leadership capacity (Leithwood, 1994). In this age of accountability, the roles of leadership have come to the forefront. In addition, Leithwood (1994) noted that K-12 school instructional leadership is the current preferred image of school leadership, as well as the preferred image in the past decade. School administrators play a key role in providing leadership for improvement at their sites. Over the past decade, administrators have attempted to provide such leadership by shifting their focus from a managerial role to an instructional leadership role (Lee, 1991). The perception of instructional leadership has become a recognized view for both theoretical and practical thinking about approaches to support school effectiveness and promote school improvement (Bossert et. al.; Sergiovanni, 1987; Smith, & Andrews, 1989). Hoerr (2005) wrote, “Strong leaders are artists. They inspire, applaud, chastise, steer, and stand on the side. They create, monitor, reinforce, encourage, and stand in the back” (p. 1). The author stated that strong leaders recognize that no method works for all. Short and Greer (2002) stated that leadership is the most unknowable term in organization theory literature. In addition, the authors acknowledged that Frederick Taylor was one of the earliest writers to describe the work and behaviors of leaders in corporations (Short, & Greer, 2002).

Furthermore, in the *National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) Legislative Update* (2009), Secretary of Education Arne Duncan addressed the NAESP-National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) National Leaders Conference (NLC) stating that “school reform cannot happen without strong principals”. (p. 1) Secretary Duncan highlighted President Obama’s priorities for education, which included expanding the access and quality of early childhood education opportunities, improving state standards and information systems, identifying and rewarding excellent teachers and principals, and turning around the lowest performing schools.

Effective School Movement

The Center for Effective Schools Development of Effective Schools Research (2005) reported that the period of 1966-76 initiated many descriptive studies of individual effective schools. The Effective Schools Model was unique in that the focus was on improvement of both teaching and learning (Lezotte, 1984). This movement began with a definition of an effective practice setting, the finding of such a setting, and a study of the setting. The results were effective practices. Subsequently, researchers from other countries began reproducing these findings. The central question remained: why some low-income schools were successful while others were not?

First, Cotton (2003) reported that the Effective School Research was initiated with such notable researchers as Ronald Edmonds, Wilbur Brookover, and Lawrence Lezotte. These researchers and those who followed conducted studies of high-performing and low-performing schools with similar student population to explore why differences existed between them. The studies revealed a commonality that may contribute to the success of the high-performing schools: strong leadership, high expectations of students and staff, a safe and orderly school

environment, a primary focus on learning, resources focused on achieving key objectives, regular monitoring of student learning progress, and instructional leadership on the part of the principal. Similarly, Rosenholtz (1985) reported that there are anomalous findings on inner-city schools which have produced standardized achievement test for low-SES students that far exceed schools without such characteristics. It is the belief that the organizational structure was the variable of significance for achievement.

Further, studies by Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, and Lee (1982) and Purkey and Smith (1982) reported that the school effectiveness literature constantly highlights the significance of the principal in providing effective leadership and supportive management in the school. The authors reported that there is a small amount of knowledge about how instructional management at the school level affects children's educational practice. Finally, the authors stated that recent work on successful schools emphasized the importance of instructional leadership and the role of the principal in organizing and controlling the instructional program (Bossert et al., 1982). Thus, the work led to effective principals and effective schools.

Moreover, research revealed that an effective school requires an instructional leader that spends time visiting classrooms and working with teachers. An effective school requires both roles of a principal as a manager and an instructional leader (Hager & Scarr, 1982; Rallis & Highsmith, 1986; Schneider, & Burton, 2005). The authors suggested that in a good school, managerial and instructional leadership occur simultaneously. Maintenance refers to short - term goals whereas instructional leadership is long - term goals. Further, the authors suggested that leadership requires: vision, willingness to experiment and change, capacity to tolerate messiness, ability to take the long-term view, and willingness to revise systems. Maintenance management relates to oversight, the use of proven methods, orderliness, and daily attention. Levine and

Lezotte (1995) reported that schools with remarkable high achievement entail various aspects of school climate and culture. One of the most frequent noted characteristics is safe and orderly environment.

More significantly, the task of creating an effective environment that is conducive for learning is the work of an effective leader, (Halawah, 2005; Smith, Maehr, & Midgley, 1992; Whitaker, 1997). In addition, the research revealed that love for learning and the love for students is the heart of successful principals.

Organizational Leadership for Learning

The concept of leadership perception is different through the organizational perspective of classical theory, social system theory, and open system theory according to Hanson (2003). Whereas, classical theory perspectives find the leader in the upper contact of the chain of command and gifted with natural psychological traits that give him or her advantages over most people, the social system viewpoints involve a situational view of leadership. As the relationship among environment, organization, and workers changes, so must the leadership act in response to new situations. The open systems theories suggest that the leader works to create an effective fit among the internal and external environments of the organization (Hanson, 2003).

Similarly, Yukl (2002) reported that *leadership* is a word used commonly and incorporated into the technological vocabulary of a scientific discipline without being exactly redefined. He concluded that most definitions of leadership reflect the assumption that it involves a development whereby one person applies deliberate influence over other people to guide, structure, and facilitate activities and relationships in a group or organization. Leadership is a process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs be done, how it can be done effectively, and how it can facilitate individual and collective efforts to accomplish the

shared objectives (Yukl, 2002). Hanson (2003) stated that leadership is continually evolving, often moving in numerous directions simultaneously. Yukl (2002) reported that most leadership theories on effective leadership are often explained by emphasizing one category over another category. However, theories developed in the past half-century have emphasized mainly traits, behavior, or power as leader characteristics. Binding these factors together are influence, processes, and situational variables.

Instructional Leadership

Identifying aspects that influence how principals execute their professional roles as instructional leaders is complex (Smith, & Andrews, 1989). Further, to gain insight into the principals' performance, it is imperative to examine those parts of the job principals perceive as most important and the amount of time spent performing those roles.

The growing emphases of principal instructional leadership during the 1980s do not originally appear from research conducted on instructional leaders. Rather, the importance of this role of the principal is inferred from studies that examined change implementation, school effectiveness (Edmonds, 1979), school improvement (e.g. Edmonds, 1979) and program improvement (Leithwood, & Montgomery, 1982). One of the most frequently cited attributes of the effective schools research is the presence of the principal as an effective instructional leader. "The scholars conducting research in each of these domains consistently found that the skillful leadership of school principals was a key contributing factor when it came to explaining successful change, school improvement, or school effectiveness" (Hallinger, 2003, p. 331). Prior to 1980, there are neither rational models nor validated instruments accessible for studying instructional leadership (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982; Hallinger, & Murphy, 1985). Instructional leadership is defined as a blend of supervision, staff development, and curriculum

development. The generalist-managerial role of the principal moves to one oriented toward curriculum and instruction (Blasé, & Blasé, 1998).

Hallinger (1992) stated that the function of school leadership is to shape and direct the culture of the school. Leadership is an influence process directed at an individual or a group. By the mid-1980s, instructional leadership became the new educational standard for principals. No longer, is it acceptable for principals to focus on school maintenance or programmed management. Further, Hoy and Hoy (2006) stated the following:

- (1) The instructional leader should ensure a learning environment that is orderly, serious, and focused on high but achievable academic goals. The principal must demonstrate, in both words and actions a belief that all students can achieve, while developing a school culture in which teachers and students alike respect hard work and academic success.
- (2) Instructional excellence and continuous improvement, cooperative activities by instructional leaders and teachers are ongoing.
- (3) The teachers are at the center of the instructional improvement, and teachers must decide that they want to improve.
- (4) Principals must provide beneficial support and acquire the resources and materials necessary for teachers to be successful in the classroom.
- (5) Principals should be intellectual leaders who keep abreast of the latest developments in teaching, learning, motivation, classroom management, and assessment and share best practices in each area with teachers.

- (6) The principal should take the lead in recognizing and celebrating academic excellence among students and teachers because such activities reinforce a vision and culture of academic excellence. (p. 3)

Gentilucci and Muto (2007) reported in their work that research on topics ranging from effective schools to site-level management conducted from the 1970s through the late 1990s first established correlates between principal behavior and academic achievement. The authors stated, “thirty years of research have established clear-cut statistical correlations between principal leadership and student achievement” (p. 220). Lashway (1996) reported that today, leaders are encouraged to act as facilitators utilizing influential skills through building teams, creating networks, and governing from the center.

Eldredge (2008), in a quantitative dissertation study, did not reveal a significant difference in the engagement of instructional leadership tasks to campus ratings. The study investigated instructional leadership tasks by elementary principals in correlation to student performance. The data were collected from one large urban school district in Texas. The survey method was used to collect data using the *Sources of Instructional Leadership Survey (SOIL)* instrument from 43 elementary school principals. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed using the five factors of instructional leadership as independent variables: 1) observe and evaluate, 2) allocate instructional resources, 3) develop academic climate, 4) encourage concern for achievement, and 5) coordinate instructional programs. The years of experience as a principal were significant for only one factor of instructional leadership-Encourage Concern for Achievement.

The researcher concluded that the quantitative data substantiated that elementary principals who are affecting student performance on their campuses were perceived as

instructional leaders even though no significance was evident among campus ratings. The author suggested reproduction of the study through in-depth interviews and observations of principals from exemplary campuses and low-performing campuses to determine the instructional leadership tasks among campuses. Thus, the interviews could offer further insight into instructional leadership roles and student performance at each campus.

Another qualitative case study (Strouse, 2004) on the impact of principal leadership on school performance gained rich information about the leadership practices of principals that received awards for improvement numerous times. In addition, information of principals' perceptions of the impact of these awards on their schools was explored and described. In-depth interviews of eight principals who received an award three or four times and an examination of supportive documentation were used to corroborate the interview data. The study presented economic, demographic, and performance data on each school as well as comparative data with all schools that received awards and all schools in Maryland eligible for awards. The author gathered data before, during, and after the administration received the awards. Four themes were analyzed: expertise and passion, stressful but rewarding, common sense and confidence, and sense of purpose.

The conclusion of the multiple case design study was that an effective principal was 1) an educational leader who promoted academic, 2) a shepherd and steward whose vision of education remained clear and who engaged instructional programming, and 3) an organizer who sustained the school culture by ensuring organizational management encompassing a safe and efficient school environment (Strouse, 2004).

A study by Vanderhaar, Munoz, and Rodosky (2006) examined the relationship between school leadership and preparation programs and student achievement in urban settings. The

purpose was to investigate the district-driven and university-driven principal preparation programs and their impact on student achievement. The site for the study was a large urban school district with 133 schools servicing 96,000 students. The ethnic distribution of the district was 58 percent Caucasian, 36 percent African-American, and 6 percent other. The free and reduced-price national lunch program had 52 percent active participants with 54 percent of the students in single-parent homes.

Schools with principals between 9 and 17 years of teaching experience had higher mean achievement scores than schools with principals who had between 3 and 8 years of teaching experience. However, principals with between 18 and 32 years of teaching experience had the lowest mean scores. A clear pattern became evident with respect to school poverty concentration and achievement scores. As the schools' poverty concentration levels increased, achievement scores decreased. Finally, the results of principal preparation indicated that schools that had principals who received their training primarily from a university had slightly higher than average 2005 scores. As related to the district-driven preparation program participation, schools that have principals who participated in these programs had slightly higher than average 2005 scores than schools with principals who did not participate in district preparation.

Further, a "multi-variant test indicated no significant interaction effect between university and district preparation" (Vanderhaar et al., 2006, p. 27). Regarding the implications for practice, Vanderhaar et al. (2006) concluded that school districts and state universities should collaborate to ensure that significant skills are taught in principal preparation programs. The pattern of achievement in schools might be influenced by years of principal tenure, and the poverty concentration possibly will influence achievement.

Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, and Porter, (2007) stated that researchers over the last three decades have revealed that all leadership is not equal; a particular type of leadership is present in high-performing schools and school districts. This type of leadership is labeled 1) “leadership for learning, 2) instructional - focused leadership, or 3) leadership for school improvement” (p. 179). This article examines the components of leadership for learning and research on highly productive schools and school districts and high-performing principals and superintendents and the three-dimensional model of productivity. Behaviors identified from the research that characterize leadership for learning are a vision for learning, instructional program, curricular program, assessment program, communities of learning, acquisition and use of resources, organizational culture, and social advocacy.

Leaders have a significant amount to say about how well schools work for America’s youth and their families. Moreover, learning-centered leadership merits the primary attention in the work to create schools in which all children learn. Researchers are beginning to see an indirect influence of leadership and school performance (Devos, & Bouckenooghe, 2009) as well as a direct influence noted during the 80s.

Organizational Climate and Culture

Organizational culture is comprised of the shared beliefs, expectations, and values and norms of conduct of members (Cited in Hanson, 2003). Schein wrote that “culture exist at the level of the whole organization if there is sufficient shared history. It is found at the level of a whole industry because of the shared occupational backgrounds of the people industry wide”. (Schein, 1999, p.14)

Hoy and Hoy (2006) defined organizational climate as teachers’ perceptions of the school’s work environment; which is affected by the informal organization, and politics. These

factors, which make up the school climate, affect the motivations, and behaviors of teacher. Further, Hoy and Hoy (2006) explained climate as the set of internal characteristics that distinguishes one school from another and influences the behavior of its members.

Day, Harris, and Hadfield (2001) reported that the last decade is significant in the documentation of the positive and negative influences of leaders upon the culture and school performance. School climate and school culture have often been used interchangeably. Houtte (2005) further concluded that clearly the two concepts are not interchangeable and researchers should be aware of the difference. In fact, they are similar in characteristics but express separate concepts (Gruenert, 2008; Houtte, 2005). In addition, Gruenert (2008) stated that school climate articulates the ethos, or spirit, of an organization or the attitude of the organization, whereas, culture represents the personality of the organization. He concludes that real school improvement is simply changing the way teachers teach. However, Robbins and Alvy (2003) state that culture is an influential improvement tool because of the individual interactions of power. The way people interact daily or do business at the school site influences the productivity for all members.

Further, Robbins (1998) summarized important functions performed by the organization's culture:

1. Culture has a boundary-defining role; it produces distinctions between organizations.
2. Culture supplies the organization with a sense of identity.
3. Culture supports the development of commitment for the group.
4. Culture develops stability in the social system.
5. Culture is the social link that connects the organization together; it affords the proper standards for behavior.
6. Culture provides direction and shapes the attitudes and behavior of organizational members.

In addition, Schein (2004) defines culture as a “social unit that has some kind of shared history with the strength of that culture dependent on the length of its existence, the stability of the group’s membership, and the emotional intensity of the actual historical experiences that they have shared” (p. 11).

Further, Hoy and Miskel (2005) defined organizational culture as a system of shared orientations that hold the unit together and give it a distinctive identity. Common elements of culture mentioned by the authors were innovation, stability, attention to detail, outcome orientation, team orientation, and aggressiveness. Additionally, the authors suggested that effective schools have strong cultures with the following characteristics: shared values and an agreement on how things are done, the principal as a conqueror who exemplifies core values, unique rituals that are widely shared, employees as situational heroes or heroines, rituals of acculturation and cultural renewal, noteworthy rituals to celebrate and change core values, balance between innovation and tradition and between independence and control, and widespread participation in cultural rituals.

Schein (2004, p. 10) concluded, “When culture and leadership is [sic] closely examined, two sides of the same coin are apparent; neither can really be understood by itself.” The principal as the instructional leader is the catalyst for creating a school culture and climate that is conducive to learning (McEwan, 2003). Organizational climate was another aspect of the school context that set the scene for effective instructional leadership (Hoy & Hoy, 2006). According to Gruenert (2008), school climate is thought to represent the attitude of an organization. The collective mood, or morale, of a group of people has become a focus in this age of accountability. Further, Gruenert (2008) stated that leaders must create situations in which happiness thrives because happy people actually perform better.

A quantitative correlation study by O'Donnell, White, and George (2005) identified "significant relationships between principals' instructional leadership behaviors and student achievement, with school socioeconomic status (SES) as a secondary variable of interest" (p. 1). Findings of the study limited to middle level schools indicate that the teachers' perceptions of the principals' behaviors which focus on establishing school learning climate is recognized as a predictor of student achievement. Additionally, principals of schools with high SES and higher reading achievement believe that they frequently exhibit behaviors associated with defining their schools' respective missions.

In contrast, Bulach, Lunenburg, and McCallon (1994) examined the influence of the principal's leadership style on school climate and student achievement. The study results indicate no influence of the principal's leadership style on school climate and student achievement. They conclude that school climate does not depend on leadership style and that any leadership style could be accompanied by a good school climate. They theorize that the most effective leadership style depends on the maturity level of the staff. The authors defined maturity as ability, motivation, and experience. Thus, the above authors concluded that the "maturity level investigated were different for each group and the leadership style could result in a good climate because the needs of the staff and organization were met" (p.16).

Objectives of a study by Reitzug and Reeves (1992) were to "(a) provide a rich description of symbolic leadership, (b) increase the conceptual understanding of symbolic leadership behavior, and (c) explore the distinction between using symbolic leadership in manipulative versus non-manipulative ways" (p. 188). In addition, the study is grounded in the interpretive research model. Information collected through interviews and observations and followed by document analysis and teacher-kept logs provides a rich source of data. The

effectiveness of the school is determined by the perceptions of outsiders. It was viewed as a positive and exemplary school based on the efficiency of the principal. The school is populated by 72 percent Caucasian, 25 percent African-American, and 3 percent Hispanic students with a total enrollment of 800 students. The study interviewed all 41 teachers and many other certified staff members, as well as the assistant principal, curriculum resource teacher, guidance counselor, and media specialist. The findings are presented in a narrative form, which helps to provide a rich description of symbolic leadership. The following cultural beliefs, values, and assumptions emerge from the data: the efficacy of the whole language approach and both process and product are important in learning. The assumptions are all individuals must grow, and all situations are learning situations.

Summary

Multiple studies have been completed on what defines instructional leadership over long periods of time. Instructional leadership was first introduced through the effective schools' movement. Since the 1980s the instructional leadership of the principal has become pronounced. Scholars continue to focus on the principal's leadership as the key to an effective learning environment for schools.

After the review of the literature, the researcher has concluded that the principal is the vital component for instructional leadership in our schools especially in the educational environment of the 21st century. The literature reveals that one size of leadership behaviors does not fit all contextual situations. Further, defining the roles of educational leadership varies. Furthermore, researchers were faced with a universal method of analyzing the behaviors.

Eldredge (2008) suggested that more in-depth interviews and observations of principals from exemplary campuses should be conducted to determine behavioral tasks that would be

beneficial. This multiple qualitative case study will yield valuable data that will contribute to education and the exploration of Arkansas schools ranked as “Level 5” Schools of Excellence for Improvement since being implemented in 2007. In addition, this cross regional comparison may provide a useful tool for enriching our understanding of the complexity of leadership practices in Arkansas. The natural setting may also offer insight to the community.

The research revealed that safe and orderly environment was a common element of effective schools. Hoy and Hoy’s (2006) first behavior perspective is producing an environment of academic excellence for all students; citing that all students can attain high levels of achievement. Academic excellence is articulated more in research and is critical to student achievement (Hoy, & Hoy, 2006). In addition, the utilization of Hoy and Hoy’s (2006) six behavior elements as the theoretical framework would be a first (W. K. Hoy, personal communication, November 22, 2010). The six actions include the following: culture, climate, teachers at the center of improvement, support, current practices, and celebrating. Jensen (2009) reported that one action step for a student of poverty is to deepen staff understanding of poverty by changing the school culture from pity to empathy. The school culture must be caring, not giving up, and providing many opportunities for achievement. Furthermore, Hoy and Hoy (2006, 2009) actions are cited during this time of increased accountability since NCLB.

Furthermost, exploring three Arkansas schools with a high number of students who are low socio-economic, are in three different geographical locations, and are schools serviced by different education coops could begin dialogues related to instructional leadership best practices. Preparing for the next decade by exploring effective schools for student achievement will require a more defined exploration of leadership behaviors of principals as linked to learning for all.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative multiple case study was designed to investigate and describe the instructional leadership of principals in three elementary schools with large populations of students of low socio-economic status with (500 or more students), with three diverse student groups, and in three different geographical locations.

Qualitative Research

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) defined qualitative research as a research “situated activity that locates the observer in the world” (p. 3). Also, qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, physical practices that make the world visible and change our world (Denzin, & Lincoln, 2005). Data used to represent the world views were field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study; personal experiences; introspection; life story; interview; artifacts; cultural texts and productions; observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts --- that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals’ lives (p. 3).

Case Study Research Design

Merriam (1998) suggested that case study methodology is appropriate for exploring significant problems of practice, as well for broadening the understanding and interpreting observations of educational phenomena. Using Hoy and Hoy's (2006) leadership behavioral model, this study examined the instructional behaviors of three distinct principals in high poverty schools, highly diverse schools that are designated successful according to the Arkansas growth model. This multiple case study explored how leadership is defined and implemented and how

leaders' beliefs shape the culture of the school and community (Heck, & Hallinger, 1999). In this study, the phenomenon of instructional leadership was interpreted through the lens of the principals, staff, and researcher. In supporting case study design, Yin (2003) suggested that, as a research approach, case study contributes to our understanding of individual, group, organizational, social, political, and related phenomena. This study proposed to discover the instructional leadership behaviors of principals in level 5 schools of excellence for improvement across diverse groups and interests.

Site and Sample Selection

Permission was received from the university's Institutional Review Board to conduct the study. After this approval the researcher contacted the superintendents (gatekeeper) and the building principals requesting permission to visit the schools, conduct interviews, and schedule visits. This multiple case study research explored the successful instructional leadership of three principals in elementary schools that were rated Level 5... To explore the principals' instructional leadership behaviors that influence student achievement the researcher selected schools that met the Level 5 school of excellence for improvement rating in 2008, in three different geographical locations, with a population of 500 or more, and a high percentage of students with low socio-economic status, which was prevalent across all ethnic groups. Also, the sample included one school from an urban community and two from rural communities. This criterion was developed because the literature suggests larger schools with a high population of low socio-economic students are most at risk of not meeting standards (Lyman, & Villani, 2004). Of the eight schools in the state of Arkansas that were rated Level 5, three schools met the criteria for this study. Table 1 illustrates the comparison of the three schools selected for this qualitative multiple case study.

Table 1

Comparing Schools - Arkansas School Performance Report - 2009

| <i>Categories</i> | <i>School A</i> | <i>School B</i> | <i>School C</i> |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--------------------------------|
| Region Location | River Valley | Delta | Ozark |
| City Classification | Urban | Rural | Rural |
| City Population | 85,544 | 28,400 | 2,817 |
| Grade Levels | K-6 | K-6 | K-6 |
| Size | 630 | 526 | 528 |
| Faculty-Staff Size* | | | |
| Principal's Years at School | 6 | 5 | 6 |
| Education Cooperative | Western Arkansas Education Service Cooperative | Great Rivers Education Service Cooperative | Northeast Arkansas Cooperative |
| Percentage of Poverty | 91% | 100% | 71% |
| Race/Ethnicity of Students | | | |
| African Americans | < 10 | 244 | < 10 |
| Hispanic | 106 | < 10 | < 10 |
| Non-Hispanic White | < 10 | 49 | 196 |

*Totals include principals

Sampling Procedures

Purposively the researcher conducted interviews with the principals of the schools selected for the multiple case study. Within bounded cases in three different geographical locations, the principals' instructional leadership was explored through their lenses. Miles and Huberman (1994) reported that qualitative samples tend to be purposive and can evolve once fieldwork begins. Initial choices of informants lead to similar and different ones (Miles, & Huberman, 1994). Thus, after the initial interview with the principals and schools' leadership team members the researcher used the snowball sampling process to lead to the additional interviews or observations. With snowball sampling, the researcher depended on the previous participants' referral to new participants (Shank, 2006). If the leadership team consisted of less than ten, a team member was asked to select a staff member from that school. Consequently, the snowball sampling technique increased the pool of participants.

Data Collection

To adequately explore the impact of instructional leadership within each school, large amounts of contextually sensitive data were collected concerning individual perceptions, site observations and relevant documents. Merriam (1998) suggested that "... case studies provide the opportunity to uncover action through insight, discovery and interpretation" (p. 10). To address the research question regarding how principals influence school success within "Level 5" schools with high poverty and different ethnic groups, and in different geographic locations; data collection include interviews, observations, and document review. These data collection techniques are described below.

Interviews

The researcher conducted structured and semi-structured interviews with the principal and key people on staff. Those interviewed included each principal, each assistant principal, several teachers and other staff members on the leadership team within the school setting. The researcher explained the purpose of the interviews and the process of the interviews. After an explanation of the interview process, the participants were asked to sign the consent form. The interviews were conducted in private areas using a tape recorder upon the participants' approval. Questions were prepared in advanced, however, if needed additional follow-up questions were asked for clarification. The researcher developed two interview protocols for the principals and one for the teachers (Appendix C, p. 71).

It is important that the interview questions connect to the overarching question. The interview protocol was built utilizing Spickard's (2005) design. Beginning with the Central Research Question (CRQ) and connecting Hoy and Hoy (2009) principals' instructional leadership behaviors directed the theory-based questions (TBQs).

Demographical information was acquired from the principal prior to the interview. Additional information was obtained during the interviews, as needed. In addition, information related to the teachers was obtained from the teachers.

Observations

The researcher observed the school setting between interviews, during lunch, and during transitions. The school observations occurred through three days of visits to two schools and two days to another school, due to inclement weather. Observing people, actions, and events was part of data collections. Observation is essential to all qualitative inquiry (Rossman, & Rallis, 2003). Observing the bounded setting under the leadership of the principals from beginning to the end

provided additional data to confirm previous data collected. Further, observation added validity of the participant's account in the study (Creswell, & Miller, 2000). Checking how accurately the participants' realities have been represented in the final account through the everyday operations of the principals generated validity.

Further, the observation enabled the researcher to inspect inside the setting involvedness in the social setting of the schools. The researcher observed movement in the halls, classroom climate, cafeteria interactions, teachers teaching, principals' meetings, staff meetings such as grade level or parent meetings, and before and after school interactions and procedures. These observations provided insight about the culture and climate that is shaped by the principal through the lenses of the researcher. In addition, the culture and climate of the school enlightened the researcher regarding the paths of instructional leadership and the culture and climate of student achievement. Furthermore, the organizational climate and culture of the school was an additional focus during observations.

The researcher collected data from interviews and observing the culture, climate and instructional behaviors of the principals. The researcher was the instrument and collected data through the lens of the people. Also, the researcher was a nonparticipant observer, which entails observing activities and taking notes without becoming involved in the activity of the participants (Creswell, 2008).

Document Review

Archival records generated by the researcher through the Arkansas Department of Education indicated that the schools are rated as "Level 5" schools of excellence for improvement. Other archival records such as minutes of leadership meetings, reflective notes of the principal teacher lesson plans and e-mails were reviewed to triangulate the data. Through the

lens of the researcher triangulation was the validity procedure where the researcher searched for merging among multiple sources of data (Creswell, & Miller, 2000). Artifacts such as lesson plans, photographs of the building, classroom walk-through data, newsletters, and praise notes were collected. The multiple sources did confirm or disconfirm the evidence. Disconfirming the data is locating negative evidence or inconsistent data related to the themes. Triangulation is a step taken by the researcher that is a systematic process of sorting through the data to find common themes or categories by eliminating overlapping areas (Creswell, & Miller, 2000).

Data Analysis

The focus of this multiple case study was to investigate the central research question: What phenomena of instructional leadership are present in successful schools that have student populations with high percentages of low socio-economic status and are ethnically diverse? The following categories were the initial starting points: 1.) Academic excellence, 2.) Instructional excellence and continuous improvement, 3.) Instructional improvement, 4.) Principals providing support, 5.) Principals portrayed as intellectual leaders, and 6.) Principals leading in recognizing with a vision of academic excellence (Hoy and Hoy, 2009). Corbin and Strauss (2008) reported that the “first step in any analysis is to read materials from beginning to end” (p. 63). After the first interview with the principals, the researcher read the transcript of the principals’ interviews and began the analysis process. The data collected from the principals served as the foundation for further data collection and analysis (Corbin, & Strauss, 2008). Thus, the researcher devoted quality time early in the analysis stage reviewing and analyzing the collected data from the principals and later the teachers. Data analysis for a multiple case study included continuous analysis of each case separately and then conducting a cross analysis of the three study schools as a unit (Stake, 2006). Also, a search for pattern consistency and for consistency within certain

conditions while in the field was tabulated utilizing Microsoft word and color coding and sorting using identifiable patterns. The researcher pursued the unusual and ordinary happenings for each case investigating the settings and leadership behaviors (Stake, 2006). The researcher utilized field notes documenting details relating to time, location, participants and other important information.

Categories, Themes, and Clusters

After in-depth immersion of the data, the researcher reflected on the research question- What phenomena of leadership are present in successful schools with high poverty and diverse students in different geographical locations? Reflecting on the research question, the researcher questioned the data and reflected on the conceptual framework of Hoy and Hoy (2009), (Marshall, & Rossman, 2006). The next step was open coding of the data which is the conceptual categories that were predetermined. The principals' instructional leadership behaviors developed through constant comparison of codes of events, actions and words within the transcripts or memos. The second step was axial coding which involved grouping of the codes into the six categories. Marshall and Rossman (2006) reported that the codes are clustered around points of intersection. The concepts were framed around the literature review and Hoy and Hoy's (2009) framework of instructional leadership. Finally, the key words that appear multiple times within the analysis generated from the transcripts of the participants were the themes. The researcher used selective coding utilizing the model and developed guidelines that form a story to describe the interrelationship of categories in the model. The descriptions helped in the final write up of the case studies. Thus, the data analysis of the perceptions of the lived experiences of personnel in "level 5" schools of excellence for improvement emerged.

A cross analysis of the three study schools involved the same procedures as above-- examining the themes across the cases (Creswell, 2007). However, this analysis integrated finding and interpreting of similarities and differences, and acquiring new insights different from Hoy and Hoy's (2009) categories (Creswell, 2007).

Rossmann and Rallis (2003) defined "content analysis as an overall approach, a method, and an analytic strategy; content analysis entails the systematic examination of forms of communication to objectively document patterns" (p.198). The examination of e-mails, newsletters, memos, agendas, newspapers, books, novels and similar communication documents were referenced with interview translations or field notes. While observing the material culture which is all products of the educational setting, it was important that the researcher looked for connection between the themes identified and the documents. The documents were treated confidentially as the transcripts.

More importantly, there are schools of excellence in Arkansas that have succeeded in spite of a large number of low socio-economic students from different ethnic backgrounds. Employing this theoretical framework will allow the research of effective schools, effective leadership, effective instructional leadership, effectual climate and culture, and instructional leadership to describe instructional excellence. Focusing on principals' instructional leadership behaviors and beliefs will provide evidence of how they think and act in their specific environment.

Validity Issues

Creswell and Miller (2000) stated that qualitative inquirers need to demonstrate credibility with the study. Common procedures for establishing validity or trustworthiness include member checking, triangulation, thick description, peer reviews, and external audits. In

addition, researchers may employ one or more of the actions and report results in their investigation (Creswell & Miller, 2000). For this study the researcher selected member checking, triangulation, peer reviews, and audits trails.

Member Check

The researcher shared the data with principals to help ensure rigor and usefulness of the case study. Also, member check validated the researcher's interpretations. Collaboration through phone conversations and email occurred during and after data analyses. Member check helped to manage the researcher bias. As the themes emerge from the data, the member check gave the principals opportunities to elaborate or confirm the conclusion drawn by the researcher. The researcher will collaborate with the interviewee to discuss the emerging themes and validate the accuracy. Modifications were made as needed.

Audit Trail

Audit trail is keeping a detailed account of the research procedures and decisions which helped to formulate the conclusion. The data collected during the study including field notes; transcripts; and documents, which will be labeled, catalogued and maintained in a secure location for five years. Thus, the audit trail will provide a clear-cut record of the multiple case-studies. The researcher labeled the cassette tapes for each interview and stored them in a container for each school. Also, data collected including tapes, transcripts, memos, and artifacts were categorized and catalogued by date, time, and school. Official labels were created for all data.

To complete the audit trail, transcripts were typed, using an Excel workbook, by a hired individual who signed the disclosure agreement of confidentiality. The transcripts were numbered by line and numbered accordingly to the cassette player count. After the transcripts

were completed the documents were transferred to another workbook keeping the formatting and readiness for the first stage of analyzing.

Peer Debriefing

The researcher made arrangements with knowledgeable persons, such as the university professor or dissertation committee members, to verify that the information is analyzed correctly and to offer guidance. Marshall and Rossman (2011) stated that obtaining reactions about coding, the case summaries, the analytic memos written during data analysis, and the next-to-final drafts will help with credibility of the case study.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity began with the researcher and involved the study's participants (Marshall, & Rossman, 2011). The researcher was constantly aware of the role as inquirer. To ensure that data analysis was systematic, the researcher was explicit about the purposes and reflected on the role as researcher. The awareness of the biases and views at all times was considered. According to Creswell and Miller (2000), reflexivity is another procedure for the researcher to self-disclose his or her assumptions, beliefs, and biases. The researcher reported on personal beliefs, values, and biases that shape the inquiry. Therefore, the researcher role as discussed in this paper provides the procedure of reflexivity.

Triangulation

Good researchers want the assurance that what they see or hear is valid (Stake, 2006). Further, Stake (2006) reported that researchers often deal with many impressions including their own as well as others. Thus, triangulation achieves the assurance and forms validity with multiple sources of data, multiple points in time, or a variety of methods used to build the

picture that is investigated (Rossman, & Rallis, 2003). Stake (2006) reported that at least confirmations are necessary for assurances that main meaning is not ignored. Peer reviews, documents, multiple documentation of three or more responses that are similar, and field notes were used to verify data collected in the field. This is known as triangulation.

Further, producing three types of data in regards to trustworthiness, Rossman and Rallis (2003) articulated that it cannot be separate. For a study to be trustworthy, it must be ethical as well as valid and reliable. To validate this study, the researcher reflected on the role as a researcher, reported the participants' views, and followed the internal logic in developing conclusions. Further, the researcher retained an audit trail to verify the decision-making process, made sure the methodological decisions were grounded in conceptual framework of Hoy and Hoy (2009), and ensured that the methodology and design reasoning are transparent. Rossman and Rallis (2003) stated that devoting sufficient time in the field and extensiveness of the body of evidence used as data would ensure evidentiary adequacy that produces rigor.

Role of Researcher

The researcher is an educator and a lifelong learner. Based upon personal experience of thirty-six years as an educator the researcher has acquired a philosophy of learning for all. In pursuit of this doctorate, the level of inquiry has elevated, because of the quest for learning. The inquiry of why some schools succeed and others fail is vital for the researcher's understanding and development. This investigation will facilitate my ultimate task of changing our schools for students who are impoverished. Passion for building and motivating leaders has inspired the researcher to continue learning. Furthermore, as principal of a kindergarten through fifth grade elementary school, it has been a goal to create an environment that is conducive to learning. Recently, the researcher was a principal of a successful school that is rated "level 4", which is a

school exceeding standards and has influenced additional inquiry. Further, it is the desire to reach a “Level 5” rating school of excellence to help leaders in Arkansas. The wealth of experience as an administrator enables the researcher to become an active participator, listener, investigator, and inquirer. Finally, the knowledge gained through this multiple case study will help describe what works in a similar school setting. Creswell (2007) reported that the researcher’s findings should be based on self-reflection about his or her role in the research, the manner in which it is interpreted, and the personal history which shapes the interpretation. Hence, the position regarding this study was collecting and analyzing data within the bounded setting, within the lenses of people involved in the school and district and according to the researcher’s personal history of educational leadership. As a result, the researcher was able to verify the principals’ instructional leadership behaviors and depict academic excellence. Finally, the current role of Director of Academics for a rural metropolitan school district will be enhanced to further build systems of excellence for school achievement.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this multiple qualitative case study was to explore the principals' instructional leadership behaviors in three "Level 5" schools of excellence with a high percentage of low socio-economic students for improvement of benchmark scores. These schools, which are located in three distinct geographical regions of Arkansas, have a student population of 500 or more. The data were collected during 30 one-on-one interviews with administrators and teachers. The schools selected were rated "Level 5" schools of excellence for improvement by the Arkansas Department of Education in 2008 according to their students' gains' report as measured by the Arkansas Comprehensive Testing, Assessment and Accountability Program (ACTAAP).

Chapter 4 presents the detailed analysis of 31 interviews with administrators and teachers in three large Arkansas elementary schools from the Delta, River Valley, and Ozark regions. To validate the researcher's interview protocol, the questions were piloted with an administrator from the central region of Arkansas. Also, the questions were reviewed by Dr. Wayne Hoy, the author and scientist of this multiple case study theoretical framework design of principals' instructional leadership behaviors (January 21, 2011).

The data were analyzed utilizing Hoy and Hoy's (2009) six pre-coded categories to determine patterns and themes associated with the author's six instructional behaviors of principals' leadership: 1) an orderly, serious and focused learning environment is present, 2) instructional excellence and continuous improvement is present, 3) teachers are at the center of instructional improvement, 4) principals provide support and resources, 5) principals are intellectual leaders, and 6) principals lead in recognizing and celebrating academic excellence (Hoy & Hoy, 2009). The analysis within chapter 4 provides the methodology used to determine

the major themes resulting from collapsing data directly relating to Dr. Wayne Hoy's six behaviors and examining the common versus the different behaviors prevalent in the three schools. Finally, the emerging themes determine if Hoy and Hoy's (2009) instructional behaviors are aligned and if other behaviors were prevalent. The primary research question combined with specific interview questions aligned with Hoy's model provided the framework for the research and the results.

Main Research Questions

How do principals influence leadership among faculty within "Level 5" schools with high poverty and diverse students in different geographical locations?

Auxiliary Questions

1. How do perceived leadership behaviors create instructional excellence in the culture and climate of the schools with high poverty and diverse students in different geographical locations?
2. How do principals organize for student success?

Demographics of Study Schools

The past two years total enrollment for each school investigated included in Table 1 indicated that all three schools decreased in enrollment except Study School C increased. The percent decreased for schools A and B, and C: .03 percent, .11 percent, and .08 percent, respectively.

Table 2

School Enrollment 2008-2010

| SCHOOL | 2008/2009 | 2009/2010 | Percent of Change |
|----------------|-----------|-----------|-------------------|
| Study School A | 630 | 610 | .03 |
| Study School B | 526 | 473 | .11 |
| Study School C | 528 | 568 | .08 |

Public Schools of Arkansas Report Card, 2010

Basic demographic data for each participating school is included in Table 3.

Table 3

Demographics of Study Schools - Arkansas School Performance Report - 2010

| <i>Categories</i> | <i>School A</i> | <i>School B</i> | <i>School C</i> |
|--|--|--|--------------------------------|
| Region Location | River Valley | Delta | Ozark |
| Education Cooperative | Western Arkansas Education Service Cooperative | Great Rivers Education Service Cooperative | Northeast Arkansas Cooperative |
| City Classification | Urban | Rural | Rural |
| City Population | 85,544 | 28,400 | 2,817 |
| Grade Levels | Pre-K-6 | Pre-K-6 | Pre-K-5 (6) |
| Size | 610 | 473 | 568 |
| Faculty-Staff Size* | 44 | 43.5 | |
| Principal's Years at School | 8 | 6 | 9 |
| Student Percentage of Free and Reduced Lunch | 95% | 100% | 71% |
| Assistant Principal | Yes | No | Yes |

Study School A is located in an urban city with a population of 85, 544 in the River Valley region of Arkansas. The school's student population is 610 with 95 percent free and reduced, 57 percent Latino students, a pre-kindergarten through sixth grade span. The number of teaching staff is forty-four. The principal is a female between the ages of 20-40 and has been at the school for seven years including one year as an assistant principal. Also, the school has a female assistant principal between the ages of 20-40 who is a member of the school's leadership team (Table 3).

Study School A is a neighborhood school and students come to school by walking or riding in private cars. Students who are transferred from another school because of over enrollment are transported by school bus. The drop-off and loading zones are monitored by teachers and the process of traffic control is effective. The teachers and administrators greet parents and students upon arrival.

Study School B is located in a rural city with a population of 27, 666 in the Delta region of Arkansas. The school's student population is 473 with 100 percent free and reduced, 97.2 percent of African American students, and kindergarten through sixth grade span. The number of teaching staff is forty-three and one-half. The principal is a female between the ages of 40-65 and has been at the school for seven years, serving one year as an assistant principal. Also, the school does not have an assistant principal this year because of the decline of enrollment below under 500 (Table 3).

Study School B is a neighborhood school, with many students walking to school. Students who ride with parents enter the building in one location. This area is monitored by upper-level students who have earned the school's leadership role meeting and greeting their fellow students as they arrive.

Study School C is located in a rural area with a population of 2,817 in the Ozark region of Arkansas. The school's student population is 511 with 73 percent free and reduced students, 98 percent Caucasian students, with a grade-span of pre-kindergarten through six, and serviced by 44 teachers. The principal is a male between the ages of 40-65 and has been at the school for nine years with serving one year as an assistant principal. (Table 3) Also, the school was restructured from a K-6 school to K-5 with the assistant principal overseeing K-6. The K-5 school functions as a K-6 school utilizing the two administrators for leadership.

Because of the rural location, most of the students are bused to school. However, there are some students who ride with parents to school. The parents and students arrive at school happy, and the students are ready for learning. The staff of School C greeted the parents and guests upon arrival. The assistant principal was on duty in the halls while the principal transported students to school on a bus.

The Arkansas State Board of Education approved the administration of an augmented criterion assessment system beginning with spring 2008 test administration. In 2003, the Arkansas Department of Education established the mathematics and literacy starting point for the total (All) and each subgroup beginning with 2001-2002 as the baseline year. Twelve equal increments were established that will ultimately lead each school and each subgroup within that school to 100 percent proficiency by the 2013-2014 school year. Table 4 shows the annual measurement objectives for status or growth for 2008-2011.

Table 4

Annual Measurable Objectives for Status and Growth (Normes, 2008)

| Year | Grade | Math | Literacy |
|-----------|-------|-------|----------|
| 2007-2008 | K-5 | 55.00 | 56.80 |
| | 6-8 | 46.83 | 51.40 |
| 2008-2009 | K-5 | 62.50 | 64.00 |
| | 6-8 | 55.69 | 59.50 |
| 2009-2010 | K-5 | 70.00 | 71.20 |
| | 6-8 | 64.55 | 67.60 |
| 2010-2011 | K-5 | 77.50 | 78.40 |
| | 6-8 | 73.41 | 75.70 |

For the school year 2010-2011, the K-5 percent achieving proficiency or advanced in mathematics is 77.50 percent of the students tested with exception of mobile students. Students are classified as mobile if they were not enrolled on October 1 of the school year.

In 2007 the Arkansas Department of Education implemented the growth model as approved by the United States Department of Education (USDE) for the 2007-2008 school year. If a school did not meet Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) by status or Safe Harbor model, may apply for the growth model. The growth model is used for those students who did not score proficient but made acceptable growth based on a formula developed by USDE. Table 5 shows the Arkansas Department of Education School Improvement Ratings.

Table 5

School A: Arkansas Department of Education, School Improvement Report, Normes School Report Card (May 27, 2010)

| SCHOOLS | GAINS RATING | | |
|----------------|---|--|---|
| | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
| Study School A | “Level 5” schools of excellence for improvement | “Level 3” schools meeting improvement standards | “Level 4” schools exceeding improvement standards |
| Study School B | “Level 5” schools of excellence for improvement | “Level 3” schools meeting improvement standards | “Level 3” schools meeting improvement standards |
| Study School C | “Level 5” schools of excellence for improvement | “Level 1” schools in need of immediate improvement | “Level 2” schools on alert |

Schools A, B, and C received the gains rating of “Level 5” school of excellence for school improvement in 2008. The rating is based on the number of gains on the Augmented Benchmark Assessment for the combine population of students and subgroups of students in grades three through five.

RESULTS

INTERVIEWS AS RELATED TO THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Behavior I. Academic Excellence

To collect information for Hoy and Hoy's (2009) Behavior I, Principals were asked:

- Tell me your beliefs regarding individual student achievement.
- How do you articulate your beliefs in your personal and professional life?
- Describe how you maintain continuous improvement for your staff.
- Tell me what you do to create a safe environment for your students.
- How do the principal and teachers build a culture of trust?

To collect information for Hoy and Hoy's (2009) Behavior I. teachers were asked the following questions in a one-to-one interview setting:

- How does your principal articulate that all students can achieve?
- How does your principal ensure continuous improvement?
- How does your principal create a safe environment for your students?
- How do the principal and teachers build a culture of trust?

STUDY SCHOOL A

The principal, assistant principal, and nine teachers were interviewed using Hoy and Hoy (2009 six principals' instructional leadership behavior model. Of the eleven participants seven were members of the school's leadership team including the principal and assistant principal. The school's leadership team has eleven members: the principal, the assistant principal, two reading recovery teachers, a kindergarten teacher, a fifth grade teacher, a counselor, two interventionist teachers, a media specialist and a special education teacher.

The principal's belief is that every child can learn and it is the school's task to help every child reach their potential through modeling and leading the mission. In addition, the principal believes that the staff must be a role model for the students to be successful. The principal stated that her personal belief is demonstrated through her professional life. She strives to be a role model and lead the mission through a team approach which involves all stakeholders in decision making. One method used with Pre-kindergarten parents is the Teaching Important Parenting Skills (T.I.P.S.) program which involves pre-school and kindergarten parents learning with the students within the classrooms. The principal revealed that she is a good listener and provides motivation through inspirational quotes that she posts throughout the staff meeting rooms and lounge area (artifact). The long term effect is important!

In order to ensure a safe environment procedures are in place for constantly monitoring and adjusting for improvement. The procedures are reinforced on the morning show with the word of the week, staff modeling and support, praising students, and being consistent.

The eleven participants were in close agreement in the research's significant areas that lead to academic excellence. These factors were collaboration, a focus on high achievable goals, and observable actions and words by the principal, teachers, and students. Teachers shared that procedures were in place, to create a safe environment for students and working environment communication of trust. Working together helps build a trust in the learning environment. This idea of trust will be exhibited in the teachers' comments below.

The following are some thoughts purported by the faculty regarding the leadership style of their principal. The principal leads us in the vision that all students can achieve (Participant 11). We set the expectation of respect within the school setting: respect yourself, respect others in your environment, and never interfere with learning. The principal is consistent with parental

contact and holds teachers to high standards of a safe environment. Whenever there are problems or concerns the principal will follow through with feedback. Knowing that our principal supports us and is there to help us achieve and be successful is important. She “walks the walk and talks the talk” daily (Participant 8, Lines 123-129). The staff meets together establish the vision of promoting individual student growth, building relationships among teachers and students. The grade level teachers and common subject teachers are provided common planning time to sustain continuous improvement. Systems are built to examine data vertically and horizontally. Our principal “does a very good job of creating a safe learning environment for students” (Participant 2).

In addition, to ensuring a safe learning environment, the staff and students follow safety codes by practicing fire, tornado, and intruder drills (Participant 6). Visitors report to the office first and students have hall passes when out of class. Subsequently, the standard for our school is protection of instructional time-no interruptions. Teachers do not interrupt other teachers except through emails or planning time. Through the morning broadcast (Participant 2, 3, 8, 10, and 11) the principal instills the procedures or challenges for the day to ensure that students are working and learning. The Friday whole school celebrations in the cafeteria, as well as the principal’s newsletter, recognize accomplishments, as related to student achievement and teacher performance (Participant 8, principal, artifact). Further, the principal contacts parents through connect calls (school based communication system) to ensure parents are informed of procedures and policies and students’ needs.

Additional comments were the following. During our leadership team meetings we aggregate and disaggregate data and report our findings to determine what is needed for student success (Participant 6). Also, the leadership teams analyze formative and summative assessments

from The Learning Institute (TLI), which is an external assessment provider for the district and The ACTAAP State assessment. They brainstorm either change in instruction or group size of students. The teams report back findings from the assessments such as skills not mastered and solutions for remediation. (Participant 4) The staff is always learning and our principal sets the expectations. She articulates that we are at different stages of development for the learning community (Participants 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, and 11). We cannot change everything at one time. She helps us to find out what we need and supports that.

Further comments were also presented. The building procedures are designed at the beginning of the year, taught to the students, and revisited as needed to remind the students of the expectations. Safety is not the only issue but conversations with students are held concerning the roles of the adults as helpers for them with their problems (Participant 4, 5, 7, 9). Building consistent, confidential relationships of trust between adults and students is on-going. Relationships with each other are consistently built and some things are handled confidentially. Students are constantly reminded that the adults are here to help, and they can rely on with adults for support. The staff strives to build a companionship connection. Our principal is “anal” about every policy, procedures and rules. She firmly believes that a rule is a rule and applies to everyone. There are no special treatments! (Participant 9, Lines 39-43) The principal expects everyone to follow the rules and procedures. She constantly talks to us about the procedures and this vision is articulated to students and staff. The staff works collaboratively; the staff is always welcome to discuss issues with the principal. Working together helps build trust in our learning environment. The staff believes in this idea of trust as exhibited in their further comments.

Additional positive comments were as follows. The school’s promise statement which is an affirmation of the mission statement, and mission statement are taught utilizing an

instructional strategy such as analyzing the parts of speech. We have positive conversation about the students and teachers' mission. The principal expresses to everyone that future success depends on personal achievement. In addition, the meetings are structured with a purpose or objectives communicating the strengths and weaknesses, and ways to improve, or things to do differently. With the teachers she also discusses "how are we impacting achievement and what strategies we are using". Our principal monitors the plan and is involved and supportive. There is an open model of trust often revealing everything that is needed for students' achievement.

Moreover, the principal offers opportunities for growth through workshops and follows-up after training (Participant 9, 10). The principal leads us in the walk, garnering direction through Standards Based Curriculum (SBC). The principal does Classroom Walk-Throughs (CWT) or observations examining the data and meeting to discuss certain areas of weakness, discussing "where do we need to go to help ourselves to strive for better instruction" (Participant 11, Lines 13-34). She provides immediate feedback from the CWT done by her or the district's administrative team.

Building a culture of trust with the principal and faculty is facilitated by the frequent meetings with the staff collaborating on best practices and problem solving. The staff works together and depends on the expertise of all members. Relationships are formed based on the open communication which is focused on student achievement. The data provides evidence of strengths as well as evidence of teaching and learning (Participants 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, and 10). The staff is challenged during all meetings to discover: How we can improve our students? (Participant 4) We have an open-door policy, which means we can talk about issues anytime without feeling threatened while working together. This openness of communication helps to

build a culture of trust (Participants 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, and 11). The principal's asking "How are we going to help them?" (Participants 4, Lines 1-6) [helps to bring the group together as one!]

STUDY SCHOOL B

The principal and nine teachers were interviewed using Hoy and Hoy's (2009) six principal's instructional leadership behavior model. Of the ten participants eight were members of the school's leadership team including the principal. The school's leadership team has ten members: the principal, the math coach, two literacy coaches, the physical education/health teacher, a kindergarten teacher, a first grade teacher, a second grade teacher, a third grade teacher, and a fourth grade teacher representatives. Due to the decrease of enrollment, Study School B does not have an assistant principal. However, the principal utilizes the physical education teacher for assistance. This teacher is an aspiring principal who is enrolled in a higher education program.

The principal articulated this "All students can achieve not at the same time, the same rate, and not always at the same level we want them to. We as educators should have high expectations for all of our students. All staff members are accountable for student achievement and we hold all our students accountable for their achievement. We try to keep our parents involved to help make this happen". (Principal, Lines 29-38) Also, the principal stated that "Our decisions are data driven trying to determine-where the students are and where they need to be. Whatever is preventing student achievement we try to work through that? It may be a learning disability or behavior disorder; we will work through the issues." The principal stated that in her personal and professional life she articulates that belief in everything that she does. Whether through the district's mission statement or the school's mission statement she strives to set the example. This belief is demonstrated in whatever, she is doing: staff meetings, memos,

communicating with staff, students, and parents. “They will know what we need to do and how we’re going to do it, and they will articulate that we can do it!” she demonstratively affirms.

Implanting this idea that we can do it into the school operations, home connections and community participation that we can do it takes a lot of communication on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. However, the data is at the forefront. Our Benchmark and Block assessments (both formative and summative assessments) provide valuable feedback of teaching and learning or skills needed to focus on. Student and teachers post our results every month with a graphs and charts to visually see our progress (artifact). To build a culture of trust the principal deals with issues that she feels that will affect the school culture. Also, she feels that she does not have to know everything, but, if issues arise she will handle them “quickly, quietly, and discreetly if possible”.

The teachers reported that the principal has high standards (Participant 8) and articulates that all students can achieve in so many ways: the principal works closely with the coaches, conducts classroom observations, models instruction, uses data to assess strengths and weakness, focuses on students’ areas of need, provides remediation, and works with parents. “Whatever we can do to get kids up to where they should be is our goal” she intently declares. The mission statement is communicated over the intercom every morning by students (Participant 2, Lines 2-6). Our principal is involved in the classrooms, works closely with curriculum coordinators; meet with coaches and district coordinators to figure out what the problem is to fix it. We work closely together (Participant 3, 5, 7). The principal is a role model showing by example what the staff should do to communicate that all students can achieve “given the opportunity and the tools” (Participant 5, Line 2).

“We study our data and go the extra mile for remediation” (Participant 5, Lines 2-7). Most of what is done by the staff deals with data which is obtained through different assessments: block testing system of western school district. The block test really drives our instruction and remediation for reaching student achievement as measured by the state’s benchmark exam. Through our faculty meetings we analyze data from the block assessments to determine where we are (Participants 2, 10).

Further, examining the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) for K-6th grades, Individualized Education Program (IEP) [for students with delayed skills or other disabilities who might be eligible for special services] are part of the data that the principal and teachers use for assessing the learning. Students attend after-school remediation, and the Adopt-a-Student program by the staff helps student achievement. Adopt a Student is an innovative remediation system where teachers are assigned students to build relationship and work on areas of weaknesses. The teachers turn in documents showing the contacts and methods used for the students.

The principal’s encouragement and motivational tactics help us to realize that there are different levels of learning, different levels of curriculum, and different groupings of students. The teachers rotate and mix up the configuration of students to give low level students opportunities to feel successful with higher achievers. In addition, the principal monitors the classroom, review lesson plans, gives ideas if we are falling behind, and ask coaches to give ideas for improvement. The principal provides continuous help and the teachers feel that there is support (Participant 8).

Continuous improvement revolves around following our goals, examining our block test results and talking about individual students. The teachers work on improvement in the

classroom as well as improvement in student behavior. During the monthly meeting the staff examines the scores, identifies students who need improvement or bubble students, which are students who are three or four points above or below the target. The students are identified and encouraged during one-on-one tutoring each week. The teachers keep a weekly log for each student that is remediated to provide evidence of learning. The teachers are provided support through attending conferences that will help continuous growth with instructional strategies (Participants 7, 8, 9).

The principal's personality contributes to the morale that all students can achieve (Participant 8, 9). Also, the principal demonstrates to us that students should not get an easy pass that we should push them to strive for what they can achieve. Through different staff activities relationships are cultivated and trust is established. For instance, the staff socializes during Christmas sharing experiences and learning about each other. The staff retreat during the summer was an exciting event, offering an opportunity for the staff to learn about each other, as well as to learn about best practices. Building strong relationships and seeing your coworker as a friend while working together and collaborating builds trust. There is not of lot of teacher turn-over [which helps trust to build overtime]. There is respect for our principal. The students can go to her if there is a problem. They love our principal [which helps to create an environment of trust].

Everyone enters through one door in the morning and reports to the cafeteria. The principal is visible in the hallway along with other teachers monitoring the safety of the students. The principal is in the classroom daily observing and sometimes taking notes and ensuring a safe environment for students. She makes sure discipline is taken care of and is visible in the school. She is in cafeteria, monitoring for a safe environment for students (Participants, 7, 9). The principal talks to the staff about things we can do in the building and classroom for the safety of

students. Teachers monitor students and often send students in pairs if needed. We have an open door policy that is confidential regarding personal and school related issues.

The teachers feel that the school is a safe environment because of the policies, cameras, and discipline, which is handled effectively. In addition, all doors are locked to deter intruders except the front main entrance. We have to trust our principal and she has to trust us which comes with professionalism (Participant 6, 9). Also, to help create a safe environment for students, teachers explain to each child that it is important that he/she feels safe and protected while at school.

Further, teachers explain to students the policy regarding bullying, and that they can report any problem and it will be addressed. We are vigilant and stay on top of everything by “keeping those eyes in the back of our head, ears open and listening to students who seek help” (Participant 5). The procedures and policies in place deal with students socially and emotionally and foster an environment for zero tolerance of bullying.

STUDY SCHOOL C

The principal, eight teachers and the assistant principal were interviewed using Hoy and Hoy’s (2009) six principal’s instructional leadership behavior model. Of the ten participants seven were members of the school’s leadership team including the assistant principal. The school’s leadership team has ten members: the assistant principal, a the curriculum specialist, the activities representative, a kindergarten teacher, a first grade teacher, a second grade teacher, a third grade teacher, a fourth grade teacher, a fifth grade teacher, and a sixth grade teacher. Due to an absence, another first grade teacher was interviewed as a representative for that grade.

The principal of Study School C stated that every child has potential but it is his belief that every child actually does not achieve his or her full potential because of things happening in

the home or school or in other situations. However, it is the school's responsibility to try to get all children closer to their full potential. Providing a positive place, directing the right paths, and motivating the students are our goals. However, it is an uphill battle that we must continue to fight while doing the best we can at school.

The principal's personal and professional life is dictated by treating everyone with respect and patience. He feels that his job is to not demean but to be more of a positive influence by supporting and directing the staff and students to solve problems through reflection. To maintain excellence in the community, the principal stated that acting as a professional with staff, parents, and students, while releasing a little bit of silliness, at appropriate times, helps to build relationships and respect. It is his desire that all students not only feel comfortable with him but also have respect for him as a leader. Treating everyone with respect, stopping to listen to them, and making time to communicate builds the culture of trust in our school.

The teachers reported that the principal articulates the following beliefs. All students can achieve through high expectations of the staff and students. His belief is stated during meetings with the team of teachers in each grade level. The team consists of literacy teachers, math teachers, science teachers, literacy coaches, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals. The team meets weekly to discuss student achievement and to provide support for the students who are not making progress. At the beginning of the year, the staff meets to examine the benchmark results to determine what's going on, what can be done and what the weak areas of instruction are. After regular joint grade-level team meetings, students are carefully selected for services offered: double dip which is extra time teaching skills not mastered, appropriate resources for the classroom, and special needs students included into the regular classrooms. (Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10) Because of the high number of low socio-economic

students, our principal comments on the student progress made by thanking the staff and building the positives, articulating that all students can achieve regardless of economic circumstances.

(Participant 3)

Other ideas articulated by the principal were as follows. To ensure the continuous improvement of student achievement, the teachers responded that there was constant communication, data driven instruction through examining the data from the benchmark interim Target Assessment, and classroom walk-throughs. (Participant 2) Target Assessments are quarterly external assessments provided for the district. There is a continual examining of what's working and what's not working. Sometimes a learning approach is working for one teacher and not others. The teachers exchange teaching methods that help effect student learning. (Participant 2) Providing continuous embedded professional development for teachers utilizing the literacy coaches is a valuable tool.

The coaches talk directly to the teachers' daily providing support for teaching and learning. Also, sixty hours of required professional development is offered through our district and coop services and school. Our district provides support for purchasing research-based materials and supplies. In addition, our leadership team monitors the schools' programs continuously. For instance, the reading levels of students from kindergarten through sixth grade using the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). The school has technology and teachers are trained to utilize the promethean boards' instructional strategies.

(Participants, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 9)

The teachers stated that to ensure a safe environment for the students, the principal's visibility is number one (Participants 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7). The principal walks around and monitors constantly and is everywhere all the time and easily accessible to kids. The students

feel like they can talk to him at any point of time and tell him their problems. (Participant 4) In fact, the principal takes care of issues such as behavior and bullying. (Participant 7) The school's video cameras are a great defense for a safe environment. Everything is monitored and captured on video. The involvement of parents in the school "Watch Dog Dads" where the dads are monitoring on campus during the regular school day provides support for school safety. (Participant 2)

Building a culture of trust is not a big issue around here (Participant 9) because we are all from the same area and grew up together. However, through the weekly meetings where we collaborate, trust has been built over time. (Participant 10) The teachers stated that the principal's consistency, communication, and mutual respect are penetrated through the school. Working together professionally as a team, sharing concerns, being open-minded, and listening and talking makes the staff feel appreciated. (Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8)

Behavior II. Instructional Excellence and Continuous Improvement

To collect information for Hoy and Hoy's (2009) Behavior II., the Principal was asked:

- Describe how you maintain continuous improvement for your staff and students.
- What activities do your teachers do for continuous growth-instructionally and academically?
- How do you monitor the climate or culture of the school?
- What do you do to motivate teachers to continue to improve?

To collect information for Hoy and Hoy's (2009) Behavior II ten teachers from Study School A, nine teachers from Study Schools B and C were asked the following questions in a one-to-one interview setting:

- What activities does your principal do to ensure continuous growth-instructionally and academically?
- How does your principal give teachers decisions to improve on areas of needs?

STUDY SCHOOL A

Study School A principal stated that the continuous improvement of the staff and students is maintained by on-going professional development based on individual needs of teachers through surveys and examining the benchmark data. Every year the staff disaggregates the data to determine strengths and weaknesses of instructional strategies, student performance, and school resources. Also, professional development is based on the instructional programs in place for students. Programs such as Cognitive Guided Instruction (CGI) for math and Every Child a Writer (ECAW) for writing instruction help foster on-going professional development.

The professional development is designed in various ways. One particular design is job embedded. Job embedded is training the teachers within the classroom setting through coaching. The principal's and district's team of professionals, through Classroom Walk-Throughs, provide data of best practices implemented in the classroom. One-to-one conferences and reflections with teachers ensure continuous improvement and growth. Finally, through collaborative group meetings with focusing on best practices connected to the data from formative and summative assessments helps teachers to grasp an understanding of expectations. Constant praise motivates the staff to self-efficacy or taking ownership.

The climate and culture are monitored through discipline referrals; students' missing recess; observations in classrooms; teacher feedback; and parent, student, and grade level leaders' feedback. Being a visible support activates the climate and culture of seriousness or dedication. Various motivational tools are used by the principal: a newsletter with a section for

praising and recognizing great things, writing five positive notes per week recognizing genuine things, sending positive emails, highlighting staff and students on the morning broadcast, and just promoting positive things.

The teachers referred to the Standards Based Classroom (SBC) cycle of instructional strategies: planning, teaching, assessing, and re-teaching so that all students meet the established standard of learning. The expectations for learning are discussed in the vertical and horizontal meeting of the staff. The conversations are centered on the data collected through observations and assessments. The teams are consistently looking for a move towards growth. Anything that is new to the district teachers is encouraged by the principal for the staff to attend the training. The principal and staff have extremely high expectations (Participant 9). The teachers' professional growth plans (PGP) gives the teachers the opportunity to reflect on weak or strong areas and select that area to improve (Participant 8). The principal is very supportive and always follow-up after observations (Participants, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11).

The teachers stated that the principal uses many motivational strategies. Positive and encouraging information sometimes verbal and often written are practiced (Participant 3). The principal puts notes in the teachers' mailboxes (Participants 2, 5, 7 and 11). The principal's newsletter often addresses positives (Participants 2, and 8). It's the little things that matter (Participant 5). She meets with the staff privately, during grade level and leadership meetings, and talks about other successful schools. Most importantly the principal articulates to the staff that we can no longer plan or teach the way we did 20 years ago. We will be cheating the kids and cheating ourselves as professionals.

STUDY SCHOOL B

The principal indicated that keeping everybody informed and on board believing that we can achieve maintains excellence within the learning community. Also, being visible investigating what is going on and fixing those things that need attention. She further stated that it is a daily, weekly, and monthly endeavor. Realizing that the data must be in the forefront is imperative. The block assessments design by the district's central office team helps us to continue to accelerate. There is a constant reminder around the building of the expected adequate yearly progress for the year, a focus calendar which displays skills and assessments pacing guide. Finally, a graph that demonstrates students' scores is visible in the hall. It is a conversation piece and students and staff reflect on where we've been and where we are individually and collectively. In the team meetings, the teachers talk about what we need to do with particular students and the coaches and principal monitor the progress.

The once-a-week common planning time for grade level teachers is devoted to collaboration focusing on student achievement. In addition, teachers have further planning time after school. The school provides remedial instruction once a week for the lowest achieving students. Teacher-made tests, both formal and informal assessments play an important role when analyzing data for trends in the learning. The culture and climate of the school is monitored through listening to everyone and addressing any issues as they develop. The principal promotes a positive climate through offering little awards such as coupons for over and above actions implemented by teachers and treats such as chocolate. The principal also rewards teachers for students' performance on the monthly block assessment. She loves to praise the staff for wonderful actions.

The teachers in Study School B stated that grade-level teachers hold weekly meetings with the grade level teachers which alternate between literacy (LIT), math (MIT) and science (SIT) focus. The coaches in each of these areas assist in the classrooms modeling lessons, observing, and providing feedback. This embedded professional development provides one-on-one assistance (Participants 3, and 9). Tracking growth or skills not mastered and posting the results in graph form in the main hall is a constant reminder of the focus of learning. Observations either formal or informal provide insight to what is working and what is not. On-going professional development gives teachers opportunities to hone in skills for instruction or new strategies (Participants 4, 5, 7, 8, and 10). The training with Education City a program for smart boards provided information for a more effective integrating of technology into classroom instruction (Participant 8). The regular meetings every Tuesday create a collaborative team building relationship that enhances the reliance of the staff on each other. The staff believes they are accountable for their students' continuous learning. The principal is a supportive and is a mentor for the teachers (Participant 4).

The principal's motivational use of kind words uplifts the staff (Participant 3). Little treats (simple things) are placed in the teachers mail boxes: drinks, candy, or coupons (jean day) or "just a pat on the back" (Participant 5, Line 44). Also, positive notes are posted in the teachers' lesson plan books. The principal compliments teachers by stating, "You're doing a good job (Participant 7, Line 31)." Any small growth is always recognized (Participants 2, 3, 7, and 10).

Opportunities to attend conferences or professional develop motivates the teachers to continue to improve (Participants 8 and 9). Having the time to meet together provides meaningful dialogue. The principal is very supportive, a mentor for the teachers and stays after

hours to help the staff. However, she says, “Motivation comes from within at our school” (Participant 9, Line 40).

STUDY SCHOOL C

The principal stated that maintaining excellence with the learning community means keeping abreast of the changes while at the same time being able to weed out the nonsense. It also means implementing things that you know will work for teachers and the students. What may work at other schools may not be best for you. Teachers take part in quality professional development activities that foster their continual growth. Sometimes it may take them out of the classroom. However, opportunities are provided for the teachers to improve instructionally. Monitoring the climate and culture of the school is predicated on being in the classrooms as much as possible. Also, being visible in the halls to ascertain the feeling tone of the teachers is important. The principal stated that investigating whether the teachers are having a good day and being able to help balance the teachers’ reactions helps to ensure a good climate. Trying to keep the teachers working hard and not stressed and on balanced emotionally is his task every day. In addition, talking to the teachers provides support. Lastly, the teachers’ professional growth plans that are formulated at the end of the year in order to provide him an opportunity to push the teachers to do things that he has seen work! The staff has built a climate where they want to do better to improve test scores which is another motivational factor!

The teachers stated that meeting every week with principals and coaches is very positive. The rotation of study is literacy, math, book study, and choice of focus. The teachers’ book study is dealing with students of poverty and learning. Having the opportunity for open communication with each other, listening to various opinions about best practices and solving problems about what they need to do next or what direction should be taken is significant for teachers’

continuous growth (Participants 2, 3, and 4). Examining the data as a grade level team and adjusting the curriculum and daily routines provides additional support. Further, the principal provides encouragement and praise along the way and does not act like a dictator (Participants 5, 6, 7, 9, and 10).

The principal's communications from weekly classroom walk-throughs, emails, and professional development help to provide continuous growth (Participant 9). The professional development plan is based on best practices research and teachers' have the opportunity to select their preferences. The teachers' professional growth plans are followed and reviewed every year. Through observations the plans are monitored (Participants 1, 4, 5, 6, 9, and 10).

Motivating teachers to continue to improve is enacted upon through surveys from teachers, weekly grade level meeting, professional development opportunities, and consultants to train staff on programs that are used for instruction-accelerated math (Participants 2, 4, and 7). Communication, as well as having a community of teachers from the same town, is the motivating factor for the teachers.

Behavior III: Instructional Improvement

To collect data for Hoy and Hoy's (2009) Behavior III, instructional improvement, nine teachers, the assistant principal of Study School A, nine teachers and the principal of Study School B, and eight teachers, assistant principal and the principal were interviewed and the principal. The following question was asked from the principal:

- How do you give teachers decisions to improve on areas of needs?

To collect data for Hoy and Hoy's (2009) Behavior III the teachers were asked the following question:

- How does your principal give teachers decisions to improve on areas of needs?

STUDY SCHOOL A

The principal shared the reflective coaching model learned through training with Mr. Larry Lock. This system is based on principal's observations, followed by conferencing with the teacher and giving strategies which build ownership. This type of professional development is tailored for the individual teacher. The principal explained to the researcher that the teachers opted not to have whole school staff meetings, but preferred one-to-one support. The professional development is on-going and provides two types of data teacher self-reporting and classroom observation (Rock, 2002). Rock (2002) stated that the goals of reflective coaching are: "increase student achievement, refine existing instructional strategies, introduce new instructional strategies, and incorporate training time to learn new instructional strategies" (p. 1).

The teachers stated that the reflective coaching model is used to give teachers decisions to improve on areas of needs? Through feedback from observations, data from assessments and observations the principal allows the teachers to explore areas of improvement. The training may come from instructional coaches or the principal (Participants 2, 3, 6, and 7). Another method for giving teachers decisions to improve is during weekly planning meetings. The teachers discuss and sometimes vote on certain approaches or implementation of teaching strategies or programs (Participants 5, 8, and 11). In addition, the principal gives positive support through newsletters or emails. Communication is vital whether one-on-one or group. Everyone has the ability to voice concerns or needs during meetings. It is a democracy (Participant 5). The principal communicates what successful schools do and relates learning to a basketball coach (Participant 9).

STUDY SCHOOL B

The principal of Study School B stated that in order to give teachers decisions to improve on areas of needs the evaluation process is utilized. Evaluations are based on weekly classroom visits and formative and summative collected data. The small things are addressed as needed, such as classroom management, instructional strategies, and student engagement. If the teachers are not performing best practices, conferences with the individual teachers involving the instructional coaches, peer teachers, or principal are scheduled. Consistent, communication and modeling best practices provide support. In addition the teachers are encouraged to base sixty hours of professional on areas of needs. The principal stated that the teachers know what professional development or training will provide support for them.

The teachers' responses to how the principal gives them decisions to improve on areas of needs indicated that the data generated by the principal through classroom walk-throughs are used for continuous feedback (Participants 2, 5, and 6). The data from the school's Block and Benchmark Assessments is reviewed weekly by the teachers. Examining growth for individual teachers and students provides feedback for improvement (Participant 3). The principal administer surveys for the teachers to complete, which provides additional feedback from individual teachers (Participant 10).

The principal has set up other systems of support for improvement of needs: Professional Learning Communities where teachers work with other teachers in the district (Participant 9); and, research based strategies (Participant 4) are two of these systems. The teachers' Professional Growth Plan is a requirement for setting goals and actions for improvement. The plan is monitored by the principal ((Participants 6, and 7). The teachers have a voice in developing a plan of action for needs' improvement (Participants 6, and 8).

STUDY SCHOOL C

The principal stated that some teachers are asked to improve in certain areas. We talk to them about in-service that is needed for them to improve. Further, the principal indicated that this method is almost “deceptive” (Lines 107-110). However, it is needed for some staff members. The teachers meet and decide which areas of improvement will benefit the students. The data from many sources helps to formulate the discussions and plans.

The teachers stated that the Benchmark data, and classroom walk-throughs and observations give the teachers direction for improvement. During the weekly meetings, the teachers discuss where we are and what needs improvement. The interventionist works with the group to help find solutions. After discussion, the teachers get approval from the principal (Participants 1, 2, 5, 6, and 7). The Professional Growth Plans are the main documents used to reflect on improvement (Participants 3, 4, and 9). The Professional Growth Plans are addressed at the beginning of the year after examining the Benchmark data. This on-going document is revisited throughout the year. Finally, the principal sends surveys to teachers for input of professional development needs (Participant 9).

Behavior IV: Principal Provides Support

To address Behavior IV, the principals were asked the following questions:

- What resources do you provide for teachers?
- How do you determine what materials and resources are needed for you school?

To gather data for Behavior IV the teachers were asked the following questions.

- What resources does your principal provide for teachers?

- How does your principal determine what materials and resources are needed for your school?

STUDY SCHOOL A

The principal indicated the support for the following programs, which are implemented within the school, is provided to the teachers: Every Child A Writer (ECAW), Cognitive Guided Instruction (CGI), technology production of student engagement resources. The classroom walk-throughs and school achievement data for literacy and science provided relevant insight on the needs. After examining the classroom materials and literacy scores, it was determined that more leveled books were needed for instruction in the classrooms. In addition, to help with penmanship a discovery of holes in the curriculum provided support for literacy. The science Benchmark indicated that more support was needed for increased student achievement. After classroom observations on student engagement, the use of technology as a tool was determined to be beneficial. The principal reflected on the concentration on needs for the future is important for continuous improvement.

The teachers responded that the principal provides anything that is needed. The only prerequisite is that the teachers must show how the materials and supplies will benefit student achievement (Participants 3, 7, and 9). For improvement in literacy, books were added to the instructional book room, materials and supplies for the math and science instruction, and lots of technology for the classroom instruction were also added (Participant 5, 7, and 11). In addition, financial support for teacher-release time for professional development and peer observations were added (Participants 2, 8). Human resources are available for teachers including math, literacy, and reading recovery instructors (Participants 2, 7, and 10). The principal is always open to the needs of the staff, and many opportunities are available (Participant 3). In addition, the

connection of the resources to strategies that work in our environment is essential for the school's resources (Participant 6).

The principal determines the materials and resources needed for the school through feedback from the teachers (Participants 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10). The feedback is from surveys, observations, and test data in group discussions or one-on-one conferences with principal or instructional facilitators. The principal focuses on the "needs of the world and what students will need to survive" (Participants 3 and 7). Often the teachers are given the power to vote on issues (Participant 8). The bottom line is everyone wants what's best for kids. This requires knowing the population of students within the school's educational needs and utilizing what is best for kids through research-based tools.

STUDY SCHOOL B

The principal stated whatever that can be provided for the teachers is the goal. Anything that the teachers ask for is supplied through district funds: materials and supplies, consultants inside and outside of the district, smart boards, and substitutes for professional development. Funds are appropriated in the school's Arkansas Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (ACSIP) during the year. If the teachers ask for anything that is aligned with our goals and action plans, provisions are made to obtain it. However, the teachers must have a goal to improve the performances of the students as well as personal performances.

The acquiring of resources is driven by the data of the Arkansas Comprehensive Testing, Assessment, and Accountability (ACTAAP) Smart Start Initiative. For instance, the school's literacy data indicated low improvement. Therefore, the resources and energy were placed in the literacy components of the school. Weekly and daily data are collected through school-wide

observations and teachers' collaborative meetings. The goal is to continue to improve, no matter what it takes.

The teachers overwhelmingly stated that whatever is asked for is granted. The phrase "ALL is supplied we are blessed" was a common expression (Participants 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10). The staff's reaction to the technology focus for the school was motivational (Participants 3, 6, and 9). Other resources such as literacy books professional and instructional tapes are purchased. Providing coaches who model lessons and co-teaching model for special needs students are valuable for continuous growth (Participants 4, and 5). The principal is open to listen and provide what the teachers request (Participant 8).

The teachers reported that the principal determines what is needed for the school during collaboration on the schools ACSIP plan. Discussion about the budget and materials and supplies are collaboratively placed in the improvement plan (Participants 4, 5, and 6). Working closely together monthly and weekly in the team meetings provides additional information for the principal (Participant 4). The school's co-teaching system for special needs students and curriculum materials to support programs determines resources needed. In addition, the principal meets with teachers and coaches to finalize the resources needed for improvement. Teachers can tell the principal of all needs and concerns (Participant 10).

STUDY SCHOOL C

The principal stated teachers are provided with time for in-service, transportation, housing, and meals. Since the Northeast Arkansas Education Cooperation is close to the school, providing professional development at this location is beneficial for teachers. To determine the needs of the staff, the principal listens and looks for things that are beneficial for students and

teachers. The district's office personnel "assist with weeding through and finding what the school needs".

The teachers stated that anything needed and connected to student achievement is granted (Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, and 10). The teachers have the freedom to ask; however, they must justify requests. Materials and supplies to support curriculum and technology curriculum integration are supported. Human resources such as math and literacy instructional coaches are additional assets (Participant 2). At the beginning of the year, teachers receive \$500.00 to purchase supplies for the classroom. Teachers are given release time for professional development. Professional development that is aligned with professional growth plans, school plans or work with other teachers is approved for teachers.

The principal trusts the teachers and observes what is going on in the classrooms to determine what is needed. The school is rich with resources for a rural community (Participant 2). Teachers make requests through emails, grade-level meetings, or surveys. If the resources are buyable and beneficial for teaching the students, they are purchased. This open system of communication is on-going through regular collaboration.

During collaboration sessions, teachers may offer input on resources that have worked. The decisions are based on student interest and teacher needs. Consequently, sharing information of what is working offers perspectives from both sides. The principal keeps abreast of the state and local guidelines and communicates needs to the teachers. In addition, the principal examines What Works Clearinghouse (U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences (IES) web-site for best practices (Participant 1). The principal observes the classrooms and school setting to determine what is needed.

Behavior V: Intellectual Leaders

To collect data for Hoy and Hoy's (2009) Behavior V. the principal was asked the following questions:

- What do you do to keep current with best practices for leadership and teachers?
- How do you share best practices in regards to teaching, assessments, and classroom management?

To collect data from the teachers, one-to-one interviews were conducted and teachers were asked the following questions:

- What does your principal do to keep current with best practices for leadership and teachers?
- How does your principal share best practices in regards to teaching, assessments, and classroom management?

STUDY SCHOOL A

The principal stated that best practices for leadership and teachers are acquired through continuous learning in the Educational Leadership program at a nearby university. An outside contracted consultant has partnered with the principal providing professional job embedded services. The principal articulated that the district is very progressive and oftentimes has outside leaders to provide support. The principal shares the best practices with the staff through weekly newsletters and meetings with staff. Communicating procedures with the entire faculty is implemented for a continuous focus on best practices.

The teachers stated that the principal is a continuous learner and is enrolled in Educational Leadership in Higher Education. The teacher indicated that on-going training for the principal occurs at the school, district, and personal level. While at school, the principal has

opportunities to attend the professional development implemented for the staff. The monthly Standards Based Classroom (SBC) and weekly sessions provide best practices for teachers dealing with teaching assessments and classroom management. Training that occurs on campus related to programs implemented at school provides support for learning.

In addition, other teachers who have attended professional development at other sites present to the staff (Participants 3, 6, 9, and 11). The principal is a reader and copies of books are on her desk. The district administrators meet often and sometimes participate in book studies and audio journals. Feedback from colleagues is another way to acquire best practices within the district.

STUDY SCHOOL B

To keep current with best practices for leadership and teachers, the principal of Study School B stated that outside educational consultant agencies provide ongoing support. Also, the school district's coordinators provide continuous support through training and resources. The best practices are shared through grade-level common planning time-vertical (kindergarten through sixth-grade teacher meetings) or grade level (same subject teacher meetings). The meetings focus on literacy (LIT), math (MIT), science (SIT) and open forum. In addition, the meetings are facilitated by the instructional coaches. The "school is growing leaders".

In regards to the principal keeping current with best practices for leadership, the teachers stated that the principal is in partnership with an educational consultant. This consultant works diligently with the principal and staff to ensure best practices are implemented. The embedded professional development is relevant to best practices necessary for the principal and staff at this particular school setting. The principal attends professional development and conferences for leadership collaborating with other principals and leaders (Participants 2, 3, 6, and 8). In

addition, the principal reads scientific research examining best practices (Participants 3, 4, 5, 9, and 8). Teachers who are enrolled in higher-education programs often share best practices in the team meetings every week (Participant 5). Through the principal's daily observations, best practices are acquired from new teachers who have recently completed studies as well as teachers who have attended workshops (Participants 3, 5). The principal schedules professional development with outside presenters (Participant 3). The goal for the principal is to acquire best practice skills for the staff and leaders that will help student achievement.

Sharing best practices with the staff in regards to teaching, assessments, and classroom management, the teachers reported that this is done through the weekly meetings, one-on-one conferences, or staff retreats. Whether, the principal articulates the information verbally, written, or professional text, the communication process is carried out to the staff (Participants 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10). Often teachers present different strategies and techniques in the weekly and monthly team meetings (LIT, MIT, and SIT). Further, during the ACSIP planning sessions best practice actions are developed for continuous improvement (Participant 6).

STUDY SCHOOL C

The principal of Study School C stated that to keep current with best practices for leadership and teachers, quarterly meetings with other principals, principals' summer institutes, workshops through the coop, and brainstorming sessions for leadership are continuous. To share the best practices, the principal utilizes the weekly grade-level meetings, regular teachers' meetings before or after school, summer staff meetings, and emails.

The teachers stated that the principal keeps current on best practices through professional development offered through the district's cooperative service, district-level meetings, state workshops, book studies, and teachers in the school setting. There is a good communication

system between the cooperative service, the superintendent, and teachers (Participants 2, 6, 7, and 9). There is a level of trust between the above entities (Participants 1, 6, and 7). In addition, the principal implements book studies, researches best practices and communicates with the teachers about best practices that the teachers have attained through training (Participants 2, 3, 4, and 6). The principal's daily walk-throughs are additional components for obtaining best practice techniques.

Further, the teachers stated that the principal communicates best practices through the weekly grade-level team meeting during common planning time, before and after school staff meetings, and in-service training with lead teachers, on campus (Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9). Likewise, the principal shares best practices through emails and teacher visits (Participants 3, 6). The weekly grade-level team meetings are helpful for communications with teachers (Participant 1).

Behavior VI: Principals lead in recognizing and celebrating academic excellence

To collect data for Hoy and Hoy's (2009) Behavior VI, the principal of Study Schools A, B, and C, responded to the following questions:

- What do you do to celebrate or recognize academic success?
- What does trust mean to you and the teachers?
- How is faculty trust with parents and students cultivated?
- What trust-building activities are used?
- How is self-efficacy developed in teachers and students?
- How much emphasis is placed upon academics?
- How optimistic is the school culture?
- How do you build academic optimism in teachers and students?

To collect data for Hoy and Hoy's (2009) Behavior VI, one-to-one interviews were conducted.

The teachers answered the following questions:

- What does your principal do to celebrate or recognize academic success?
- What does trust mean to the principal and teachers?
- How is faculty trust with parents and students cultivated?
- What trust-building activities are used?
- How is self-efficacy developed in teachers and students?
- How much emphasis is placed upon academics?
- How optimistic is the school culture?
- How do you build academic optimism in teachers and students?

STUDY SCHOOL A

The principal stated that recognition and celebrating achievement for students who made proficient or advanced or exhibited growth on the Benchmark occurs in February. Students are rewarded with a trip to the University of Arkansas Lady Razorbacks' game in Fayetteville. There is no cost to the students. Teachers also reward students in their classrooms. The students may receive gift cards or coupons for their choice of restaurants or department stores. Often, teachers eat lunch with the students and offer praises continuously. The smallest gesture means the most to the students.

The teachers believe that trust is honesty and doing what you say consistently and professionally. This trust is cultivated with parents and students by building positive relationships. Trust building activities include team building throughout the year in social settings off campus. Relationships are built through communication about personal life such as family. Again, the little things make the difference.

Through high expectations for administrators, teachers, staff, and students; self-efficacy is developed. Once the expectations are communicated, support is provided for all groups to accomplish them. Every member of the school setting knows the expectation is both proficient and advanced student work, which requires best practices from teachers. Resources are provided such as support personnel, materials and supplies, and time for academic learning and professional collaboration to make that happen. Teachers and students know they have the tools necessary to reach their goals, and they accept personal responsibility for using the tools that are provided to meet the expectations of the entire school community.

To accomplish the expectations, the emphasis is 100 percent work and learn. The staff helps the student with personal and emotional needs to help accomplish success. The co-teaching model has the special needs students learning by being immersed into regular classroom setting. Finally, the principal's motto is "work and learn" (Participants 3, Line 97).. The school culture is optimistic because the resources are available for success. Further, the principal stated that the staff is always optimistic that the school can be a high performing school. Examining the data from The Learning Institute for each student, talking to the students about growth along the course, providing professional development for teachers' growth, and coaching and reflecting conferences for learning builds academic optimism in the school's environment.

In response to the question what does your principal do to celebrate or recognize academic success the school airs school-wide broadcasts each morning, has a school-wide celebration on Fridays, and sponsors trips for students who were proficient or advanced or who exhibited growth. Also, teachers stated that, for Benchmark success, students receive an all-expense-paid trip to the Lady Razorbacks' game at the University of Arkansas campus. During the morning broadcast show, teachers and students are recognized for accomplishments in

academics. On Fridays, the whole school meets in the cafeteria for success in math and reading or for achieving Accelerated-Reader point goals. Math monthly recognitions include time tables accomplished or positive results from the monthly assessments of The Learning Institute (TLI). The staff is rewarded by the principal with pot lucks, positive notes, or announcements on the intercom of accomplishments.

The teachers' replies to what does trust mean to the principal and teachers were as follows:

- ✓ Administration will back you up
- ✓ You can count on each other
- ✓ There is help and support
- ✓ Support and all about learning
- ✓ I'm doing best practices for students
- ✓ Confidential and professional manner
- ✓ Mutual respect that is shared with open communication
- ✓ Stand behind each other

The response to how faculty trust with parents and students is cultivated was positive relationships are built from the top down through communication. The communications include weekly newsletters, positive phone calls, positive notes or conferences with parents and teachers. Also, preschool parents are connected to the school's TIPS program. This program allows parent to learn with the student in the classroom setting.

Activities for building trust for the staff include teachers' meeting at the beginning of the year to become familiar with school data related to students' academic progress. The staff discusses each student to become familiar with the academics, family life and social and

emotional status. The information shared provides targets to talk about with students and parents which help to build relationships (Participants 2, and 8). In addition, the staff talks about methods for positive interactions with students and parents; for instance, one method used is making positive phone calls to parents and students.

The team of teachers working in small groups every week has continued to help build trust among the staff (Participant 3) as well as meeting with teachers after hours at various off-campus sites (Participant 6). Building a community of trust begins with the teachers and flows into the classroom as the school focuses on the “school promise” (Participant 4). Students are welcomed into the school and one-on-one conversations occur between teacher and students (Participant 11). It is the way things are done at the school (Participant 3).

Self-efficacy is developed in teachers and students through constant examination of student data, communicating best practices, sharing with the team of teachers, and providing professional development that will help teachers continue to learn (Participants 2, 5, 6, 8, and 10). In addition, constant feedback and reflection enables the staff to learn and grow, working together to reach the high expectations of learning (Participants 4, 6, 8, and 10). These expectations for learning are modeled from the top (Participant 2).

The tremendous emphasis on academics, safety of students, and emotional stability are the goals of working and learning with academics number one (Participant 3). The school setting also engenders working and learning (Participant 4), with teaching and learning from bell to bell (Participant 2). The staff and students are very positive and optimistic about making progress or growth toward improvement (Participants 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10). The attitude and belief is “We can make a difference,” (Participants 2, 4, 6, and 8). This perception of “We can do it,” is generated through celebrating success, focusing on improvement, concentrating on what we are

learning right now, and on why it is important, and how the learning affects the future (Participant 5).

STUDY SCHOOL B

The principal of School B stated that all students attended a “Benchmark Blowout” at the park. The first day kindergarten through second-grade students attended, and the second day third-grade through sixth-grade students went. The decision to take all students whether proficient or not was made to show the importance of the Benchmark. Further, it was to articulate the goal - all students to become proficient. In addition, the school had a pep rally and awarded certificates to the students who were proficient or advanced. Little celebrations were held in the cafeteria with cake and food. All students attended the pep rally; however, students were dismissed to return to the classroom if they did not earn proficient or advanced on the Benchmark.

After each district Block Assessment, the school celebrated with activities such as slam dunk or hula hoop contests, or dances the students selected. The students enjoy the activities and oftentimes food is not required. The principal stated that “following the requirement for healthy snacks” is the school’s policy.

Celebrating with the staff and recognizing the student achievement was ongoing. Teachers earned coupons which are worth 3:00 early leave. The entire staff was treated to a meal for making state honors for Benchmark success for the 2011. The school was on alert previously, but made state honors because of the achievement.

In response to “What does trust mean to the principal and teachers?” the principal indicated that trust is “everything”. If the principal is aware that something is going on and it does not affect the culture, the response is to leave it alone. However, if the culture will be

affected, the principal makes a conscious effort to intervene by communicating with the individual or group involved. The principal replied that this is done “quickly, quietly, and discreetly if possible”. Every year the principal articulates to the staff the importance of creating an atmosphere of mutual respect. Respect the students, they are our customers and “always right” the Wal-Mart Way. It is important to understand that the students are children from ages five to sometimes fourteen. The adults should be able to perform as adults. Creating an environment of respect for our parents and students starts with the staff building relationships utilizing positive approaches. Positive interactions with phone calls will begin the process. Teachers are asked not to call parents about every little thing that occurs. Some things should be controlled on campus. The school’s task is to treat the parents with respect.

Building trust with the faculty begins early during the summer with activities during professional development sessions. Mostly, trust is built during around school through the professional learning community’s sessions as groups work together problem solving issues for school improvement. This is called on-the-job training. Thus, self-efficacy develops among the students and teachers sharing and collaborating on the school’s data. The data helps to provide information about: what’s going on in the classroom. As a group looking at the big picture and involving all stakeholders, increases the accountability of teaching and learning. A lot of emphasis is placed on academics, especially when the reported results bear individual names. The transparency of the system helps to establish the self-efficacy. In the midst of a data-driven system in place, the teachers work even if they are not teaching a Benchmark area. Everyone plays an important role and helps to improve learning. The staff is very optimistic and very concerned. The expectation is set, an eye is on it (student achievement), and we can do it! We

keep everyone informed about where we are and encouraged with authentic praise, and we balance the negatives and positives.

The teachers' responses to the principal's actions for celebrating and recognizing success is a school-wide effort. The principal makes a big deal about everything (Participant 8). When we are successful, "We scream". Also, the principal puts the staff on a pedestal and is very complimentary and expresses how proud she is (Participant 3). During our grade-level meetings, the school's performance is announced; pictures are taken, and publicized in the newspaper (Participant 10). Oftentimes, staff members are acknowledged before the entire staff and receive a standing ovation (Participant 5). Incentives are placed in the teachers' mailboxes-chocolates, goody bags, coupons (Participants 2, 3, and 4).

To celebrate the students' Benchmark success, there is a blowout with waterslides to motivate them to score proficient or advanced. Students earn Falcon Feathers, which are valued incentives for purchasing in the school's store. Parents attend the blowout day and awards' assembly which recognizes student achievement (Participant 9). Further, the principal initiates staff member of the month and students of the week. The pictures of the individuals are placed on the awards board in the hallway (Participant 6).

Trust to the principal and teachers means:

- ✓ You got my back
- ✓ I believe in you
- ✓ You can go to the principal with an issue and it's okay
- ✓ Meet on a professional level
- ✓ Principal and teachers are doing a good job
- ✓ Doing your job

- ✓ Learning from one another
- ✓ Mutual trust
- ✓ Respect and open minded

Faculty trust with parents and students is cultivated by parents' involvement with the school. The school provides parent nights to help them feel comfortable within the school (Participants 2, 4, 9, and 10). Communicating with the parents and building relationships establishes the trust. However, the first contact must be positive (Participant 5). The parents must be assured that we care for the children and respect the family (Participant 8). Also, parents are invited to observe during the teachers' planning period and not during instructional time (Participant 3). In addition, a parent compact is made between the parents, teachers, and students (Participant 6). This compact outlines the parents' role, teachers' role, and students' role in the learning process. The compact is reviewed during parent-teacher conferences.

Trust-building activities include 21 hours of conferencing with parents and students (Participants 8, 9, 10). Parents' opinions are solicited through surveys or verbal communication (Participant 2). Teachers do what they tell the parents that they will do (Participants 2 and 4). One of the most memorable trust-building exercises for the staff was the overnight retreat during the summer. Spending the night gave the teachers an opportunity to build strong relationships through interacting with one another (Participant 5).

Self-efficacy is developed in teachers and students through the use of on-going Block Assessments that measure growth overtime. The Block Assessment is a constant short-term measurement that provides information about where we are. The teachers are comfortable examining the data (Participants 2, 3, and 9). The staff is accountable and responsible for actions (Participant 8). Self-efficacy is established by the principal, moves to the teachers, and finally

ends with the students (Participant 6). The staff feels that they are a team which is supportive, and students know the expectations (Participant 4). This team spirit enhances self-efficacy because one feels that he or she is not alone (Participant 5). “I’ve learned to just do it; momma said it so just do it” (Participant 10).

The academics, which are vitally important, are continually emphasized. The Block Assessments report ranks the elementary schools in the district. The students and teachers examine the results to see where we are. Social skills are implemented to help with discipline and making the right choices (Participants 4 and 6). The culture of the school is optimistic because of the way the teachers work trying to improve and the target is steadily moving up (Participant 4). Optimism is what a teacher is willing to bring to the school. The perception is one gets what one puts into it (Participant 9). Everybody knows that we can do this and are going to be successful because we believe that kids can do (Participant 5, 10). This optimism is centered on setting goals, reviewing the data from the Block Assessment, giving Rewards for doing well, among other things (Participants 2, 4, 8, 9, and 10). The principal instills in the staff a hope in the students, and the teachers’ believe that we can accomplish the goals (Participant 8). The teachers keep working toward improvement, which is hard work that takes effort (Participant 5).

STUDY SCHOOL C

To celebrate for academic success the principal stated that the school has Pony Power awards. The awards had occurred every nine weeks, but in 2011 the awards were offered only once a semester. The problem was that the parents had to leave work, which caused a hardship. Also, instructional time suffered the four times yearly. Awards were given for accelerated math and accelerated reader student points earned. Students received little trinkets and toys, as well as

ice cream, when they reached a certain level. In addition, the school had a big bouncy play day, which rewarded the students for their achievement. The principal felt like the students worked hard and deserved a play day.

The principal stated that trust is everything to the teachers and principal. If trust breaks down, then big problems occur. “Where trust breaks down, it is like a train derailing. Things do not go well at all”. Also, losing trust inhibits the mission of teaching and learning. Therefore, maintain is definitely preferred over losing it. Rebuilding trust is an extremely difficult endeavor. Building faculty trust with the parents and students is accomplished during parent-teacher conferences. The school tries to provide a safe environment to communicate during conferences. However, in a small town, parents and students are always visible in the community stores. As professionals, we must communicate positives with the parents and students at all times. Keeping it upbeat may be difficult sometimes when the task is talking about retention. However, the principal informs the staff to dwell on the positives, such as how the decisions made will benefit the child. Activities for building trust are accomplished on a daily basis. For example, when parents are in the building, stopping to talk to them in the hallway builds trust. When the parents arrive at school in the morning with the students, talking to them helps to establish relationships.

Self-efficacy began developing in teachers and students with the implementation of the Reading First Program. The program required students to be responsible for the learning by working at different stations or projects while the teacher worked with individuals or groups. The students grew and learned how to work in groups with assigned roles. A lot of emphasis was placed on academics. The principal tried to maintain as stress-free of an atmosphere as possible. The school culture was very optimistic. The optimism grew stronger every year. The principal stated that it was the administrator’s duty to keep the culture optimistic. The principal’s role also

included keeping the staff working together and communicating positively with the parents. In addition, keeping the instructional methods current and working to improve enhanced the climate of optimism.

Building this academic optimism in teachers and students using district and state assessments was critically important. Constantly the administrators and teachers must monitor student achievement. Waiting until the end, especially after the Benchmark, was too late. Then, the system had failed the child. It was up to the school to keep the focus and not allow it to be lost.

The teachers of Study School C stated that the school has a Benchmark Celebration day once a year for growth on the Benchmark or for achieving proficient or advanced on the Benchmark and parents are invited to attend. Blow-up equipment, such as the bouncy houses and slides are provided for this fun day (Participants 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 9). Individual teachers do things or celebrations in the class; for example a class might read a novel each nine weeks and students travel to Barnes and Nobles to purchase books (Participants 3, 4, 7). Also, Pony Power Awards are awarded to the students for honor roll and their names are published in the local newspaper (Participants 6 and 7). Awards are issued for Accelerated Reader and Accelerated Math when goals are met (Participant 7). In addition, the principal brags on the students and gives them pats on the back during classroom visits (Participants 3, 6, and 10). The teachers are rewarded with bonuses and verbal praises when things go well (Participant 2). The principal recognizes the teachers during grade-level meetings (Participant 2). A reward for the teachers is time to delve into the data (Participant 1).

Trust between the principal and teachers, as articulated by the teachers, signifies:

- ✓ Concerned when teachers need help and it's confidential

- ✓ Teachers are the experts and valued
- ✓ Supportive that teachers are doing everything in the classroom to help student
- ✓ Good listeners when it comes to concerns
- ✓ Knowing that the principals are doing the best things for the students and teachers
- ✓ Success
- ✓ Support and confidential
- ✓ Trust in principal and teachers and principal and teachers are doing their job

Faculty trust with parents and students is cultivated by involving parents in numerous activities in the school (Participants 2, 3, 5, 7, 6, and 9). Activities such as Family Nights, doughnuts for day, parent breakfast and muffins for mom occur periodically during the year. Parents love coming to fun activities (Participants 3, 6, and 7). Regular communication with parents providing feedback on things that are going well is important (Participants 4 and 9). Building the communication from the beginning, being honest, and keeping concerns, is the first priority, builds trust (Participant 9). Trust building activities include Du Fours' Professional Learning Community (PLC) questions to drive the discussions in meetings; 1) What do we want each student to learn, 2) How will we know when each student has learned it, 3) How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning (Participant 3), 4) gift of time to work together (Participant 5), and 5) different in-services at the beginning of the year (Participant 2).

The staff explained that self-efficacy is developed in teachers and students by the principal making his presence known, constantly looking at the data (students' scores) to determine if they are doing what they're capable of. Further it includes expecting the teachers to encourage the student to perform at their best at all times and informing students whenever they have achieved any growth (Participants 1, 3, and 4). Working as a team using our data from the

Target Test, which is the district's external assessments, developing pacing guides, and communication best practices helps to prompt self-efficacy (Participant 7). Students are placed in remediation if needed to give more time for learning. The "cameras in the school monitor teaching and keep everyone on their toes" (Participant 9). A lot of emphasis is placed on academics (Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, and 10). There is more emphasis on academics in elementary than the high school (Participant 4). Because there is a lot of emphasis on academics at the elementary level, some fun activities have been cut, and the teachers have to get creative to incorporate some fun activities into the school setting (Participants 5, 6).

The school's optimism has shifted from "ways to fail" to a "can do approach" and is going in the right direction with more communication (Participants 1, Line 18a), and 4, Line 74). There are high expectations (Participants 5, and 6) from everyone, including the special needs' students who are doing well. Teachers want to do well and strive to do well. The teachers expect the students to do what they are capable of doing. Further, the teachers talk to the students about their capabilities (Participant 7). Even further, the staff has a positive focus and always tries to look for ways to improve some area (Participant 10). The staff has a mindset to continue to grow and succeed. The data helps to keep everyone focused and to make adjustments as needed in teaching in the classrooms. Furthermost, the mutual feeling is we can make a difference (Participant 2). Through encouraging with positive things, looking at the data and individualizing the teaching for students, and keeping the teacher-student ratio down, academic optimism is developed (Participant 2). The Response to Learning (RTI) approach, which intervenes when children are not gaining the knowledge, creates more support for individual students (Participant 1). Setting obtainable goals and progress monitoring using the Target Test cultivates optimism with teachers and students. Understanding that everybody has problems and issues, having a

positive attitude to set the stage, and working together building a strong community among the teachers enhances academic optimism (Participants 3, 9, and 10). We are going in the right direction because of the communication that is embedded in school. The respect from the students, teachers, and principal goes hand in hand (Participant 7). All students can succeed and the teachers try hard to accomplish it (Participant 3).

STUDY SCHOOLS CROSS ANALYSIS

The cross analysis of the three study schools revealed common instructional leadership behaviors of the principals as categorized by Hoy and Hoy's (2009) instructional model. The common demographics for each school is a percentage above 50 of free and reduced lunch students, a population of students above 500 for two schools, and a location of Arkansas. The principals' behaviors that emerged in Category I-Academic Excellence for learning are the following: team meetings that are focused on student growth and collaboration based on assessment data collected from internally and externally providers, an orderly learning environment focused on procedures and policies, the principals as roles models who are serious and promote high, achievable goals (Table 4a).

Table 4a

Hoy and Hoy (2009) Principals' Instructional Leadership Behaviors I, II, III
Study Schools' Cross Analysis

| I. | II. | III. |
|---|--|--|
| Team Meetings | Feedback of praise and encouragement | Data-Driven |
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CWT • Benchmark • External Assessments-TLI, Target |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration/Communication | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emails | Evaluations |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data-driven | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal | Reflection |
| Procedures/Policies | Professional Development | Feedback |
| Role Model | | Teachers decide and principals support |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serious | | Professional Growth Plans-Goals |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Expectations | | |

Table 4b

Hoy and Hoy's (2009) Principals' Instructional Leadership Behaviors IV, V, VI
Study Schools Cross Analysis

| IV. | V. | VI. |
|---|--|--|
| Anything that the teachers ask for as long as they can justify student achievement. | Professional Development | Parent Activities |
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build relationships • Positive Communication |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials and supplies | Within School Setting, District and Outside District | Culture that is built on trust <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working in groups • Focused on learning • Self-Efficacy • Feedback • Data Driven • High emphasis on academics • Very optimistic • Focused on improvement |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human resources | Reading-books, journals | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial support | Higher Education Course of Study | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time for collaboration | Consultants | |

and peer observations

- Professional Weekly Team Meetings
development
 - Technology Share: Notes or Emails
 - Curriculum and
Instructional materials
-

Study Schools A, B, and C’s principals have created a system where the schedule is constructed with time to meet for collaboration and communication. Teachers from each school meet once per week during the activity period of the students to focus on what is working, what is not working, and what is going to be done about the students who are not making progress (Participants APSA-2, TSA-3, TSA-4, TSA-5, TSA-7, TSA-8, TSA-11, TSB 2, TSB-3, TSB-4, TSB-5, TSC-1, TSC-3, TSC-4, TSC-6, TSC-7, TSB-9, and TSC-10). Each school evaluates data from internal assessments such as principals’ classroom walk-throughs or feedback from literacy and math instructional leaders. External data are assessments from an outside provider and are administered to students monthly for math and literacy. Teachers utilize a pacing guide that helps pace the instructional skills from month to month. In addition, the scores provide an indication of the growth of students’ progress toward proficiency. The data from the external providers is utilized frequently during the meetings, and extra support for students and teachers is discussed.

The vision of excellence in the learning community is established by the principals in all three schools. The principal of Study School A articulated that she is a “role model for teachers and students, and her high expectations are exhibited in her actions.” The teachers reported that the principal’s actions, whether verbal or written, lead the learning; further, the principal always

expresses that students can achieve, and she holds everyone accountable for student success (Participants 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, and 11). The principal of Study School B reported that her belief that all students can learn is exhibited in everything that she does [models]. The district's mission is repeatedly articulated in staff meetings and memos or whenever she talks to the staff; the students and the parents are told "what we need to do and how we're going to do it", and she encourages everyone to believe that "we can do it". The teachers of Study School B stated that the principal articulates the vision that "all students can achieve" very well, often in meetings, and in many other ways; "it's the principal's personality" (Participants, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9). The principal of Study School C indicated that treating the staff with respect and patience and solving problems is how his beliefs of students' achievement are displayed. Further, the principal stated that his job is not to demean but to be more of a positive influence to the staff. The teachers stated that the principal expects to see achievement, and that is understood by the staff. He is clear about the expectations for the students and staff and frequently gives the staff input about how to reach "our students" (Participants 3, 4, 7, 9, and 10). The teachers in all of the study schools revealed that working together collaboratively weekly helps to build relationship, trust, and self-efficacy.

Furthermost, the teachers feel support from the principals and a teacher working in teams on a weekly basis is a critical component. This cooperative activity provides collaboration for instructional excellence that is continuous and data driven. Hoy and Hoy's Category II consists of this concept of ongoing and cooperative activities, focused on student growth and achievement; teachers and students are motivated, monitored, and assessed regularly with a faculty whose objective is student improvement (Table 4a). There is a climate where teachers and students feel good about the process.

The teachers in all three study schools indicated that the principals have created a safe environment for the students by focusing on procedures and policies that lend themselves to the existence of a positive place for students. Study School A teachers specified that the principal is “anal” about every policy, procedure, or rule (Participants TSA-2, TSA-3, TSA-6, TSA-7, TSA-9 and 10). Study Schools B and C teachers stated that the principals are visible in the classrooms and halls and on the grounds (Participants TSB-4, TSB-5, TSB-7, TSC-2, TSC-6, TSC-7, and TSC-10). Trust is built through frequent communication. All principals communicate with teachers and students both orally and in writing but utilize different mediums, including emails or written notes (Table 4a).

Likewise, Study School A’s principal utilizes a newsletter and a broadcast system for communication. Finally, the teachers in all schools stated that relationships are built, and there is an open-door policy of communication. The teachers feel that the principals have established a system where teachers have opportunities to express concerns and not feel threatened. There is support from the principals and co-workers. The ultimate goal is working for growth in students’ achievement (TSA-7).

In addition, Hoy and Hoy’s instructional excellence and continuous improvement, Category II denotes that teachers are motivated to improve. Consequently, this is brought about by the principals’ constant feedback of praise with uplifting, kind words and encouragement (TSA-2, TSB-3, TSC-6, TSC-7, and PSB-Q5). The teachers expressed that they are like the kids and want to hear what is working. “Encouragement makes a teacher feel important” (TSC-6). Also, the researcher feels that the awarding of “Level 5” school of excellence for improvement helped to implant motivation. Likewise the students are motivated through constant encouragement from the teachers and principals (Participants (TSA-5, TSA-8, and TSA-11).

Most importantly, motivation is acquired through professional development. This support for the teachers ensures continuous growth for the staff. The principals' feedback with teachers with data from classroom walk-throughs (CWT) and reflective conferences is supported with training for teachers in the areas of need. Providing quality professional development for what teachers need is the priority.

The principal does various things to motivate teachers to continue to improve. Verbal feedback in the form of praise and encouragement is prevalent in all study school sites (TSA-2, TSA-3, TSA-8, TSB-3, TSB-5, TSC-5, TSC-7, and TSC-10). The little things make the difference (TSB-5 and TSB-7)! Lastly, one teacher from Study School B stated that motivation comes from within the school (TSB-9).

Principals' instructional leadership behavior Category III involves the principal giving teachers decisions to improve (Table 4). The decisions to improve from the teachers begin with the examination of the data determining the strong and weak areas in both content and instructional areas and areas of students' growth or stagnation (TSA-2, TSA-3, TSA-4, TSA-10, TSB-3, TSB-5, TSB-10, TSC-1, TSC-2, TSC-5, and TSC-9). After collection of data from the Benchmark Exam, monthly assessments, external providers, classroom walk-throughs, observations data, and collaborative conversations, one-to-one conferences are centered on the following questions: What do you think that you need to improve or what are you going to do? Teachers make goals for improvement on their professional growth plans and discuss with the principals (TSB-6, TSB-7, TSC-3, TSC-4, and TSC-9).

The teachers in all three study schools expressed that the principals provide anything that is needed –Category IV of Hoy and Hoy (2009). Materials and supplies, human resources, time for collaboration, professional development, financial support, professional books and

technology have been made accessible to teachers (Table 4b). The principals' communicated that teachers may ask for anything; however, they must show how they will utilize it and how it will help student achievement. In addition, principals stated that the request must be researched based and durable.

Category V (Hoy & Hoy, 2009) specifies that principals are intellectual leaders who keep abreast of latest developments. All study school principals keep well-informed of the latest developments, including instructional high-tech needs for the future. Study School Principals A, B, and C attend professional development within their district and out of their district. Oftentimes, this is accomplished within their school settings as they develop research based professional development for the staff. Also, reading research based journals and books are a constant for the principals. The principals work with colleagues and staff members collaborating on best practices that emerge from different school settings. One principal is enrolled in higher education leadership programs while the principals of Schools B and C rely on staff members who are enrolled in higher education courses to share information about best practices or techniques.

Ongoing professional development is provided through the use of consultants who provide embedded training within the building. The consultants provide instructional leadership practices on a one-to-one basis (School A and School B). The principal of Study School C collaborates with the assistant principal, and they implant leadership skills as a pair. In addition, the principal of School C is connected to the educational cooperative service (Participants TSC-2, TSC-7, and TSC-9). He stated that the cooperative provides support for the administrators. The cooperative is close to the school and, therefore, easily accessible.

The teachers stated that the principals share their acquired knowledge during the weekly team and staff meetings and on a one-on-one basis. Also, the principal of School A shares best practices through weekly newsletters and Standards Based Classroom training. The principals of Schools B and C may share best practices through notes or emails (TSB-6, TSAB-5, TSC-3, and TSC-6). Frequently, lead teachers facilitate training for the staff training sessions (TSA-10, TSB-5 and TSC-2). The utilization of the common planning time for sharing of information is atypical of all schools.

All principals lead in celebrating and recognizing academic excellence with a vision and culture of academic excellence for teachers and students-Category VI (Hoy & Hoy, 2009). The principals of Study Schools A, B, and C have implemented a vision and culture of academic excellence. The principals of the three study schools stated that they are role models, and modeling is the key to articulating their beliefs of student achievement. The principal of Study School C replied that his “job is not to demean but to be more of a positive influence with the staff”. Also, the principals shared that the team approach, data-driven at the forefront and exhibiting professionalism with staff toward parents and students is how excellence is maintained within the learning community. Further, building a culture of trust with teachers requires being a listener, moving quickly, quietly, and discreetly when there are problems, and treating everyone with respect. Additionally, the definition of trust for the faculty is honesty. The principal of Study School C stated that “trust is easier to keep going than to rebuild”.

The principals shared that self-efficacy is developed through high expectations for the staff, teachers, and students through constant review of the data, open communication, and encouragement. The emphasis is academics and is stressed through the expectations and

collaborative groups. Finally, all schools have a positive outlook for continuous improvement and optimistic.

Participant APSA-2 stated that “it’s all about bell to bell teaching and learning and modeled from the top”. Likewise, Participant TSA-4 stated that there is tremendous emphasis on “working and learning, investing in lives and setting expectations”. The bar is high, and this is communicated often” (Participant TSA-11). Continuous growth of student achievement is celebrated on a daily basis within the classroom or in displays in the halls showcasing students’ work. Each nine weeks’ awards assemblies occur to honor students for achievement. Further, at the end of the year, students are rewarded with “Benchmark Success Celebrations”. Consistently students are praised for their achievement with Accelerated Reader, Accelerated Math, and Interim Assessments provided by the districts’ suppliers. Participant TSC-2 indicated that there is a “high emphasis placed on academics”, and Participant TSB-8 suggested that the emphasis is “all about test scores”.

The study Schools’ culture is cultivated by trust. Positive trust with parents and students is cultivated by building relationships with the families. Activities are incorporated at the school setting that allows the students and parents to feel comfortable. “Constant communication beginning with positives is the key (TSA-5, TSA-6, TSA-7, TSA-10, TSB-2, TSB-4, TSB-5, TSC-3, TSC-4, and TSC-6)”. Working in small groups or teams and helping each other is instrumental in building trust among the staff. “It’s the way we do things at work in small groups and not alone (TSA-3)”.

The communication systems that are embedded in the weekly team meetings facilitate on-going feedback which helps the staff to “work toward their best effort as a team” (Participant TSA-4, TSB-4, and TSC-2). The team meetings are focused on learning, which is monitored

through daily, monthly, and yearly assessments. “Teachers share knowledge and support each other as they learn things.” (TSA-8) Also, the data helps to drive the instruction –“What are you going to do-- which is the next plan of action?” (TSB-3) The teachers stated that the school culture is very positive and optimistic. Participant TSA-11 stated that the “future holds all possibilities and the teachers hold all the possibility”. The “school culture is very optimistic with a positive focus which examines ways to improve” (Participant TSC-11). In conclusion, Participant TSA-6 stated that “celebrating success, daily or cumulatively with teachers and students makes sure they know the objective is critical to be able to move to the next level”. Furthermost “small daily success brings about optimism”.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter summarizes the findings from this qualitative multiple case study which explored the instructional leadership behaviors of three principals of “Level 5” schools of excellence for improvement with a high percentage of students who are identified as low socio-economic and in three different geographical locations in Arkansas. This descriptive multiple case study examined exemplary instructional leadership behaviors that help to promote continuous improvement for low, socio-economic-status students.

Hoy and Hoy’s (2009) instructional leader model was used as the framework for this study, examines the following components: 1) academic excellence, 2) instructional excellence and continuous improvement, 3) instructional improvement, 4) principals’ support, 5) principals as intellectual leaders, and 6) principals as leaders in recognizing and celebrating academic excellence with a vision and culture of academic excellence. The main research question and auxiliary questions are answered based on the researcher’s findings. In addition, responses to the questions are presented, the researcher’s reflections, recommendations, and implications for practitioners are highlighted, and suggestions for future studies are described based on information gathered by the researcher along with conclusions from the researcher.

Overview of the Study

Qualitative data were collected through structured, in-depth interviews with the principals, leadership team members, and other teachers from three “Level 5” schools of excellence for improvement. The schools selected were rated “Level 5” schools of excellence for

improvement in 2008 by the Arkansas Department of Education. This rating was based on the percentage of students who met growth on the Arkansas Benchmark Assessment. The researcher interviewed three principals, two assistant principals, and twenty-six teachers. The three schools were located in the northeastern, Delta, and Ozark regions of Arkansas. All study schools have a percentage above 50 of Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) students. Two schools have a student enrollment above 500, and one school has an enrollment slightly below 500. In addition, the study schools have diverse population of students which consist of Latino, African Americans, and Caucasians. The researcher used Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Word programs to help code and analyze the data with attention to Hoy and Hoy's (2009) principals' instructional leadership behaviors that emerged during the research study in the previous chapter.

Conclusions

The researcher has been an educational leader for fourteen years in a large elementary school in the central region of Arkansas. As a practitioner for many years, the researcher has continued to strive to become an exemplary administrator who develops best practices for student achievement. This aspiration has facilitated the goal of becoming a life-long learner for student achievement. Tichy (2002) reported that

leaders recognize the defining moments in their lives and communicate the lessons through words and actions. Further, leaders are extraordinary learners as well.

Furthermore, Life is full of lessons that we all learn everyday which is living (p. 71). Thus, the following guiding question and auxiliary questions were used for this qualitative multiple case study:

Main Research Questions

1. How do principals influence leadership among faculty within “Level 5” schools with high poverty and diverse students in different geographical locations?

Auxiliary Questions

2. How do perceived leadership behaviors create instructional excellence in the culture and climate of the schools with high poverty and diverse students in different geographical locations?
3. How do principals organize for student success?

Main Question Number One

The researcher discovered that principals are the role models who articulate high achievable goals for the students and staff. Systems are established from the beginning based on communication, collaboration, support, ongoing learning, and authentic motivation. “The principals walk the walk and talk the talk” (Participants TSA-11, TSB-7, and TSC-5) Further the principals influence leadership through consistent praise (TSA-10 and TSC-3). The researcher discovered that Hoy and Hoy’s six principals’ instructional behaviors are practiced by the principals in the three study schools.

Auxiliary Question Number Two

The principals’ leadership behavior that affects the climate and culture of the school is the time given to teachers for continuing communication and collaboration. Teachers meet weekly to work together in groups focusing on what is working, what is not working, and how what’s not working can be fixed. Teachers feel as if they are associated with a team of teachers, and they are not working in isolation to improve student achievement. This constant system of

communication and collaboration gives the teachers the belief that “We can make a difference” (Participants TSA-6, TSB-5, and TSC-1). Participant TSC-9 stated that the “teachers” attitude sets the stage for the kids in a positive way”.

Auxiliary Question Number Three

The principals organize for student success by creating a schedule that allows for continuous team communication. Weekly the teachers meet by grade level (School A) or by core subjects (School B and C). The meetings are focused on student achievement through consistently examining the data and discussing students who are in need of extra services. Students are assigned to additional tutoring either during, before, or after school. The principals provide support for the teachers and students through materials and supplies or through different programs such as Every Child a Writer (ECAW) or Educational City, a technology-based education program for students. The teachers stated that they have everything that is needed for the classroom. The principals provide anything that the teachers ask for as long as it is research-based and beneficial to students.

Researcher’s Significant Reflection

The purpose of this study was to provide additional knowledge to help the researcher who had been a principal for 12 years. The urban, high-poverty, elementary school was rated in 2008 a “Level 4” school exceeding improvement standards. It was the desire of the researcher to discover influential leadership behaviors that would help all students achieve proficiency and move from good to great (Collins, 2001). Tichy (2002) reported that first-class, winning leaders have the ability to use stories as a useful tool for communication, which is an essential prerequisite. My story reflects-Who I am, where I am going and how I will get there. Since working on this research project, the researcher has another leadership role-Director of

Academics. This new role has given the researcher new lenses for leadership. Instead of focusing on one principal, the researcher has a desire to help other aspiring principals to become more effective.

Similarities and Differences of Study Schools A, B, and C

In cross analysis of the three study schools, certain similarities and differences were evident (Table 6). The similarities apparent in Hoy and Hoy (2009) are as follows:

Category I:

1) academic excellence that is motivated, orderly, serious, focused on high but achievable goals, and demonstrated through actions and words to the teachers and students, 2) principals who articulate high expectations for student achievement through verbal or written communications, 3) teachers who report that the principals are role models to the staff and students, and 4) schools' environments which are focused on high but achievable goals for the teachers and students.

Category II:

1) instructional excellence and continuous improvement that includes cooperative activities, focused on student growth and achievement, 2) a climate of instructional excellence for continuous improvement, 3) teachers who are motivated, monitored, and assessed regularly for improvement - this was evident in all study schools through ongoing weekly professional development during regular school hours where teachers used a systematic approach and common time to focus on best practices, 4) teachers who are empowered to share concerns and best practices through collaboration and communication. 5) decisions which are data-driven and based on weekly, monthly and annual assessment results, 6) teachers in all schools who reported

that they felt safe and not alone in their endeavors to improve, and 7) teams that work together building support for each other.

Category III: Instructional Improvement

1) teachers who are at the center and are motivated and self-regulated, in which teachers reported that student achievement inspired them to continuous improvement. 2) teachers who report that instructional improvement is a constant journey, and 3) unending collaboration with the teachers which facilitates teachers' motivation and being at the center of decisions for improvement.

Category IV

1) principals' support that is constructive and provides resources--the teachers in all three study schools reported that the principals provided repeated support through obtaining resources and materials and constructive reflections when needed. 2) unanimously, all teachers who reported that the principals provided anything that was needed with the requests being researched based, and 3) teachers in all study schools who were motivated by the technology provided for them in the classrooms, specifically smart boards and computers.

Category V

1) principals who are intellectual leaders and who keep abreast of best practices--all principals are involved in professional development provided either by their district, cooperative educational service, universities, or teacher leaders. Most importantly, the principals keep abreast of practices through book studies with the staff.

Category VI

1) principals who lead in recognizing and celebrating academic excellence with a vision and culture of academic excellence for teachers and students--all study schools have annual celebrations after the Benchmark, which may include parents and the community. In addition, all

three schools have recurring celebrations throughout the school year, such as the following: honor roll, Accelerated Reader and Math awards, and both teacher and student of the month recognitions.

The differences among the principals' behaviors discovered in the cross analysis of the study schools are described below and in (Table 6).

Study School A: Principal's behaviors:

- ✓ More reflective conferences with teachers. The teachers voted not to have staff meetings which created a daily focus with individual teachers.
- ✓ Leader of the morning broadcast
- ✓ Observations and feedback with teachers, utilizing a daily walk-through
- ✓ Lesson plans monitored with feedback for teachers
- ✓ Enrollment in higher education classes

Study School B: Principal's behaviors

- ✓ Transparent data throughout the building with interim assessment charts and graphs in the halls. Students create their individual monthly progress
- ✓ Utilization of instructional coaches to monitor and model instructional practices and student growth
- ✓ Instructional leaders heading departmental meetings

Study School C: Principal's behaviors

- ✓ Utilizes instructional coaches to monitor and model instructional strategies for the teachers
- ✓ Heads departmental meetings with teachers
- ✓ Provides time for peer observations

- ✓ Drives a bus and meets the students' needs before school if needed
- ✓ Depends on their educational cooperative service for professional development

Organizational Culture of Schools

All schools provide activities for parents to become partners. Study School A has TIPS for the preschool program. Parents come to school and learn with the students. Study School B has created student leadership. Students are given roles in the school which help to motivate the students and parents of students. Study School C has Watch Dog Dads program. Dads schedule time to come to the school and help. This program gives the dads the opportunity to learn about the school's environment.

Relating to the safety of schools, the teachers of Study Schools B and C stated that the cameras in the schools are helpful. Also, in Study School B feeling safe was determined by all the doors being locked except for the front entrance. Study School C teachers felt safe because of the principals' movement around the school. In addition, teachers of Study Schools B and C reported that the principals' are consistent with discipline. The principals' presence was a unique behavior that emerged from the analysis of Study School C. In addition, the relationships of the staff of Study School C were another unique item. The staff members are all from the area and have been members of the community from birth.

In Study School A the principal utilized media such as broadcasting and newsletter for positive reinforcements for the teachers and students. Also, the school's Promise Statement, which is an abbreviated mission statement, is recited daily by the students and staff. In Study School B the mission statement is announced every morning on the intercom led by students. The teachers stated that the principals are role models; moreover, the principal of Study School C was characterized by the staff as a strong presence.

Cross Analysis of Study Schools

Table 6

Similarities and Difference of Study Schools as Related to Merging Themes Aligned with Hoy & Hoy (2009)

| Hoy's Behavior Category | SIMILARITIES | | COMMON BEHAVIORS | DIFFERENCES | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|--|------------------|--------------------------|---|
| | Themes | Behavior | | Themes | Behavior |
| I | High Expectations | Mission Statement – all meetings, with students, | | High Expectations | A-School Promise Newsletter, media B-Intercom, email, announcements B-Students chart growth |
| I | Role Model | All school principals are role models | | Role Model | School C – presence of principal |
| II, III, IV | Professional Development | All schools- teachers, principal-district level and Coop Read Research Based Materials | | Professional Development | A- Higher Ed B & C other resources (principals) |
| I, II, III, IV, VI | Communication | Meeting-Verbal and written | | Communication | A-morning broadcast, newsletter |

| | | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|--|
| II | Professional Development | | Professional Development | B & C-team meetings share A & B Consultants |
| II, III, IV | Weekly Meetings | Common planning time grade level –team approach Inquiry Based | Weekly Meetings | A-SBC B-Mit, Lit, Sit, Other C-Math, Literacy, Book Study, Other-1 st year to implement |
| I, II, III, IV, V, VI | Data-Driven | CWT External Assessments Benchmark | Data Collection | B External Assessments-District A & C-Company B & C-Diebels C – Reading First Model |
| I, II, III, | Observations | All principals Formal and informal | Observations | A-coaching model training-reflection |
| VI | Celebrations | All schools celebrate benchmark success | Celebrations | A & B – teachers tokens C verbal praise |
| I, II, III, IV, V, VI | Leadership Team | Meet with principals, model lessons | Leadership Team | B & C Instructional Leaders are heavily involved with instruction |

| | | | | |
|----------------|--|---|--|--|
| IV | Resources | All schools reported that they have everything needed Students are serviced –tutoring, during and after school | Resources | A-High school students partner with classroom A-Reading Recovery |
| IV | Instructional organizational structure | Teams | Instructional organizational structure | School A-Self Contained K-6 Classrooms Schools B & C-4 th -6 th grade core subject teachers |
| IV | Curriculum | Technology Accelerated Reading | Curriculum | School A – SBC School B –Reading First-CGI School C-Reading First-Accelerated Math |
| I | Safety | Teachers state safe environment Consistent with discipline | Safety | B & C Schools talked about locks & cameras B & C principal consistency with discipline C-Watch Dog Dads |
| III, VI | Trust-self-efficacy | All teachers stated that trust is established All Schools | Trust | C- Teachers are from the area and are close knitted |

The most significant leadership behavior that the researcher discovered was the building leadership capacity through Professional Learning Communities (PLC). Participant TSA-3 indicated that “we are always learning and we are all at different stages”. Dufour, DuFour, Eaker, and Karhanek (2010) defined PLC as “an ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve” (p. 345). Also, Dufour, DuFour, Eaker, and Karhanek (2010) stated that a learning community is focused on a commitment to the learning of each student. Further, the district and school function as PLC, where educators embrace high levels of learning for all students, which is the vision and goal. The researcher discovered that the teachers and principals of all study schools focused on what the students must learn, weekly monitoring the learning, intervening for the students who need more time, and offering enrichment programs for students who have learned.

The teams had a specific goal and collaborated on student growth or improvement. Professional Learning Communities are centered on inquiry. Both asking the important questions and taking action for continuous learning were discovered in this research study. This collective inquiry enables team members to develop new skills and capabilities that lead to new experiences and awareness (Dufour, DuFour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2010). The researcher observed a fifth-grade team meeting. The inquiry-based questions were on the board: What do we want our students to learn, how will we know they are learning, how we will respond when they don’t learn, and how will we respond when they do learn (Dufour et al., 2010). These questions were the foundation for the team’s collaboration.

As an educational leader, the researcher communicated the belief of student engagement. Since exploring principals’ leadership behaviors, the researcher has embraced hands-on learning

for teachers: “learning by doing” (DuFour, R., DuFour, R., Eaker, & Many (2010). Learning by doing offers a greater commitment and understanding of best practices rather than reading. Thus, the researcher has gained a better understanding of principals’ instructional leadership behaviors through this hands-on project. Furthermore, Dufour (2010) stated that PLCs help to close the “knowing-doing gap” by transforming the school culture into professional learning communities (p. 427). Participants TSA-7 and TSB-9 proclaimed that “learning from one another and always going to try to improve” builds a strong community of trust.

Building leadership capacity in schools involves skillful work of leadership. DuFour and Eaker (1998) shared that a leader must develop a good and strong communication within the community of learners. The “mission, vision, values, and goals are irrelevant, and the change process will stall unless building blocks is communicated on a daily basis throughout the school” (DuFour, & Eaker, 1998). Further, DuFour and Eaker (1998) stated that the building blocks of visions and values, monitoring, questions to focus on, what is modeled, how time is allocated, what is celebrated, what is confronted, and simplicity are essential components of communication.

Furthermost, PLCs support leaders facing the challenge of school improvement (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker (2008). Leadership is about change and the professional learning communities in the study schools have developed a culture of the assumptions, beliefs, values, expectations, and habits of embedded learning or building leadership capacity. This is mainly fostered through the collaborative meetings, self-efficacy of teachers, and the student-centered and repeated encouragement for continued improvement. Also, leadership capacity encourages constant collaborations. The study schools’ collaboration sessions occurred through weekly leadership team meetings or grade-level meetings.

The communication system is an unending, active process where the individuals interchange ideas based on their relationship, experiences, and effective communication systems. The study schools have developed a high level of trust within the school setting. In Study School C's case, the staff are all members of the small community, and relationships have development over generations. Participant TSC-1 specified that they live in a small area and the teachers are valued. One participant shared that the "superintendent selects the staff carefully" (TSC-6).

Continuous learning is another point that is embedded in the study schools' culture. Consultants are hired for two of the study schools, providing job-embedded skills for the administrators and teachers. The principals and teachers are learning through the process of student achievement. One teacher reported the following in the interview:

Well they, you know, we have our standard based classroom (SBC) days that we do once a month. Which teachers can stay and they grow professionally during that. Ms. Smith and I meet with the teachers once a nine weeks to discuss you know their data or ways they can grow their student. Every week if it's a five day week they either have a vertical or horizontal meeting where they can continue building. This year (study school A) we brought in ECAW which is Every Child is A Writer and the um, and it's built into the school base so the um, lady that does all the data comes in. And it's here at school so she observes them teaching and then communicates so it's built into the school base so that they all lead. So she's done more of the embedding it here so that the teachers can get it and you know continue that growth (Participant TCA-2).

Suggestions for Future Study

The theoretical model of this study is framed around Hoy and Hoy's (2009) principals' instructional leadership behaviors. The principals of this study are educational leaders of "Level

5” schools of excellence for improvement in three distinct geographical locations, with a high population of low socio-economic students and with two schools having a population of students over 500 and one school with a population slightly below 500. This study school’s enrollment declined during the 2010-2011 school year. However, upon selection of the schools during the rating year of 2008, the school’s enrollment was over 500. According to the researcher’s notes, the principal of Study School B stated that the students transferred out and the enrollment is down to 497, which does not allow for an assistant principal; also there is high mobility within the school. The school district of Study School B declined in enrollment from 2008-2010 by 128 students (2 percent decrease). Jensen (2009) stated that certain factors within the low socio-economic families caused involuntary moves from place to place.

Areas of interest for future research could examine principals’ instructional leadership focused on “Level 5” schools of excellence rating based on the status model for Arkansas Benchmarks Assessment. The schools could have a high percentage of low socio-economic students, in different geographical locations, with a small student population. This study could possibly shed light on small school environments with fewer staff members. For instance, the school may not have an assistant principal and other additional support staff.

Additionally, the study could focus on building the professional learning teams and building leadership capacity. Since Arkansas has adopted the Common Core State Standards Initiative, it will be beneficial to see how the schools make the transition and continue to maintain student achievement. The study schools were rated in 2008 using the gains model “Level 5” schools of excellence for improvement. However, the ratings declined in 2008 and 2010 while the study schools gained in student achievement based on the status model. The status model is the desired rating for schools meeting adequate yearly progress.

Another consideration for further study includes follow-up with the same schools tracking their performance utilizing more time in the bounded systems and at a different time of year. Observing the principal and leadership teams setting goals and expectations for the year at the beginning of the year rather than in the spring could be beneficial for a principal.

Summary

The focus of this descriptive multiple case study was to discover the instructional leadership behaviors of three principals of “Level 5” schools of excellence for improvement. Further, the schools selected were identified with 50 percent or more high poverty and three distinct geographical regions in the state of Arkansas. The schools are in the River Valley-Urban, Delta-Rural, and Ozark-Rural regions and serviced by the Western Arkansas Education Service Cooperative, Great Rivers Education Service Cooperative, and Northeast Arkansas Cooperative respectively. Furthermore, the schools were selected based on each of the principals’ having a leadership team in place. A leadership team is a selected group of individuals who share leadership roles in the school.

Qualitative research methodology was used for data collection and analysis. Data were collected through structured principals’ and teachers’ interviews. The interview protocol was design using Hoy’s (2009) six instructional leadership behaviors (Appendix C). In addition, school artifacts were gathered by the researcher as auxiliary data for this research study. Data were analyzed by using Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Word. Further, data were repeatedly coded and sorted to discover common themes that related to behaviors connected to Hoy’s (2009) principals’ instructional leadership categories. Hoy (2009) reported that principals’ instructional leadership behaviors embrace leadership that is focused on: 1) academic excellence, 2) instructional excellence and continuous improvement, 3) instructional improvement, 4) support for teachers, 5) intellectual leadership, and 6) recognizing and celebrating academic excellence.

This qualitative multiple case study attempted to provide information for educational leaders and practitioners who lead in school settings with a population of students who are

identified as low socio-economic based on their free and reduced lunch status. The focus of the study examined the instructional leadership behaviors that promoted student achievement. The main theme that was discovered by the researcher that was prevalent across the three study schools teachers and administrators worked together as a team. Principals articulated this instructional leadership behavior throughout the school as professional learning communities. A professional learning community is defined as:

Educators committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve.

Professional learning communities operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous, job-embedded learning for educators (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2006, p. 342; DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, 2008, p. 14).

The three study schools demonstrated a culture of ongoing, continuous, and never-ending process of conducting schooling (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2006, p. 330). This concept was prevalent throughout Hoy's (2009) six principals' instructional leadership behaviors. Overwhelmingly teachers' responses were that the team approach and communication systems in place articulated the expectations for the staff and students (TSA-3, TSA-5, TSA-7, TSB-4, TSB-5, TSB-9, TSB-10, TSC-4, TSC-6, TSC-9, and TSC-10). Furthermore, the principals are building leadership capacity through the leadership teams. The members of the team work collaboratively to enhance school improvement. Harris and Lambert (2003) reported that for school improvement to work there must be a commitment to changing the way we do things in the schools. In addition, the school culture must have a mind-set of focusing on teaching and learning. The leadership team members share the responsibility of learning for all through collaboration, modeling, and training in the school setting. "Effective leaders orchestrate rather

than dictate improvement and create learning communities within their schools” (Harris, & Lambert, 2003, p. 15). Further, the authors stated that schools that build this leadership capacity possibly will sustain improvement over time.

Participant TSB-3 stated that the principal and teachers work closely with curriculum coordinators who meet with the coaches, sit down to figure out what the problem is, and try to fix it. “We work together”. The three study schools exhibit a culture of learning and working together where teachers and students are expected to improve. Furthermost, there is a climate of trust, integrity, and self-efficacy within the school environment which is modeled from the top – “Working together towards best effort” (Participant TSA-4, TSB-5, TSC-1).

As America continues to seek the solution for student achievement, this study possibly can offer insight for continuous improvement. In this era the educational system is moving from a system of individual state standards to “Common Core State Standards”. Common Core State Standards are national standards implemented in forty-six states including Arkansas.

aligned with college and work expectations, focused and coherent, include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills, build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards, Internationally benchmarked so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society, based on evidence and research, and state led –coordinated by National Governors and Association Center for Best Practices (NGA) and Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) (CCSSO & NGA, 2010, Slide 3).

This endeavor requires that educational leadership remain focused on continuous improvement with a high emphasis on problem solving. Possibly creating an environment of learning for all with a vested interest in problem solving is the key for instructional leadership. In

addition, Senge stated that “the most successful corporation of the future will be a learning organization” (cited in DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 23). Finally, Robinson (2010) believes that the schools must become a learning organization that is built on relationships and trust.

Contributions to the Field of Education

The researcher believes that the findings of this study will make a difference in the field of education for policy-makers, researchers, and educational leaders. As our policy-makers continue to seek solutions to problems of the educational system, it is important to continue to create systems that offer encouragement through the change process. America is constantly changing and inquiring minds should come together building on strengths of all stakeholders. During the change process, it is evident that practitioners need encouragement through the learning process. The gains model of measuring student achievement offered encouragement and self-efficacy within all of the researcher’s study schools. The ranking of “Level 5” school of excellence for improvement produced encouragement to make a difference. Policies should focus on systems of reassurance rather than punishment, specifically not meeting status based on the Annual Measureable Objective (AMO).

Researchers in the field of education should continue to focus on best instructional practices. Evidence about effective leadership practices are abundant and proved throughout the last half century especially focusing on the principal as the catalyst for effective instructional leadership (Leithwood (1994). The researcher of this study discovered that best practices of Hoy and Hoy’s (2009) model was practiced in all three study schools. Although varied in transactions, the principals’ instructional leadership behaviors were aligned with Hoy and Hoy’s (2009) theory-based model. The study schools’ principals created systems that established a culture of learning and doing. The staff and principals articulated that we are all learning.

Further, researchers should continue in the area of instructional leadership to understand what skills are needed by principals to form their capabilities toward engaging in effective instructional practices (Robinson, 2010). Examining instructional leadership behaviors of principals of schools where student performance is equal to or beyond established expectations, focusing on the capabilities of those principals could help in the development of additional training. With similar training, the puzzling question lingers as to why some principals are capable of successful implementation and others not. Also, the dilemma hangs over our American education system of how some principals are capable of building effective systems while other principals struggle with this issue. What factors play a part in this quandary--could it be age, gender, higher educational training, or experiences factor? The future of so many at-risk students hinges upon our educational system's finding and implementing a solution to this problem.

The impact of this study to educational leaders affirms that implementing systems for collaboration and communication, building relationships and trust, being visible and supportive, providing support for ongoing learning, and monitoring, reflecting and providing feedback on a widespread scale effects increased student achievement. Encouraging and celebrating successes along the way produces self-efficacy among teachers and staff. Focusing on data in all areas mentioned above will help to establish relational trust for the school organization (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). With the plethora of factors that are pervasively prevalent with students of poverty, the ever changing demographics of America, and the emergence of technology, it becomes relevant that relational trust is established in the changing dynamics of the world, through organization of coherent environments working together. The policy-makers, researchers, educational leaders, and school community should work together to design good

schools for the development of student achievement. Prestine and Nelson (2005) referred to this thought as sociocultural. Teaching and learning could be undertaken from the sociocultural stance which is building shared meaning and understanding connected to leadership behaviors. This interaction should continue as we seek solutions to the challenges facing our American educational system and strive to nurture enhanced student academic progress for this global society.

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APPENDICES

A. Letter to Participants

Letter Requesting Permission for Research Purposes

Name of Superintendent
Address

Dear _____:

My name is xxxxxx and I am a doctoral student in the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville in the Educational Leadership Program. I am working on my dissertation and requesting permission to conduct research with one of your principal and his/her elementary school. I have selected _____ because of the school's rating of "Level 5" school of excellence for improvement by the Arkansas Department of Education. Data from Arkansas Department of Education indicated that this school has received a rating of 5 for the school years 2008 and 2009.

Further, investigation into my dissertation a multiple case study methodology will be utilized to discover the phenomenon that exists in the school setting. The principal's instructional leadership behaviors will be uncovered through interviews with the principal, key staff members, and observations within the school setting. Additionally, to facilitate the discovery of the excellent environment, school visits gathering artifacts will be essential. I await the permission of you and your school district and assure the district that all confidential measures will be followed to protect the confidentiality of students and administrators. The proposal for this study has been approved by the Human Subjects Review at University of Arkansas. Furthermore, no identifying information will be released to the public and you will receive a completed copy of the dissertation.

I truly appreciate your help with my study. Please sign and return the attached consent form to me. I will keep in touch. If you need more information, please do not hesitate to contact me either at xxxxxxxx or xxxxxxxx. Again, thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,
XXXXXXXXXX

A2. Letter of Participation

January, 2011

Mr. /Mrs.

Principal

School District and School

Dear Mr. _____:

My name is xxxxxx and I am a doctoral student at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. I am conducting a study on principal's perceptions of instructional leadership in a level 5-school of excellence as rated by the Arkansas State Department. During my doctoral proposal work, you and your school were identified as a "level 5" school of excellence. This information was publicly announced on the Arkansas Department of Education website. I would like to forward you a formal letter introducing my dissertation study for your consideration.

Sincerely,

XXXXXXXXXX

A3. Letter to Participants

January, 2011

Mr./Ms.

Principal

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am beginning a dissertation data collection and analysis to complete my doctoral studies in Educational Leadership at the University of Arkansas. The title of my dissertation is: A Multiple Case Study of Principals' Leadership in "level 5" Schools of Excellence. The principals' roles of instructional leadership are vital to a successful school.

You and your school have been identified as exemplary of leadership performance by receiving the ratings of "level 5" school of excellence for improvement gains. You have earned this rating for the last two years and I commend your achievements! Hopefully, this study will provide descriptive models seeking to improve our public elementary schools. This is a qualitative multiple case study method. Data will be collected from a series of interviews with you, and your school leaders, observations, and document analysis.

The interviews involve a time assurance and I am prepared to accommodate your school schedule. I am requesting your participation in this study. I will call your office to inquire about an obligatory meeting. Thank you for your consideration of this matter. Please do not hesitate to call me for more information about my request concerning this study. You can reach me at xxxxxx.

Sincerely,

xxxxxxxxx

B. Consent Document

B1. INFORMED CONSENT

Title: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY OF PRINCIPALS' LEADERSHIP IN "LEVEL 5" SCHOOLS OF EXCELLENCE

Researcher:

Name: XXXXXXX

Faculty Advisor's Name: Dr. Carleton Holt

University of Arkansas
College of Education and Health Professions

Department of Educational Leadership

Mailing Address: 233 Graduate

Education Building

Fayetteville, AR 72701

479-575-5112

Compliance Contact Person:

Iroshi (Ro) Windwalker

Compliance Contact Person

Research Compliance
University of Arkansas

120 Ozark Hall

Fayetteville, AR 72701-1201

479-575-2208

irb@uark.edu

Description: This study will explore how three elementary schools' principals of "Level 5" schools of excellence of improvement promote an equitable quality education for all students with a high population of low socio-economic students by providing instructional leadership, service, and support to meet the standards for accreditation. Study: This multiple case study will explore the principals' role as instructional leader in "level 5" schools of excellence that have high percentages of low socio-economic students with diverse ethnicity from three distinct geographical regions of Arkansas. If selected you will be interviewed utilizing the interview protocol of structured and unstructured questions. The interview will be audio taped and transcribed without identifying information. The audio tapes will be given to the University of Arkansas for storage.

Risks and Benefits: The benefits include contributing to the knowledge base of instructional excellence for student achievement. There are no anticipated risks to participating in the study.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in the research is completely voluntary. There are no payments for college credits for participating.

Confidentiality: You will be assigned a code number that will be used to match the responses to the questions. All information will be recorded anonymously. Only the researcher will know your name, but will not divulge it or identify your answers to anyone. All information will be held in the strictest of confidence. Results from the research will be reported as a description of your school and leadership behaviors as aggregated through the building of themes. In addition, records will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law and University policy.

Right to Withdraw: You are free to refuse to participate in the research and to withdraw from this study at any time. Your decision to withdraw will bring no negative consequences---no penalty to you.

Informed Consent: I, _____, have read the description (Please print) including the purpose of the study, the procedures to be used, the potential risks and side effects, the confidentiality, as well as the option to with draw from the study at any time. Each of these items has been explained to me by the investigator. The investigator has answered all of my questions regarding the study, and I believe I understand what is involved. My signature below indicates that I freely agree to participate in this exploratory study and that I have received a copy of this agreement from the investigator.

Signature *Date*

B2. Transcriptionist Confidentiality Form

Date: _____

I _____ understand that my services as transcriptionist is for the work of xxxxxxxx dissertation case study. I will only transcribe information recorded during the site visit at the school selection.

I understand the confidentiality of all information acquired through my services is the utmost importance. I will ensure the confidentiality of my work through the protection of all documents and only communicating with the researcher.

I further understand that my fee is in accordance with established services. The information will not be used for self-promotion.

Signature of Transcriptionist

Date _____

B3. Participant Protocol Outline

Mr. /Mrs. _____, here is a broad outline of what my qualitative case study interviews and observations of your instructional leadership may involve:

1. Two or three interviews to discuss your leadership perspective since the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (2002).
2. Access to any relevant documents and artifacts you may think relevant to your school success (records, events, newsletters, etc.).
3. Opportunity to observe you in leadership action for a day or two.
4. Access, if possible, to key leaders in or around your school who help make your school and leadership successful (key teachers, leadership team members, parents, staff, district personnel, etc.).
5. Time period for which your accessibility corresponds to dates in _____

Sincerely,

xxxxxxx

C. Interview Protocols

C1. Interview Protocol for the Principal

Principals' Leadership in "Level 5" Schools of Excellence for Improvement

Time of interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of interviewee:

The purpose of this interview is to discover the phenomena of instructional excellence in "level 5" schools of excellence for improvement. What does a set of rated "level 5" school of excellence for improvement elementary principals across Arkansas with a high percentage of low socio-economic students state they do that fosters change in teachers' instructional practices?

School Demographics Questions

1. What is the student population and ethnic make-up?
2. What are the free and reduce percentages?
3. What is the grade level configuration?
4. How many years have you been principal at this school?
5. Were you an administrator previously?
6. What is the population of your city?
7. What is the number of staff members?
 - a. Teachers _____
 - b. Support Staff _____

- c. Math Focus _____
 - d. Literacy _____
 - e. Administrators _____
 - f. Counselors _____
 - g. Custodians _____
 - h. Special Education Teachers _____
 - i. ELL Teachers _____
 - j. Other _____
8. Are there Special Education students? If yes, how many _____
9. How many ELL students? _____
10. How many minority students? _____

Questions

1. Tell me your beliefs regarding individual student achievement?
2. How do you articulate your beliefs in your personal and professional life?
3. Describe how you maintain excellence within the learning community.
4. Describe how you maintain continuous improvement for your staff and students?
5. What activities do your teachers do to for continuous growth – instructionally and academically?
6. Tell me what you do to create a safe environment for the students.
7. How do you monitor the climate or culture of the school?
8. What do you do to motivate teachers to continue to improve?
9. How do you give teachers decisions to improve on areas of needs?
10. What resources do you provide for teachers?

11. How do you determine what materials and resources are needed for your school?
12. What do you do to keep current with best practices for leadership and teachers?
13. How do you share best practices in regards to teaching assessments and classroom management?
14. What do you do to celebrate or recognize academic success? –
15. How do the principal and teachers build a culture of trust?
16. What does trust mean to the principal and teachers?
17. How is faculty trust with parents and students cultivated?
18. What trust-building activities are used?
19. How is self-efficacy developed in teachers and students?
20. How much emphasis is placed upon academics?
21. How optimistic is the school culture?
22. How do you build academic optimism in teachers and students?

C2. Interview Protocol for the Staff

Interview Protocol Dissertation Study: Principals' Leadership in "Level 5" Schools of Excellence for Improvement

Time of interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of interviewee:

The purpose of this interview is to explore the phenomena of instructional excellence in "level 5" schools of excellence for improvement. What does a set of rated "level 5" school of excellence for improvement elementary principals across Arkansas with a high percentage of low socio-economic students state they do that fosters change in teachers' instructional practices?

1. How does your principal articulate that all students can achieve?
2. How does your principal ensure continuous improvement?
3. What activities does your principal do to ensure teacher's continuous growth – instructionally and academically?
4. How does your principal create a safe environment for your students?
5. What does your principal do to motivate teachers to continue to improve?
6. How does your principal give teachers decisions to improve on areas of needs?
7. What resources does your principal provide for teachers?
8. How does your principal determine what materials and resources are needed for your school?

9. What does your principal do to keep current with best practices for leadership and teachers?
10. How does your principal share best practices in regards to teaching assessments, and classroom management?
11. What does your principal do to celebrate or recognize academic success?
12. How do the principal and teachers build a culture of trust?
13. What does trust mean to the principal and teachers?
14. How is faculty trust with parents and students cultivated?
15. What trust-building activities are used?
16. How is self-efficacy developed in teachers and students?
17. How much emphasis is placed upon academics?
18. How optimistic is the school culture?
19. How do you build academic optimism in teachers and students?

C3. IRB Approval Letter

January 6, 2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: xxxxxxx
 Carleton Holt

FROM: Ro Windwalker
 IRB Coordinator

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #: 10-12-368
Protocol Title: A Multiple Case Study of Three Principals of Three "Level 5" Schools of Excellence
Review Type: 1 EXEMPT 0 EXPEDITED 0 FULL IRB
Approved Project Period: Start Date: 01/06/2011 Expiration Date: 01/05/2012

Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Compliance website (<http://www.uark.edu/admin/rsspinfo/compliance/index.html>). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

If you wish to make any modifications in the approved protocol, you must seek approval prior to implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 120 Ozark Hall, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.

D. Appendix

D1. Hoy and Hoy Permission

From: "Forschler, Jenell" <Jenell.Forschler@pearson.com> Monday,
December 13, 2010 10:59:38 AM
Subject: Permission agreement
To: XXXXXXXXXX
Attachments: Attach0.html 14K

PERMISSION AGREEMENT

Div: 0G: Code: 9780205578443
Req No: 42035: Cust No: 15799
DEC 13 10
XXXXXXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXXXX:

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To use pp. 2-3 in Janice McCoy's qualitative multiple case study dissertation, begin completed for degree requirements at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville.

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from the sources cited. At this time, we are unable to provide you with any additional information regarding these sources beyond that provided in our publication.)

Thank you for contacting our offices regarding this matter. We wish you success with your educational and career objectives.

Sincerely,

Jenell Forschler
Permissions Administrator
Pearson Education, Inc.
501 Boylston St., Suite 900
Boston, MA 02116
Phone: 617.671.2291
Fax: 617.671.2290

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For alternative text files for students with a disability, go to <https://order.superlibrary.com/Comergent/en/US/adirect/pearson?cmd=DisabilityRequestForm>

From: Wayne Hoy <whoy@me.com> Tuesday, December 07, 2010 3:57:30 PM
Subject: Re: research
To: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Attachments: Attach0.html 6K

Hi xxxxxxxx--

No problem. You have my permission to use the elements.

Wayne

Wayne K. Hoy
Fawcett Professor of
Education Administration

[<mailto:hoy.16@osu.edu>]hoy.16@osu.edu
[<http://www.waynekhoy.com>]www.waynekhoy.com

On Dec 7, 2010, at 4:21 PM, XXXXXXXX wrote:

Dr. Hoy,

May I have your permission to use your six elements of instructional leadership in my dissertation? I sent a letter to Allyn and Bacon, but no response. Thank you for your help.

XXXXXXXXXXXX

From: Wayne Hoy <whoy@me.com> Sunday, November 21, 2010 6:52:21 PM
Subject: Re: instructional leadership
To: XXXXXXXXXXXX
Attachments: Attach0.html 7K

Hi XXXXXXXXXXXX

I know of no one else that has used all six elements as a framework for study. I am interested in your findings when you are done. Please send me a summary of your results.

Good luck with your research.

Wayne

Wayne K. Hoy
Fawcett Professor of
Education Administration

[mailto:hoy.16@osu.edu]hoy.16@osu.edu
[http://www.waynehoy.com]www.waynehoy.com

On Nov 20, 2010, at 2:54 PM, XXXXXXXXXXXX wrote:

Dr. Hoy,

I am a graduate student at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. I am writing my dissertation: A Multiple Case Study of Three Elementary Principals of Three "Level 5" Schools of Excellence". I am using your six as my theoretical framework. I would like to know, if other researchers have use your six behaviors as a framework. The behaviors are listed in chapter 1 on page 3 of Instructional Leadership: A Research-Based Guide to Learning in Schools (2nd Ed.) (2006). Thank you for your help..

A Multiple Case Study of Three Principals of Three "Level 5" Schools of Excellence
A Multiple Case Study of Three Principals of Three "Level 5" Schools of Excellence
A Multiple Case Study of Three Principals of Three "Level 5" Schools of Excellence
A Multiple Case Study of Three Principals of Three "Level 5" Schools of Excellence

XXXXXXXXXXXX

From: Wayne Hoy <whoy@me.com> Friday, January 21, 2011 1:48:27 PM
Subject: Re: interview protocol
To: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Attachments: Attach0.html 9K

HI Janice-

I looked over the questions that you will use to collect data. They look good to me and get at important facets of instruction. The one area you may want to develop a little more is academic optimism, which consists of trust, self-efficacy, academic emphasis. Consider the following questions:

How do the principal and teachers build a culture of trust?
What does trust mean to the principal and teachers?
How is faculty trust with parents and students cultivated?
What trust-building activities are used?
How is self-efficacy developed in teachers and students?
How much emphasis is placed upon academics?
How optimistic is the school culture?
How do you build academic optimism in teachers and students?

I am not suggesting that you have to ask all these questions, but attempt to gauge the academic culture of the school, which is quite important.

Good luck with your research and please send me a summary of your results when you are done.

Wayne

Wayne K. Hoy
Fawcett Professor of
Education Administration

[<mailto:hoy.16@osu.edu>]hoy.16@osu.edu
[<http://www.waynehoy.com>]www.waynehoy.com

On Jan 18, 2011, at 8:46 PM, XXXXXXXX wrote:

XXXXXXXXXX

501-624-3372 ext. 1001

----- Original Message -----

Dr. Hoy,

If you have the time, please review my questions for the principal and the staff. The questions should be aligned to your behaviors. Thanks for your help.

XXXXXXXXXXXXX

<Interview Protocol-1.docx>

G. Dissertation Timeline

| | |
|------------------|---|
| January, 2007 | Entered Doctoral Program -Spring |
| May, 2009 | Coursework completed UA |
| May, 2010 | Coursework will be completed (Harding University) |
| Nov. 2010 | Chapter I - Introduction |
| Nov. 2010 | Chapter II - Literature Review |
| Nov. 2010 | Chapter III – Methodology |
| Jan. 2011 | Field Work |
| January 24, 2011 | Field Work |
| June - July 2011 | Chapter 4 & 5 |
| August, 2011 | Complete Edits |
| October, 2011 | Defend |
| December, 2011 | Graduate |

Proposal Hearing and Approval
IRB Approval

Letter to the Superintendent of Schools
Meeting with the Superintendent of Schools and Principal
School and Community Visit/Set up contact list e-mails
Pilot Study (Questions)
Site Visit and begin Interview Sessions with Principal and staff
Study Participant Selection
Observations/Interviews
Chapters IV – Case Study
Chapters V – Results and Summary
Complete Dissertation
Defend Dissertation
Graduation

