
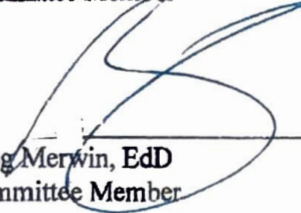


ACCEPTANCE


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CENTRAL OFFICE SUPPORTS FOR PRINCIPALS AS LEARNING LEADERS AND THE
IMPACT ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

by

Jodi L. McClay

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ABSTRACT

School leaders play a vital role in ensuring student achievement. In fact, they are second only to classroom instruction. All too often, however, principals are immersed in administrative duties with little time or training to become true leaders of learning who can shape the success of a school. This dissertation focuses on the need for central offices to create systems and structures that support the ongoing development of principals as learning leaders. It utilizes a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative tools with a comprehensive review of relevant literature. The study is divided into two phases, a survey measuring superintendents' and assistant superintendents' beliefs and behaviors related to supporting the professional development of principals, and one-on-one interviews with superintendents, principals, and directors to assess the types of district office support, the impact of the support on principals' leadership capacities and retention, and ultimately student achievement.

This research produced a number of key findings, including: 1) strong relationships exist between student achievement and three beliefs and behaviors reported by districts: the quality of teaching and learning within classrooms, efforts to build trust with principals, and efforts to support principal mental health; 2) district leaders and principals acknowledge the importance of principal mentoring and believe there needs to be differentiated support for new and veteran principals; and 3) district leaders and principals place immense importance on building and maintaining high levels of trust. The results of this research conclude that in order to maximize the impact on principals as learning leaders, central offices must deliberately and thoughtfully focus on: a) prioritizing the importance of principal mentoring; b) designing systems and structures that allow for and foster principal mentoring; c) training mentors in how to coach and

build trust; d) establishing supports for the mental health of principals; and e) ensuring all departments within the district are supporting the work. As a result, principal retention and student achievement will increase.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction/Overview of Chapter

Public school principals are charged with immense jobs (National Association of Secondary School Principals and National Association of Elementary School Principals , 2013; DuFour, 2015; Fullan, 2016; Jenkins, 2009; Van Roekel, 2008). They are responsible for hiring and ensuring that their staffs (both certificated and classified) are highly qualified and effective at both the curriculum being presented and the instructional strategies utilized for delivery; building and sustaining a positive school climate; planning and balancing multiple budgets; handling parent concerns and student discipline; staying current on federal and state laws as well as district office mandates; and much, much more (Fullan, 2016; Carbaugh, Marzano, & Toth, 2015).

Historically, there was a time when school administrators merely served as plant managers (The Wallace Foundation, 2013), walking the campus each morning to look for hazards, ensuring that the school facilities were in working order, and serving as a liaison between the teachers and the central office. Parents, for the most part, held educators in high regard and trusted the schools to teach their children appropriately. They put their children on a school bus each morning, expected a good report at the end of the week, and warned their children about earning a trip to the dreaded ‘principal’s office.’ “In the public mind, principals were often thought of as mere school-building managers, individuals who were more interested in wielding power and enforcing compliance than in the loftier concerns of teaching and learning” (Alvoid & Black, Jr., 2014, p. 1).

In the early 1990's, however, the role of the principal began to change, and this was especially enticing to this author. The concept of instructional leadership emerged, tying

principals back to the one-room schoolhouse administrative role of 'lead teacher.' In this realm, principals were still expected to manage their facilities, but the priority shifted to one of a teacher coach, mentor, and staff developer (DuFour, 2002). This required visibility all over the campus to build relationships with students, staff, and parents, as well as a new set of skills in pedagogy, curriculum, instruction, assessments, clinical supervision, and staff development (Van Roekel, 2008).

In this new role, principals' concerns were far more complex than manager-like tasks such as balancing the school budget; they now were charged with responsibility for the teaching and learning on their campuses (The Wallace Foundation, 2015). These instructional leaders worked tirelessly to ensure that each student received high quality instruction and that each teacher continued to grow in his or her abilities to implement research-based instructional strategies (DuFour & Mattos, 2013).

This author was extremely blessed to have a true instructional leader as her principal during the formative years of her teaching. The principal not only knew every child by name, but also each student's strengths and weaknesses as a learner. She worked alongside the teachers to develop individual intervention and enrichment plans. She held staff meetings (almost daily) that were unlike traditional teacher meetings where staff spent time debating the duty schedule or location of the new copy machine. As an instructional leader, this principal framed every session and conversation around an instructional goal, using research, articles, case studies, and ideas to develop her teachers. She arranged 'field trips' for the staff to go and observe high-achieving schools, she facilitated book studies each semester, and she spent the vast majority of her time during the school day observing instruction, modeling lessons, participating in grade level meetings, providing specific feedback to teachers, and engaging in parent/teacher conferences

about student progress. Her actions motivated and inspired the staff to be the lifelong learners they promoted within their students.

By limiting the focus and making the vision of high-quality teaching and learning exceptionally clear (Fullan, 2016), this principal served as a model instructional leader. It is no wonder that, although this author never aspired to become a school administrator, she jumped at the opportunity to become a school principal after being mentored by such an exceptional instructional leader. Add to that the fact that she was told by the superintendent that she was being recruited "as an instructional leader who should expend all energies toward improving the quality of teaching and learning on the campus" (D. Allmen, personal communication, August 1998). The superintendent specifically stated that as a newly hired instructional leader/principal for the district, she would not need to worry about the minutia of running the school; it would dominate her time if she let it. Rather, he would keep an eye on the logistical things if she would focus on improving the teaching and learning on the campus. What an exciting opportunity!

Fast forward to the present day, over 20 years later, where research has taken us even further – transitioning principals from serving as instructional leaders to learning leaders who are focused on the learning (vs. teaching) and developing teams of teachers rather than individual practitioners (DuFour, 2002). In this role, principals work together with their teams of teachers to utilize data and evidence of student learning as the foundation for planning and revising instruction (DuFour & Mattos, 2013). This takes the concept of instructional leadership to the next level, asking administrators to prioritize focus on the collective efforts of their teams rather than working with individual staff members to impact instruction (DuFour, 2002). Most principals who enjoyed instructional leadership work are also thriving as learning leaders, as they

now work alongside their groups of teachers in grade level or department teams to design curriculum, create assessments, and analyze student learning.

As time has progressed, however, many additional items have been added to the plates of instructional and learning leaders (Fullan, 2016), including larger schools with more staff, students, and families; increased expectations/standards for student learning; increased levels of accountability from the state, federal government, and central office; less support staff such as counselors, specialists, and assistant principals; higher demands from the community and parents; increased numbers of students on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), requiring significantly more time in IEP meetings; increased numbers of egregious student behaviors; increased social emotional needs of students; and so many additional duties.

These are just some of the reasons being cited for increasing levels of principal job dissatisfaction and turnover (Fullan, 2014). In fact, 75% of school principals believe their jobs are too difficult and complex (Fullan, 2016; Markow, Macia, & Lee, 2013), and some say school leadership is one of the hardest jobs (Rieg & Marcoline, 2008). After all, what other jobs require the employee to be an expert in so many things... leadership theories, instructional strategies, child development, facilities, budgets, fundraising, counseling, liability, special education, state laws, federal laws, curriculum, and more? Add to that the necessity to have superb people skills, from remembering and acknowledging students and parents by name to being able to deliver difficult messages, and one could argue we are asking for an impossible human 'jack-of-all trades' (Fullan, 2000; Lovely, 2004). When principals have direct, systematic support from the central office, however, they report much higher levels of satisfaction (Silverman, 2016), less turnover (Gates, Baird, Master, Chavez-Herrerias, 2019; Saltzman, 2016), and ultimately, increased student achievement (Goldring et al., 2009; Goldring et al., 2018; Louis et al., 2010).

One of the most important functions of a site administrator is to ensure high quality teaching and learning on the campus (Marzano, McNulty, & Waters, 2005). “Research has shown that strong principals are integral to strong schools and to raising the quality of teaching” (Goldring et al., 2018, p. xi). As stated by the National Association of Elementary School Principals’ Study (2014), *Recruiting, Preparing and Building the Capacity of Effective Principals: What the Research Tells Us*, “A great teacher makes a great classroom, but only a principal can lead a school’s success and sustain long-term improvements” (p. 1).

According to a meta-analysis of 31 studies in 1,129 schools, the principal’s responsibility for monitoring and evaluating employees has an average .27 correlation to improved student achievement (Marzano et al., 2005). It is second only to situational awareness and flexibility (Marzano et al., 2005). From the kindergarten teacher focused on letter sounds and fine motor skills to the Advanced Placement (AP) Calculus teacher preparing students for the high-stakes AP test, it is imperative that each teacher on a principal’s campus demonstrates excellence. Our students deserve no less, and it is ultimately up to the principal to be certain that this occurs.

The first chapter of this study describes the problem, the purpose of the study, and the significance of the research to education practitioners. Key terms are defined and an overview of the theoretical framework, limitations, delimitations, and assumptions of the study are detailed. Primary and sub research questions are introduced, along with an overview of the organization of the study.

Statement of the Problem

The leader’s role in school districts today is complex and ever-changing, charged with creating sustainable, transformational changes to meet the needs of 21st Century learners, while often dealing with conflicting and time-consuming mandates that have little to no impact on

student achievement. Sadly, studies show that most site leaders are spending far too little time on the issues that matter most – teaching and learning (Fink, 2015; Turnbull et al., 2009). In fact, Stanford University’s School Leadership Research Report (2009) indicates that principals spend the least amount of time in instruction-related tasks than any other area, even though achievement gaps continue to widen (Hanushek, Peterson, Tapley, & Woessmann, 2019; Muhammed, 2015). The desire and need to focus on instruction and ongoing staff development amidst myriad, and often contradictory issues, also adds to the frustration of these leaders (DuFour, 2002). Yet, principals “remain crucial in creating a North Star for action, establishing enabling conditions, and shaping a pathway for change” (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 27). This process, as outlined by Fullan and Quinn (2016), “is a process involving initial and continuous engagement around core goals persistently pursued” (p. 45).

We know that the role of the site administrator is paramount to establishing sound instructional practices (Sebastian & Allensworth, 2019; National Association of Secondary School Principals and National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2013; National Association of Secondary Principals, n.d.) and a strong school climate (Marzano, 2005; Muhammad, 2018), so districts must recruit and retain exceptional school leaders. Yet, data tells us the majority of principals are overwhelmed and/or unhappy (Fullan, 2016).

An enormous amount of research tells us that school leaders play a vital role in ensuring student achievement (Fullan, 2014; Goldring et al., 2018; Hattie, Masters & Birch, 2015; Mendels & Mitgang, 2013; Peterson, 2001; The Wallace Foundation, 2013). In fact, they are second only to classroom instruction (National Association of Secondary School Principals and National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2013; National Association of Secondary Principals, n.d.). As both instructional and learning leaders, it can be argued that site

administrators ultimately have the greatest impact on what occurs in the classrooms. After all, they are responsible not only for hiring, firing, and training classroom teachers, they also are required to ensure a positive school climate (Marzano, 2005; Muhammad, 2018), guaranteed and viable curriculum (Marzano, 2003), and accountability at all levels. In essence, they have the most potential to improve classroom instruction and ensure that students are receiving the best instructional programs by creating the necessary conditions (The Wallace Foundation, 2013).

Instructional leaders shape the environment in which teachers and students succeed or fail. Even if by some magic we could immediately do what it takes to give all teachers the time and opportunity to upgrade their skills and knowledge, we would still require skillful leadership to ensure that teachers can operate in an environment that values and takes advantage of what they know. (Van Roekel, 2008, p. 1)

Nonetheless, site administrators are often hired and assigned to a school with little to no systems of support. In some cases, particularly low socio-economic or rural areas, where principal recruitments are even tougher (Hinton & Kastner, 2000; Latterman & Steffes, 2017; Pjanowski, Hewitt & Brady, 2009), principals may be hired with minimal teaching experience and little to no training in leadership (Wood, Finch, & Mirecki, 2013). And due to a small district size or rural area of a school, a site leader in these cases is often isolated professionally and receives less access to professional development opportunities, including fewer principal colleagues and district administrators within his or her own district (Johnston et al., 2016; Kaufman, 2016).

With so many principals suffering from insurmountable demands (Jenkins, 2009), decreasing job satisfaction (Johnson, 2008), increased burnout/turnover (Fullan, 2014), and minimal support and/or training, this reality must be transformed. In addition, achievement gaps

continue to widen, particularly for English learners, special education students, and socio-economically disadvantaged youth. Unless site leaders are skilled and able to serve their teachers and students as true learning leaders, we cannot expect achievement to increase. Teachers are likely to – as the mantra goes – keep on teaching how they have always taught, and keep on achieving the results they have always received.

Purpose of the Study

Therefore, central office leadership must develop and implement strategic systems of support to ensure that principals are equipped to handle the demanding elements of their jobs (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010), while prioritizing the need to serve as learning leaders (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). For districts and schools to achieve this, and ultimately improve the learning and teaching processes within our organizations, we must systematically and relentlessly be purpose driven, choose a small number of ambitious goals, establish clarity of strategy for accomplishing the goals, and utilize knowledge of change to implement appropriately (Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

These realities, in conjunction with the needs and rights of our students, demand change. First, site leaders need strategic and systemic models of support that equip them with the necessary skills to be effective learning leaders. And second, central office administrators need to design systems that remove the barriers that prevent principals from serving in such capacities.

Hence, the purpose of this study, in its most simplistic form, is to understand the role of central offices in developing and retaining principals to serve as learning leaders. The nature of the specific problems will be evaluated, and potential solutions will be identified. At this stage in the research, principals as learning leaders will be generally defined as principals working

alongside their teams of teachers to influence the teaching and learning processes by utilizing data and evidence of student learning to plan further instruction, interventions, and enrichments.

Significance of the Study

School principals are growing immensely frustrated with their jobs. Competing demands, limited resources, and a near-impossible workload are sending many back to the classroom or out of the field entirely (Fullan, 2014). High performing teachers are watching their overworked principals. They see the long hours, politics, and frustration of not being able to serve as instructional or learning leaders and are opting not to go into administrative positions (Fullan, 2001). In addition, Grissom and Harrington (2010) found a negative correlation between university preparation programs and principal effectiveness. “Principal training at the majority of university-based programs has long been upbraided for being out of touch with district needs and leaving graduates ill-prepared to lead” (Mendels & Mitgang, 2013, p. 23). Simply put, pre-service programs cannot keep up with the ever-evolving role of principals (The Wallace Foundation, 2012) and are not adequately preparing our school leaders for the needs of schools today. “96 percent of practicing principals said their colleagues were more helpful than their graduate studies in preparing them for the job. And two-thirds of those polled reported that leadership programs ... are out of touch” (Van Roekel, 2008, p. 2).

With an estimated growth of 6% of school principals needed in the United States between now and 2022 (National Association of Secondary Principals, n.d.), change is imperative. If we acknowledge the principal’s critical role in shaping the climate and instructional prowess of a school, and we want to keep our best school leaders in the field while recruiting teacher leaders into the administrative ranks, action must be taken.

Though some districts have tried to limit initiatives during recent years, the reality is that most districts have vast and often non-congruent or competing changes/initiatives happening simultaneously. This defies common sense and Fullan's (2010) simple recommendation, "Limit the number of core initiatives" (p. 62). While most initiatives are rooted in data and research that emphasizes the need, there are simply too many with too few connections.

The problem is not the absence of goals in districts and schools today but the presence of too many that are ad hoc, unconnected, and ever-changing. Multiple mandates from states and districts combine with the allure of grants and innovations, resulting in overload and fragmentation. The overload results from too many goals, projects, and initiatives (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 19).

Rather than spinning wheels to implement the 'latest or greatest' strategy or program, districts ought to heed the research and focus their energies on developing and supporting principals. Designing systems of support that allow site leaders to do what they went to school and entered the field of administration to do, seems novel but should be a top priority of the central office.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions delineate the meaning of terms used in this study:

Achievement Gap: An achievement gap is a measurable difference between the level of educational benefit between different groups of students. In other words, when the Nation's Report Card revealed in 2013 "that the average score of African American and Latino students in fourth- and eighth-grade mathematics and reading compared to white students was more than twenty points lower" (Muhammed, 2015, p. 15), we have evidence of an achievement gap.

While race is the most commonly studied subgroup, other student groups frequently analyzed for

achievement gaps include socio-economic status, gender, students with disabilities, English proficiency levels, and first-generation college students.

Clinical Supervision: Developed in the late 1950's (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011), clinical supervision is a systematic process of working with individual teachers to improve the quality of instruction in their classrooms. The most famous version of the process came in the 1980's from Madeline Hunter (Marzano et al., 2011) and included a pre-conference with the teacher, an observation/scripting of the lesson, analysis of the data, and a post-conference to discuss the strategies that positively impacted student learning, those that held no impact on student learning, and those that actually impeded student learning (as cited by Hunter, 1980 in Marzano et al., 2011).

Coaching: In education, coaching began as a tool for successful teachers to assist other teachers; it evolved into site administrators being charged with coaching teachers; and finally, "School leaders themselves now often work with leadership coaches to learn how to navigate transitions, improve staff relationships, and develop both short-term and long-range plans" (Tschannen-Moran, B. & Tschannen-Moran, M., 2011, p. 11).

A successful coaching model for principals involves a coach and principal working together for school success; it must be strengths-based, no-fault, and principal-centered (Tschannen-Moran, B. & Tschannen-Moran, M., 2011). In addition, coaches must be cautious not to involve evaluation. "Schools are increasingly looking to coaching and other relationship-based professional development strategies to improve the skills and performance of teachers and school leaders" (Tschannen-Moran, B. & Tschannen-Moran, M., 2011, p. 10).

Effect Size: In an attempt to answer the question, "What works best in education?" the label 'effect size' was chosen to provide a way of quantifying an influence based on meta-

analyses. 138 different influences related to learning outcomes have been ranked from very positive effects on student learning to very negative effects. Hattie (2012) found that the average effect size of all influences he studied was 0.40, and he therefore decided to judge the success of influences relative to this score.

Instructional Leader: A principal who serves as ‘instructional leader’ focuses on the instructional quality of the school and establishes as priorities allocating resources to instruction, overseeing the curriculum, and expanding the teaching and learning on the campus. These principals will “free themselves from bureaucratic tasks and focus their efforts toward improving teaching and learning” (Jenkins, 2009, p. 36) by spending the majority of their time engaged with the curriculum, instruction, and assessments used to ensure learning. In addition, instructional leaders need to be resource providers, instructional assets, good communicators, and have a visible presence (Whitaker, 1997, as cited in Jenkins, 2009).

Learning Leader: The learning leader focuses on outcomes rather than inputs and results rather than intentions (DuFour, 2002). Stated simply, this type of school leader emphasizes what is learned vs. what is taught. He or she works alongside teams of teachers in Professional Learning Communities to plan lessons, assess student learning, determine interventions, and design enrichments. This is in lieu of prioritizing his or her work to develop individual teachers through a clinical supervision process. It does not mean, that as the learning leader, he or she does not work individually with teachers, especially new teachers, to enhance their effectiveness (DuFour & Marzano, 2009); he or she merely recognizes the value of and prioritizes working with teams of teachers on the teaching and learning processes (DuFour & Marzano, 2009).

Mentoring: The term ‘mentoring’ dates back to Homer’s epic poem *Odyssey* in the 8th Century BCE (O’Donnell, 2017), as Homer’s friend Odysseus was named Mentor. The word is

best used to describe someone, like the character, who serves as a teacher, helper, or advisor to a less experienced person (History Disclosure, 2016). As stated by Gray et al. (2007), “Mentoring is an integral component of principal preparation programs designed to improve school and student performance” (p. 5). It is at the heart of this study, as the author firmly supports the claim that “effective new principals have been rigorously prepared and deliberately mentored in well-designed programs that immerse them in real-world leadership experiences where they are challenged to excel” (Gray et al., 2007, p. 5).

Professional Learning Community (PLC): DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker (2008) defined a professional learning community as “educators committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve” (p. 14). They work collaboratively to share expertise; analyze data; plan lessons and learning experiences; and assess the overall quality of teaching and learning (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Many & Mattos, 2006). The concept revolves around three big ideas: learning, collaboration, and results (DuFour, 2004). Teams center their conversations around four critical questions: 1) What do we want our students to learn? 2) How will we know when they have learned it? 3) What will we do for those who don’t? 4) What will we do for those who do? (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2010).

Unduplicated Pupil (UDP): Within California’s Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), the model used to determine the allocation of funds for each school district, the term Unduplicated Pupil Count (UDP) is defined as pupils who are: 1) English learners, 2) eligible for the free and reduced lunch program under the National School Lunch Program, or 3) foster youth (California Department of Education, 2019).

Theoretical Framework

As a “blueprint” for the proposed study, the theoretical framework serves as the guide and structure for the research (Grant & Osanloo, 2015). Since this researcher gravitates toward and works strategically to ensure that her team’s leadership efforts are transformational in nature, she has chosen to approach the study through the lens of Transformational Leadership.

Kouzes and Posner (2007) define transformational leadership as the kind of leadership “that gets people to infuse their energy into strategies” (p. 122). In other words, getting people to commit to a cause rather than a plan serves to “raise the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both the leader and the led” (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p. 122). As one of many leadership types, transformational leadership leaves a lasting, sustainable change in the school or organization. This theoretical framework will define how the work is approached from a philosophical, epistemological, methodological, and analytical perspective (Grant & Osanloo, 2015).

One thing that resonates in particular about Transformational Leadership is that it requires an immense amount of ‘influence’ to move followers to achieve more than the usual (Northouse, 2016); it involves emotions, values, ethics, and standards. In other words, it recognizes that we are dealing with human beings. We need stakeholder input, involvement, and respect to ‘bind’ both leaders and followers together in the process (Northouse, 2016). This significantly increases the odds that the change becomes systemic and sustainable.

Research Questions

Primary Research Question

The primary research question to be addressed by this study is:

1. How does central office leadership impact principals as learning leaders?

Sub-Questions

2. How does central office leadership design systems of support to ensure principals are equipped to serve as learning leaders?
3. What models are high-achieving districts using to support the development and ability of principals to serve as learning leaders?
4. To what degree does trust between and among principals, mentors, and departments play a role in supporting the development, ability, and retention of principals to serve as learning leaders?
5. What is the unique impact of each department within a central office on principals as learning leaders?

Research Hypothesis

Primary Hypothesis

1. When central office leadership creates the conditions to allow principals to serve as learning leaders, retention (Gates, Baird, Master, & Chavez-Herrerias., 2019; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010) and student achievement (Honig et al., 2010; The Wallace Foundation, 2013) increase (Bottoms & Fry, 2009).

Sub-Hypotheses

1. There is a positive relationship between systems of support by central office

leadership on principals as learning leaders, retention, and student achievement.

Limitations

This study has the following limitations:

1. While it would be nice to secure the thoughts and beliefs on central office supports and mentoring for school principals from all individuals serving in the principal or mentor role, that was not practical or realistic, so for the purposes of this study, four principals and six central office administrators were secured as participants, from a total of three public school districts. Keep in mind that nearly 200 superintendents and assistant superintendents responsible for overseeing, designing, and implementing programs of support for their principals throughout three counties within Southern California provided information on their principal mentoring programs.
2. Also, not all public school districts in the United States could be included. ‘Like’ districts were established by utilizing total enrollment, demographics (specifically, ethnicity breakdowns and the UDP, including the percent of English learners, foster youth, and low socio-economic), overall annual operating budget, and student achievement rankings within the respective counties. It is important to note that there are inherent flaws in determining ‘like’ districts, as data utilized represent the previous school year and include some self (district) reported numbers.
3. Time and budget are also limitations, as this author would have included more one-on-one interviews with additional participants and districts to assess principal and central office administrator perceptions had time permitted.

4. Another limitation includes the fact that generalizations about the impact of central office supports and mentoring programs are being made based on a small percentage (i.e., less than one percent) of public school districts and a small percentage (i.e., less than one percent) of public school principals (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011).
5. Perhaps the greatest limitation in this study was the 2020 COVID-19 worldwide pandemic. The Phase I survey was launched in May, when superintendents and assistant superintendents were immensely focused on supporting distance learning programs and preparing for a fall re-opening. Though survey recipients were asked to complete the survey with a mindset matching their beliefs ‘prior’ to the virus, the fact that little central office supports for principals in the area of instructional leadership has been utilized for several months cannot be ignored. Likewise, the Phase II interviews were conducted in June and July, and while interviewees were also reminded to provide responses with a ‘prior to COVID’ mindset, they, too, were immersed in preparations for a fall re-opening like no other ever experienced.

Delimitations

1. In an attempt to gain a better understanding of the issues facing school principals and systems employed to support them by central offices today, this researcher chose only to utilize public school districts in the study. This prevented getting the input and information on systems utilized in private and independent charter schools.
2. Working in a district within one of the counties selected for the Phase I surveys, the researcher chose to include the superintendent and assistant superintendents from her district in the Phase I survey. Having instituted a principal support program in her

district over a decade ago, she realized that this could skew the single district response, yet she wanted to include all districts within each of the selected three counties. Consequently, the data received from her district superintendent and assistant superintendents was collected and reviewed by an outside, neutral party.

3. Principals interviewed represented all years of experience in an attempt to draw comparisons between and among the central office supports provided and years served as a principal. Principals were categorized into three groups: first year principals, principals in their second or third year, and principals with more than three years on the job.
4. The time served in the central office role of providing direct support or mentoring for site principals was set at three or more years. This was to ensure that central office staff had enough experience in the position to speak thoroughly about the support services provided by their districts for site principals.
5. It is important to note that while attention was given to each central office administrator's exact role, many public school districts assign a variety of titles to similar positions. For example, the title of assistant superintendent can also be associate superintendent, deputy superintendent, or executive director. Likewise, a director of curriculum can be a coordinator, director of elementary schools, executive director, etc. Rather than focus on title specifically, the researcher asked questions of each superintendent and central office staff to best determine the administrator(s) who coached or mentored principals in the areas of curriculum and instruction.
6. And finally, the researcher opted to utilize school-wide data, including student groups, but not individual student achievement data. California Dashboard data

provided English Language Arts and Mathematics scores for schools as a whole, grade level bands, and significant student groups such as English learners, Special Education, and various racial and ethnic populations.

Assumptions

There are five assumptions of this research study not tested as a part of the research. First, that the superintendents responded to the Phase I survey and follow-up calls accurately and honestly. Second, that the central office administrators interviewed were, in fact, accurate and honest, as well as the individuals most closely assigned to mentoring or coaching the principals. Third, that all participants – superintendents, assistant superintendents, central office administrators, and principals understood the terminology used and concepts being addressed. Fourth, that the principals interviewed were accurate and honest. Finally, that the interpretation of the data accurately reflects the perceptions and responses from all participants – superintendents, assistant superintendents, central office administrators, and principals.

Organization of the Study

This research study is presented in five chapters. Chapter 1 presents an introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, definition of terms, research questions and hypotheses, limitations, delimitations, and the assumptions of the study.

Chapter 2 provides a detailed review of the literature, including a discussion of the five themes pertinent to the study: 1) *principals as learning leaders*; 2) *the influences of effective leadership*; 3) *central office structures* to create the conditions for principals to serve as learning leaders; 4) *mentoring to equip and retain* principals to serve as learning leaders; and 5) *the relationship between trust and successful mentoring* that promotes principals as learning leaders.

In Chapter 3, the methods and measurements are discussed. This includes the selection of participants, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

Chapter 4 presents the study's findings, including an analysis of both the qualitative and quantitative findings for the primary and sub research questions. Finally, Chapter 5 reports the findings, implications for practice, recommendations for the future, and conclusions.

Summary

Chapter 1 introduced the need for this study. Principals are critical to improving student achievement on their campuses (Marzano et al., 2005), yet many obstacles hamper their abilities to do so. Principals are reporting higher levels of job dissatisfaction than ever before as well as the inability to focus on the 'right' things (Fullan, 2008; Jenkins, 2009; Johnson, 2008; Lovely, 2004). Teachers have grown resistant to becoming administrators (Fullan, 2001), "families and communities are dissatisfied with public schools" (Gary & Witherspoon, 2011, p. 6), and student achievement gaps continue to widen (Hanushek et al., 2019; Muhammad, 2015).

Acknowledgment of these facts, coupled with the Murphy, Smylie, Mayrowetz, & Louis (2009) study on distributed leadership, where "all change flows through the principal's office" (p. 181), require a call to action.

The task of creating systems of support to ensure principals are equipped, retained, and able to serve as learning leaders is not an easy one, but it is doable. More importantly, it is one we have a moral and ethical obligation to provide our leaders, and ultimately our teachers and students. There is no excuse not to act. Fullan and Quinn (2016) have provided a framework; Northouse (2016) has delineated the theory; and both The Wallace Foundation (2013) and the University of Washington's Center for Educational Leadership (2017; 2019) have provided an enormous quantity of research and implementation resources.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Working with The Wallace Foundation, Goldring et al. (2018) published “A New Role Emerges for Principal Supervisors” and shared the results of their four-year, \$24 million dollar initiative with six public school districts. The purpose was to “transform a position traditionally focused on administration, operations, and compliance to one dedicated to developing and supporting principals to improve instruction in schools” (p. xi). With the overall goal of improving principal effectiveness, the Wallace Foundation, in coordination with both the University of Washington Center for Educational Leadership and Vanderbilt University, has opined five components necessary to successfully improve principal effectiveness in an effort to ultimately increase student achievement: (a) strengthening central office structures to support changes in the principal supervisor’s role, (b) developing systems to better train supervisors, (c) developing the capacity of supervisors to better support principals, (d) decreasing the number of principals supervisors support, and (e) adjusting the principal supervisor job duties to focus on developing principals as instructional leaders.

Building upon Goldring et al. (2018) and The Wallace Foundation’s work, this study aims to look at the principal supervisor’s influence on the principal as a learning leader and the subsequent impact on student achievement; the relationships between the supervisor and principals; and ways in which central office systems can foster the work of principals as learning leaders. Five themes pertinent to this research study and discussed in this section include: 1) *principals as learning leaders*; 2) *the influences of effective leadership*; 3) *central office structures* to create the conditions for principals to serve as learning leaders; 4) *mentoring to equip and retain* principals to serve as learning leaders; and 5) *the relationship between trust and*

successful mentoring that promotes principals as learning leaders. While readers will note there are similarities within the sub-topics of each of the five themes, there are also distinct differences. For example, each theme includes a sub-section on the *Historical Perspective* of the topic being addressed, and each theme provides a brief conclusion. Where applicable, many address the *Theory*, relation to a *Collaborative Culture*, and *Obstructions* or common *Barriers*. A few sections have sub-topics esoteric to the theme; examples include *High Needs Schools*, *Central Office and Principal Perceptions*, *The Dimensions of Central Office Transformation*, *Models from High Achieving Districts*, and *Need for Change*.

Principals as Learning Leaders

Today's Realities

There is an abundance of research that supports the positive impact of the school principal on student achievement (Fullan, 2014; Hattie et al., 2015; Mendels & Mitgang, 2013; Peterson, 2001; The Wallace Foundation, 2013). In fact, a study sponsored by the Mid-Continental Research for Educational Leadership (McREL) in 2005 concluded that the most important factor affecting the teaching and learning processes within a school was the leadership within the school (Marzano et al., 2005). Likewise, principals who spend more time on instructional leadership activities see greater increases in student achievement (Hornig, Klasik, & Loeb, 2010). Yet, studies report that principals spend only three to five hours per week, or 8-17% of their time on instructional activities (Grissom, Loeb, & Master, 2013; Hornig et al., 2010; Supovitz & May, 2011 as cited in Markholt, Michelson, & Fink, 2018).

According to results from a national survey of principals and superintendents in 2006, only 10% of principals report being satisfied with the time spent in the areas of curriculum, teaching, mentoring, and professional development. 70% report that they would like to do "a lot

more" in these areas of instructional leadership; 19 percent would like to do a little more. In fact, "fighting for time for instructional leadership appears to be one of the main frustrations of being a principal today; nearly three-quarters of principals say that daily emergencies rob them of time "that could be better spent on academic or teaching issues" (Johnson, 2008, p. 75).

Historical Overview

The concept of instructional leadership first appeared in educational research in the 1950's (Hallinger & Wang, 2015) and stemmed from the belief that school principals should prioritize, or at least balance (Jenkins, 2009), instructional tasks over managerial tasks (Johnson, 2008) if they truly seek to positively impact student achievement. In 1967, Bridges articulated two concerns about the concept that remain relevant today. First, he emphasized the need for a common definition of the term; second, he "highlighted the tension that existed (and continues to exist to this day) between prescriptions for principals to 'be instructional leaders' and the 'contextual realities' of leading schools" (Hallinger & Wang, 2015, p. 3). The 1980's brought immense research into effective schools, cementing the idea that "in the improving schools, the principal is more likely to be an instructional leader, more assertive in his/her institutional leadership role, more of a disciplinarian, and perhaps most of all, assumes responsibility for the evaluation of the achievement of basic objectives" (Edmonds 1979, p. 18, as cited in Hallinger & Wang, 2015, p. 4).

At the core, instructional leadership represents the actions a principal takes to enhance student learning (Flath, 1989, as cited in Jenkins, 2009). It "requires principals to free themselves of bureaucratic tasks and focus their efforts on improving teaching and learning" (Jenkins, 2009, p. 34). Also, it demands that site leaders have a research-based, relevant

understanding of curriculum (*what* is taught), instruction (*how* it is taught), and assessment (DuFour, 2002, as cited in Jenkins, 2009).

Transitioning to a Learning Leader

In the early 2000's, we began to see a shift in the definition of instructional leadership, from that of supporting each individual teacher's growth to focusing on teams of teachers and student learning (DuFour, 2002). The National Association of Elementary School Principals introduced a new definition of instructional leadership in 2001 as "leading learning communities, in which staff members meet on a regular basis to discuss their work, collaborate to solve problems, reflect on their jobs, and take responsibility for what students learn" (as cited in Jenkins, 2009, p. 36). As shared by Schmidt-Davis and Bottoms (2011), "it is neither teachers alone nor principals alone who improve schools, but teachers and principals working together" (as cited in National Association of Secondary School Principals and National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2013, p. 2). Congruent to this definition, DuFour (2002) pointed out a flaw in the title of instructional leader. He supported the shift from a focus on teaching to one on learning and suggested that a more apt name is that of 'learning leader.' DuFour and Mattos (2013) proclaimed, "If principals want to improve student achievement in their school, rather than focus on the individual inspection of teaching, they must focus on the collective analysis of evidence of student learning" (p. 37). To support the claim, DuFour (2002) advocated that:

when learning becomes the preoccupation of the school, when all of the school's educators examine the efforts and initiatives of the school through the lens of their impact on learning, the structure and culture of the school begin to change in substantive ways. (p. 13).

According to DuFour and Marzano (2009) and DuFour and Mattos (2013), principals are far more likely to improve student achievement when they support teacher growth in collaborative teams rather than focusing on individual teacher evaluation. These collaborative teams serve as communities for adult learners who work collaboratively to help one another improve (Fink & Markholt, 2011), and in so doing, increase student achievement. This concept takes the notion of instructional leadership to the next level, emphasizing that the role of the principal is to serve as the learning leader, someone focused relentlessly on student *learning*, not merely *teaching*. In this case, the principal serves as the lead learner, or expert resource for the teaching and learning on campus (Fink & Markholt, 2011). Hattie et al. (2015) identified this as the first mindframe of a high-impact leader: understanding the need to focus on learning and the *impact* of teaching. ‘What was learned?’ and ‘How can we use evidence of student learning to build upon our instructional programs?’ are stronger questions than the traditional ‘What was taught?’ or ‘How was it taught?’ (DuFour & Marzano, 2009).

It is important to note that this refined role of principal as learning leader does not imply that the site leader is, in fact, the all-knowing expert on teaching and learning. Rather, as Schmoker (2005) shared, “The leader’s function is to provide opportunities for teachers to work together in self-managing teams to improve their own instruction, always with the expectation for improved learning” (p. 147). Teams work on improving their instructional strategies and programs, as evidenced by student learning, while the principal is responsible for facilitating the processes (Mullen & Hutinger, 2008; Murphy et al., 2009, as cited in Dumas, 2010).

By concentrating on teaching, the instructional leader of the past emphasized the inputs of the learning process. By concentrating on learning, today’s school leaders shift both their own focus and that of the school community from inputs to outcomes and from intentions to results.

(DuFour, 2002, p. 15)

One way to accomplish the transformation from instructional leader to learning leader is to shift the emphasis from the inspection of teaching to one of a collaborative culture that focuses on and frequently reviews student learning (DuFour & Mattos, 2013). It is essential, therefore, that principals aspiring to have the greatest impact on student learning prioritize this work (DuFour, 2002; Fullan, 2014), because “Time devoted to building the capacity of teachers to work in teams is far better spent than time devoted to observing individual teachers” (DuFour & Marzano, 2009, p. 67). In fact, Vivian Robinson’s (2011) research found that the most significant leadership factor on student achievement, “twice as powerful as any other – is leading teacher learning and development” (as cited in Fullan, 2014, p. 58).

Collaborative Culture

The research on professional learning communities (PLCs) is clear. When teachers participate in effective PLCs, student learning increases (DuFour et al., 2006; DuFour & Mattos, 2013; The Wallace Foundation, 2013). In addition, “Principals play a major role in developing a professional community of teachers who guide one another in improving instruction” (The Wallace Foundation, 2013, p. 9). However, it is important to note that simply providing time for teachers to engage with colleagues will not impact student achievement. The collaborative sessions must focus on the *right* work (Saunders, Goldenberg, & Gallimore, 2009, as cited in DuFour & Mattos, 2013). While we know the core of effective PLC conversations should revolve around the four questions of a PLC (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008), DuFour and Mattos (2013) highlighted four strategies for principals to utilize in their efforts to ensure a positive collaborative culture: form teams where members share responsibility for all student learning; provide teams with time to work together; clarify the work of establishing a guaranteed

and viable curriculum, utilizing student work to assess learning, and designing appropriate intervention plans; and provide teams with the necessary resources and support needed to accomplish their goals. Keep in mind, “Teams don’t need to be supervised. They need to be supported” (DuFour, as cited in Maeker, 2018, p. 12). Principals need to ensure that their collaborative teams have the necessary tools and resources (Maeker, 2018). While the four steps might appear simple, there are numerous obstacles preventing principals from serving in this capacity (Fullan, 2016; Lovely, 2004; Michelson, 2019; Public Agenda, 2007) that will be reviewed next.

Obstructions

Research since the term ‘instructional leadership’ was first introduced has continued to support the need for principals to prioritize instructional leadership tasks. In fact, 92% of principals acknowledge that “ensuring that all teachers use the most effective instructional methods is an essential part of being a school leader today” (Johnson, 2008, p. 72). Why, then, do principals continue to report little time and emphasis on these tasks? There are a variety of theories and realities that obstruct principals from serving as true instructional leaders. Fullan (1991, as cited in Jenkins, 2009) noted lack of time and training, as well as increased paperwork and continued parental perceptions of the principal’s role as a manager.

Fullan (2016) cited his “What’s Worth Fighting for in the Principalship?” study (1997), in which 137 principals reported extremely high increases in the demands on their time. 92% replied that there was an increase in dealing with parent/community groups; 91% in trustee requests; 88% in administrative duties; 81% in staff and student services; 81% in social services; and 69% in board initiatives (Fullan, 2016). In addition, “Education Insights: A Public Agenda” (2006) revealed that two-thirds of public school principals believe their training is out-of-date.

Only 24% of public school superintendents rate their principals as ‘excellent’ at ensuring teachers and students keep student achievement at the forefront of their work (The Wallace Foundation, 2003). In regard to paperwork, 67% of principals and 64% of superintendents report that reducing the bureaucracy and paperwork required of them would be ‘very effective’ in improving the overall effectiveness of schools (Public Agenda, 2007). Fullan (2000) went on to point out that principals have the near-impossible job of meeting both ‘old’ and ‘new’ world expectations. “The old world is still around with expectations to run a smooth school, and to be responsive to all; simultaneously the new world rains down on schools with disconnected demands expecting that at the end of the day the school should be constantly showing better test results, and ideally becoming a learning organization” (Fullan, 2000, pp. 2-3). It has become common knowledge among educators that the demands placed on site leaders are nearly impossible; in fact, “more and more potential teacher leaders are concluding that it is simply not worth it to take on the leadership of schools” (Fullan, 2001, p. 6).

Peterson (1987, as cited in Lovely, 2004) also summarized three obstacles that characterize principal tasks and impede their abilities to focus on instruction: brevity, variety, and fragmentation (Lovely, 2004). The typical principal engages in 50-60 interactions per hour with the average exchange lasting one to two minutes (Peterson, 1987, as cited in Lovely, 2004). These issues often demand quick decisions that necessitate the identification of both the problem and solution. The infamous statement, “If I had one hour to solve a problem, I would spend 55 minutes defining the problem and only five minutes finding the solution” is not the reality for school principals. The student who has just fallen off the monkey bars and appears to have a broken arm, while two parents are arguing loudly over a parking space, and a teacher has a student in class who just vomited all present simultaneously and need immediate attention.

Repeat this with similar, competing needs throughout the day (Peterson, 2001), which is often a 10-12-hour experience filled with “brief encounters that require more energy than longer activities and can exasperate even the most steel-nerved individual” (Lovely, 2004, p. 36), and we get a glimpse into the site leader’s day.

Principals also deal with an immense variety of issues and demands. Ever-changing federal accountability systems, state and district office mandates, and multiple budgets are only a few of the items that absorb a great deal of the school leader’s time. Add to these the curriculum requirements, parent expectations, association/union contracts, staff evaluations, and instructional programs, and we have an almost impossible job comprised of far too many skills needed (Fullan, 2016). Perhaps Fullan (2000) expressed it best with the following advertisement:

Wanted: A miracle worker who can do more with less, pacify rival groups, endure chronic second-guessing, tolerate low levels of support, process large volumes of paper and work double shifts (75 nights a year). He or she will have carte blanche to innovate, but cannot spend much money, replace any personnel, or upset any constituency. (p. 6)

In addition to the variety of tasks, school leaders are dealing with a multitude of age ranges, from four-year-olds, first-time parents, and new teachers to young adult students, grandparents, and veteran teachers (Lovely, 2004) and they face incessant interruptions (Peterson, 2001). All of these factors require principals to have strong people and relational skills as well as a keen ability to change gears quickly (Peterson, 2001). The combination of these three obstacles: task brevity, variety, and fragmentation create immense difficulties for

school leaders to make sense of their work. They make the job chaotic, complicated, and extremely difficult to grasp (Peterson, 2001; Wang, F., & Pollock, K., & Hauseman, C., 2018).

A sense of being overwhelmed and letting stress and chaos take over one's day is also a significant obstacle for many site leaders. The 2007 study by The Wallace Foundation "A Mission of the Heart: What Does It Take to Transform a School?" classified principals into two types: transformers and copers. "Transformers" took responsibility for student learning, focused on instructional leadership tasks daily, exhibited a can-do attitude, and had a clearly articulated vision for what the school could be. "Copers," on the other hand, let managerial tasks consume their days and viewed themselves as unable to spend quality time on instruction (National Association of Secondary School Principals and National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2013; Johnson, 2008).

Finally, Michaelson (2019) detailed three challenges facing leaders today: vision, professional learning cultures, and misalignment. She reminded us that attempts to improve the quality of teaching often do not result in increased student learning because leaders lack the vision for what it looks like; the collaborative culture on the campus works in opposition to meaningful collaboration and growth; and there is frequently a misalignment between student needs and initiatives.

In essence, more and more has been added to the daily responsibilities of school principals over the years, with little, if anything removed. In a 2000 survey conducted by Fullan, 91% of principals stated that they do not believe they can effectively fulfill all of the responsibilities assigned. "There is growing concern that the demands on principals have grown beyond what can be expected of mere mortals" (DuFour, 2015, p. 41). Yet, we know that job satisfaction increases among principals when they are able to spend time on learning leader tasks

(Wang et al., 2018). “To make the principalship truly doable would require the educational establishment to alter public opinion, lower parental expectations, eliminate political pressures, ignore diversity, and reshape our values” (Lovely, 2004, p. 10). “A more realistic approach to reinventing the role is to teach our principals how to make time for what truly counts” (Lovely, 2004, p. 10).

Implementations

It is evident that school leaders across the nation are “frustrated by seeing time that could be spent on education eaten up by distractions that other administrative or clerical personnel could easily handle” (Johnson, 2008, p. 76). Johnson (2008) also questioned whether or not “interest in instructional leadership is accompanied by a commitment to organizing schools in ways that make it possible” (Johnson, 2008, p. 76).

This author would answer a resounding ‘yes,’ so, the question becomes: How can we restructure the role of school leaders to provide adequate supports that ensure our principals are able to serve as learning leaders? “Effective principals work relentlessly to improve achievement by focusing on the quality of instruction. They help define and promote high expectations; they attack teacher isolation and fragmented effort; and they connect directly with teachers and the classroom” (The Wallace Foundation, 2013, p. 11). While the work of serving as a learning leader is achievable (DuFour, 2002), it does not happen overnight. It is complex and can be riddled with obstacles. Fullan (2000) reminds educators that “We will continue to reproduce only small numbers of heroic leaders (heroic because they are going against the grain) until we change how we recruit, support, and develop leadership on the job” (p. 16). How this can be done will be addressed in the *Mentoring* and *Central Office Supports* sections of this chapter.

Michelson (2019) encouraged principals to form teams that assess the greatest student learning needs. While she acknowledged the work that has been done in many schools to advance collaboration, she reminded us that the dialogue has “yet to deliver on the promise of creating cultures where teachers work together flexibly and authentically to study and solve student learning problems of practice” (p. 4). She went on to stress the importance of site leaders analyzing the collaborative culture on the campus, emphasizing the importance of collective efficacy by saying that “In schools where there is collective efficacy, problems of student learning – both chronic and acute – drive the work of all staff members” (p. 7). Finally, she stressed the importance of principals assessing the relationship between the student learning difficulties and collaborative culture on their campus (Michelson, 2019).

DuFour and Marzano (2009) suggested eliminating the low-leverage strategy of traditional teacher evaluations and instead focusing on promoting teacher learning in collaborative teams. The authors acknowledged the ever-increasing demands on site principals and the wealth of time spent on individual teacher observations and feedback. However, the research on the effect of traditional, individual teacher evaluations on student achievement is dismal, at best (Teaching Commission, 2006, as cited in DuFour & Marzano, 2009). They pointed out that while most claim one of the leading reasons to continue the traditional evaluation process is to remediate unsatisfactory performance, few, if any teachers are deemed ineffective as a result of their annual evaluations. Even fewer (single digits in a given state) are dismissed for incompetence. Put bluntly, “Teacher evaluation does not recognize good teaching, leaves poor teaching unaddressed, and does not inform decision-making in any meaningful way” (Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, & Keeling, 2009, p. 1). In lieu, principals should be utilizing this

time to support teams of teachers in examining evidence of student learning (DuFour & Marzano, 2009).

Of critical importance is the fact that principals need to be willing and able to address those who fail to work collaboratively or honor their team's commitments. School leaders need to be "willing to use their authority to break down the walls of educator isolation and create new norms of collaboration and collective responsibility for student learning" (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu & Easton, 2010, as cited in DuFour & Mattos, 2013, p. 39).

Mendels and Mitgang (2013) cited the importance of standards to shape how leaders are selected, hired, trained, and evaluated in order to build a strong pipeline of school leaders. "New performance expectations for principals in the United States, delineated in administrator standards established by the Council for Chief State School Officers (CCSSO, 1996) and individual states, have modified the long-standing perception of a principal as a school manager to a perspective of learner-centered leaders who focus on high levels of learning for all students" (Ferrigno, 2007, p. 1). However, many states and districts pay little attention to standards for administrative positions (Carbaugh et al., 2015). While there has been an increase in the number of districts conducting formal evaluations on site administrators since the federal accountability system Race to the Top (DuFour & Mattos, 2013) and the work of New Leaders for New Schools (2012), most evaluations are not aligned with state or national standards and inconsistently administered (Carbaugh et al., 2015). They lack reliability and validity (Carbaugh et al., 2015), and "too often, meaningful principal evaluation is the exception rather than the rule" (Stronge, Xu, Leeper, & Tonneson, 2013, p. 3).

"Instructional leaders face considerable challenges requiring instructional leadership expertise. They must figure out what teachers need to learn as well as how to orchestrate and

nurture teacher learning that results in improvement of teaching practices” (Markholt, Michelson, & Fink, 2018, p. 2). Beneath these knowledge requirements “is a deep understanding of how humans learn” (Jenkins, 2009, p. 36). This requires intensive and strategic professional development, as well as an aligned vision within each district’s central office to prioritize the work. Both will be addressed in subsequent sections on *Mentoring* and *Central Office Supports*.

Conclusion

For the past several decades, emphasis has been placed on principals serving as instructional leaders. More recently, the concept of learning leader has emerged. While many have recognized the importance of principals acting in the capacity of either an instructional or learning leader, little has been done to create the structures by which principals can prioritize the teaching and learning on their campuses. In fact, much attention has been given to the idea, albeit without systems and structures to support the efforts. Rather, more and more distractions are added to principals’ plates each year, with little, if anything, ever being removed (DuFour, 2015; Peterson, 2001). This leads to many principals reporting that while they recognize the need and strive to prioritize the teaching and learning on their campuses, the sheer quantity and variety of daily crises leave them yearning to spend more time in the area (Johnson, 2008).

The Influences of Effective Leadership

Similar to *Principals as Learning Leaders*, the first theme examined, this second section includes an historical perspective, as well as information on the collaborative culture within leadership influences, and obstructions. It also addresses the theory behind the influences of leadership. Finally, it views the theme through the lens of high-needs schools, as research details how critical it is to have effective school leaders at low-performing school sites (The Wallace Foundation, 2011).

Historical Perspective

It has long been accepted that effective leadership is paramount to school improvement (Fullan, 2007; Leithwood, Seashore-Lewis, Anderson, & Walhstrom, 2004; Sammons, 1999; The Wallace Foundation, 2013). In fact, Fullan (2007) shared, “I know of no improving school that doesn't have a principal who is good at leading improvement” (p. 160). Leithwood et al. (2004) added, “there are virtually no documented instances of troubled schools being turned around without intervention by a powerful leader. Many other factors may contribute to such turnarounds, but leadership is the catalyst” (p. 5). Nonetheless, despite the plethora of research, we hear all too frequently that principals aren't able to spend the time necessary on the ‘right’ work (Fullan, 2000; Jenkins, 2009; Johnson, 2008; Lovely, 2004).

Theory

“A good school principal is the single most important determinant of whether a school can attract and keep the high-quality teachers necessary to turn around schools” (The Wallace Foundation, 2011, p. 2). In fact, Stanford University professor Linda Darling-Hammond stated, “It is the leader who both recruits and retains high-quality staff. Indeed, the number one reason for teachers’ decisions about whether to stay in a school is the quality of the administrative support ...” (DeVita, Colvin, Darling-Hammond, & Haycock, 2007, p. 17; Van Roekel, 2008). It is the principal’s job to develop these systems of support that are often differentiated, webbed, and immensely intricate in nature.

The research shows that most school variables, considered separately, have at most small effects on learning. The real payoff comes when individual variables combine to reach critical mass. Creating the conditions under which that can occur is the job of the principal. (The Wallace Foundation, 2013, p. 5)

Bartoletti and Connelly (2013) reported on a joint program by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), who collectively represent over 100,000 site administrators, in an effort to reinforce the importance of the principal's role. The document referenced several recent studies on the most effective use of the principal's time to impact student achievement, including The Wallace Foundation (2013) and the work of Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003). Bartoletti and Connelly (2013) re-emphasized the ever-increasing demands placed on principals' time and the importance of constant prioritization. They also discussed the relationship between principals' skills and teacher retention, and they offered a broadened definition of instructional leadership to include organizational management, showing an increased effect on student achievement at schools where principals devoted more time to organizational management tasks within the instructional leadership realm.

Leithwood et al. (2004) set out to study the extent to which education leadership mattered by posing two questions: how important are the effects of leadership in promoting learning, and what are the essential ingredients of successful leadership? This study, representing a partnership among The Wallace Foundation, The University of Minnesota, and The University of Toronto reviewed evidence in five areas in order to build a knowledge base about effective educational leadership.

1. What effects does successful leadership have on student learning?
2. How should the competing forms of leadership visible in the literature be reconciled?
3. Is there a common set of “basic” leadership practices used by successful leaders in most circumstances?
4. What else, beyond the basics, is required for successful leadership?

5. How does successful leadership exercise its influence on the learning of students? (p. 2).

A critical point was presented, that leadership is second only to classroom interactions (National Association of Secondary School Principals and National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2013; National Association of Secondary Principals, n.d.). There is a common set of practices, the “basics,” for successful leadership, but these fall short for leaders who aim to significantly improve student learning. These include setting directions, developing people, and redesigning the organization.

Three major conclusions were presented by Leithwood et al. (2004), supported by evidence, about how successful leadership influences student achievement:

- School leaders contribute to student learning mostly in an indirect manner, through their influence on other people or features of their organizations.
- The evidence provides strong clues about who or what school leaders should pay the most attention to within their organizations.
- We need to know much more about what leaders do to further develop those high-priority parts of their organizations.

Collaborative Culture

As discussed in the *Principals as Learning Leaders* theme, the potential influence of principals who prioritize the support of teams of teachers is far greater than those who spend the majority of their time working with individual teachers. Unfortunately, states continue to increase mandates on the number and frequency of individual lesson observations principals must conduct on teachers, despite no evidence that they positively impact student learning (DuFour, 2015).

If current efforts to supervise teachers into better performance have proven ineffective (and they have), the solution is not to double down on a bad strategy and demand more classroom observations, tighter supervision, and more punitive evaluations. The effort to improve schools through tougher supervision and evaluation is doomed to fail because it asks the wrong question. The question isn't, "*How can I do a better job of monitoring teaching?*" but rather, "*How can we collectively do a better job of monitoring student learning?*" (DuFour, 2015, p. 42)

High-Needs Schools

One of the key points highlighted by Leithwood et al. (2004), is that the greater the challenge, the greater the impact of a school leader. In other words, high needs schools need the most effective leaders. "Leadership effects are usually largest where and when they are needed most" (Bartoletti, & Connelly, 2013, p. 3). Yet, data consistently shows that it is more difficult to recruit and retain principals and assistant principals to schools with larger numbers of socio-economically disadvantaged students and English learners (Mitgang, 2003; Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, Lapointe, & Orr, 2010). These schools are often located in rural areas with less population to draw from and/or geographically difficult to get to.

According to Public Agenda's "Reality Check 2006," 65 percent of principals in mainly white schools said they were "very satisfied" with their teachers, but just 44 percent of principals in mainly minority schools said the same thing. It is clear that instructional leadership should be an even higher priority for principals working in mainly minority, low-income settings (Johnson, 2008). Likewise, support for principals in high-needs schools is paramount. After one focus group partaking in a 2007 study by The Wallace Foundation, "principals unanimously said that the most important element needed to attract and keep top-notch leaders in high-needs schools is

providing the support they need to do their jobs” (Public Agenda, 2007, p. 6)

In the Wallace Foundation’s “Principal Pipelines,” authors Gates et al. (2019) found significant results for school districts interested in increasing student learning. “This study has important implications for school districts trying to improve student achievement,” said Jody Spiro, Director of Education Leadership of The Wallace Foundation. “The findings show that the achievement effects were notably large for the lowest performing group of students” (Rand Corporation Press Room, April, 2019, n.p.). This reiterates the need for the most effective leaders in the highest-need schools.

Obstructions

It is important to note that the role of district leadership plays a vital role in the influence of principals on student learning, as well (Leithwood et al., 2004). However, district-level leadership, albeit even with the best of intentions, can often stand in the way of effective school site leadership (National Association of Secondary School Principals and National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2013). While this will be discussed at-length in the section, *Central Office Structures*, it needs to be acknowledged that some principals report spending “time and effort finding ways to work around the district office to improve student achievement” (Bottoms & Fry, 2009, p. xx). Sadly, districts “are failing to create the conditions that make it possible for principals to lead school improvement effectively” (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010, p. ii) by exerting too much control over instruction and management or the reverse – turning all issues over to the principal, with little to no support (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010). However, when central office leaders focus on specific areas of site leader practice, such as clinical supervision or walk-throughs; communicate expectations for principal leadership with aligned experiences; and monitor principal follow-through with interventions as needed, results

in student achievement are higher (Louis et al., 2010). As Bottoms and Fry (2009) summarized, “the district leadership challenge is to move from oversight, from holding principals accountable at arms-length, to providing the capacity-building support that true district school partnerships require” (p. vii). “Finding practical ways to thoughtfully and appropriately assess and develop leaders can have an important impact on the quality of leadership, and through that, on the quality of education in our schools” (Goldring, Porter, Murphy, Elliott, & Cravens, 2009, p. 1).

Conclusion

McREL (2005) concluded that the most important factor affecting the teaching and learning processes within a school was the leadership within the school (Marzano et al., 2005). Put simply, “the principal remains the central source of leadership influence” (The Wallace Foundation, 2013, p. 6). After all, he or she has the greatest ability to impact what takes place within classrooms, and that, we know, has the greatest overall influence on student achievement (National Association of Secondary School Principals and National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2013; Fink, 2015; Louis et al., 2010; National Association of Secondary Principals, n.d.).

Central Office Structures to Create the Conditions for Principals to Serve as Learning

Leaders

This theme, like others, begins with an historical perspective. It also includes information on the collaborative culture within central offices. However, due to the fact that central offices are vast in form and function, as well as potential impact, by necessity the theme then includes additional and varied sub-topics, including action areas, district results, models from high-achieving districts, division alignment, and more.

Historical Perspective

According to a Southern Regional Education Board (SERB) report, “districts are failing to create the conditions that make it possible for principals to lead school improvement effectively” (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010). As Bottoms and Fry (2009) pointed out, some principals report that they spend energy and time finding ways to circumvent the district office on their attempts to impact student learning. Silverman (2016) called for action, and added: “Education leaders need to wake up and figure out how to make the principal job not only doable, but doable in a way that positively impacts student learning” (p. 1).

Fink (2017) identified three challenges impeding the ability of principals to serve as learning leaders. First, he shared that most districts have not yet developed a common understanding of the daily work that principals should be doing to improve teaching and learning. Second, he shared that many districts are not providing the ongoing and strategic professional development that principals need to ensure their skills. This is cause for grave concern, as 4,000 educational leaders have taken the University of Washington Center for Educational Leadership (UWCEL) assessment to measure their knowledge on instruction with results showing that the majority fall between ‘novice’ and ‘emerging’ (Fink, 2017). In essence, “too few leaders charged with leading the improvement of instruction have developed sufficient expertise to identify high-quality teaching and explicate what makes teaching ‘high quality’” (Fink, 2017, p. 1). And finally, he shared that often districts do not provide principals with the resources, time, or support they need to be able to focus on the teaching and learning at their schools.

Central Office and Principal Perceptions

Central offices play a significant role in teaching and learning improvement (Honig et al., 2010). “Decades of experience and research show that when central office staff do not exercise central leadership in teaching and learning improvement efforts, such initiatives at best produce improvements at a small handful of schools but hardly district-wide or in a sustainable way” (Honig et al., 2010, p. 1).

In the UWCEL’s 2016 “How Central Offices Support Principals: What Works and What’s Missing” [Infographic], 195 central office leaders from six school districts across the country discussed the current trends in the central office-principal relationship. They concluded, that while district leaders have a desire to empower principals, the structures and processes that will help principals to be instructional leaders are not yet in place. The infographic provides interesting statistical data for each of the following emerging themes:

1. Leaders have different ideas about the principal’s role. Only 51% selected ‘instructional leader’ as the response when asked about the primary role of a principal.
2. The emphasis of the central office is on efficiency and reacting quickly to schools’ requests, rather than partnering with principals. Only 49% of central office administrators prioritize supporting principals as instructional leaders; whereas 71% prioritize the speed with which they provide service. In addition, only 49% assign central office staff to specific schools.
3. Key infrastructure and systems need attention. 84% of respondents said central office staff learn their job “on the job;” only 51% believe there is any formal training for central office staff.

4. Central offices aren't always using improvement processes. 16% of respondents said their districts do not use any key metrics to track performance.

As mentioned in the Introduction to Chapter 2, the 2018 report “A New Role Emerging for Principal Supervisors: Evidence from Six Districts in the Principal Supervisor Initiative” Commissioned by The Wallace Foundation, provided a summary of the “Principal Supervisor Initiative (PSI), a four-year, \$24 million-dollar effort to redefine principal supervision in six urban school districts” (Goldring et al., 2018, p. xi). The components of the initiative focused on: revising the role; reducing the load; identifying and training; and strengthening central office support for principal supervisors.

The role of the central office is critical for school improvement, as principals need significant support in meeting the needs of all stakeholders. Silverman (2016) stated, “the role of school principal is less satisfying and attractive than it has ever been,” (p. 1), and he stressed the need for action on a system-wide basis.

Action Areas

Fink and Silverman (2014) cited three essential action areas to support principals that stem from the UWCEL's Principal Support Framework.

Action Area 1: A shared vision of the district's principals as instructional leaders

Action Area 2: A system of support for developing principals as instructional leaders

Action Area 3: Making it possible for principals to be instructional leaders

(Fink & Silverman, 2014, p. 24)

These action areas detail that a school system must clearly define expectations, have “reciprocal accountability” (p. 25), and utilize a central office organizational structure that shares the responsibilities that principals face daily.

Silverman (2016) updated UWCEL's Principal Support Framework with Version Two by adding three additional items:

1. Clarity on roles and expectations;
2. Differentiated and individualized professional development; and
3. Deliberate relationships between central office staff and principals that foster easier access to district resources based on site needs.

Collaborative Culture

Owens (2018) delineated the required systems and structures for effective Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). She emphasized the parts and structures; behaviors and dispositions; and timing and interconnectivity for each of the three big ideas of PLCs: learning, collaboration, and results. Central offices need to understand the relationships among the parts/structures and big ideas of PLCs; they need to prioritize the work and design systems that ensure principals and teachers are clear about the expectations and their roles (DuFour & Marzano, 2009); and they need to design practices that support the work from every department (Owens, 2018).

The Dimensions of Central Office Transformation

In the "Central Office Transformation for District-Wide Teaching and Learning Improvement" study, researchers Honig et al. (2010) delineated The Five Dimensions of Central Office Transformation, derived from actual practices done by central office administrators involved in the transformation process. The following Table 1.1 depicts each dimension:

Table 1. 1*Five Dimensions of Central Office Transformation*

Dimension 1	Learning-focused partnerships with school principals to deepen principals' instructional leadership practice.
Dimension 2	Assistance to the central office-principal partnerships.
Dimension 3	Recognizing and 'reculturing' of each central office unit, to support the central office-principal partnerships and teaching and learning improvement.
Dimension 4	Stewardship of the overall central office transformation process.
Dimension 5	Use of evidence throughout the central office to support continual improvement of work practices and relationships with schools.

(Honig et al., 2010).

Dimension 1

This dimension involves creating “direct, personal relationships between individual central office administrators and school principals” (Honig et al., 2010, p. v). In these transforming districts, support for principals' instructional leadership was given to central office leaders who became known as Instructional Leadership Directors (ILDs). ILDs utilized differentiated support based on ongoing assessments of the principals' capacity for instructional leadership. Promising ILD practices included: modeling, developing and using tools to support

principals' work as learning leaders, capitalizing on external resources, and utilizing networks of principals to learn collaboratively and from peers (Honig et al., 2010).

Dimension 2

ILDs were provided with professional development activities. Their focus was directly related to working with principals in instructional leadership, and other central office staff led through, not over or around, the ILDs. This included removing other duties and tasks from the ILD's job responsibilities and striving to ensure that the entire district system, not just the ILDs, held site leaders accountable for improving student achievement (Honig et al., 2010).

Dimension 3

Other staff at the district office, including departments like facilities, fiscal services, and human resources, shifted their work to support teaching and learning. These paradigm shifts included "taking case management and project management approaches in their work" (Honig et al., 2010, p. vii), focusing on questions like,

Who are the individual principals in the schools I am responsible for? What are these school principals and their staff trying to do to improve teaching and learning? What kinds of resources do they need and how can I help them secure them? (Honig et al., 2010, p. viii)

Dimension 4

Stewardship is defined as "leadership to support the overall transformation process" (Honig et al., 2010, p. ix). Central office administrators in these districts developed specific action plans while also communicating and engaging others in understanding the transformation process. It is important to note here, that leaders did not "simply tell central office staff, school principals, and others what the central office transformation initiative involved" (Honig et al.,

2010, p. ix); rather, “they took care to help others understand how specific activities in the central office transformation process promised to cause improvements in teaching and learning districtwide” (Honig et al., 2010, p. ix).

Dimension 5

Central office staff utilized evidence-based decision-making. This included student performance data (assessments) as well as personal reflection. When mentors of principals were surveyed in 2007 by the Southern Regional Education Board, less than half reported that their training provided instruction on facilitating reflection, cognitive coaching, active listening, and more (Gray et al., 2007). This dimension, like the previous four, was an intentional focus area that districts will need to heed when attempting these transformations. In this case, it was clear that principal mentors cannot be expected to know how to effectively mentor others just because they were successful principals themselves. As Nadya Aswad Higgins, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Elementary School Principals Association shared, “It’s one thing to live the job, but it’s another thing to teach someone to live the job” (NAESP & The Education Alliance, 2003, p. 13).

District Results

In Gates et al. (2019) and The Wallace Foundation’s “Principal Pipelines,” the researchers demonstrated “compelling evidence that when districts set clear leadership expectations and used those standards to hire, develop and support strong leaders, then principals, schools, and students benefited” (Rand Corporation Press Room, April, 2019, n.p.). Susan Gates, the lead researcher, went on to say that “The positive effects were remarkably widespread across grade levels and across districts” (Rand Corporation Press Room, April, 2019, n.p.).

In regard to setting up principal pipelines and strengthening the skills of principal supervisors, the study “found no other comprehensive district-wide initiatives with demonstrated positive effects of this magnitude on achievement” (Gates et al., 2019, p. xx).

In 2010, the national study “Central Office Transformation for District-Wide Teaching and Learning Improvement” was conducted in order to see “how leaders in urban school district central offices fundamentally transformed their work and relationships with schools to support district-wide teaching and learning improvement” (Honig et al., 2010, p. iii). Specific districts were chosen based on gains in student achievement that were credited to radical changes in their central offices. Findings supported researchers’ beliefs that central offices are critical in helping districts improve. Districts researched were utilizing “central office transformation,” a reform approach that: focuses centrally and meaningfully on teaching and learning improvement rather than increasing efficiency of basic service to schools; engages the entire central office in reform; calls on central office administrators to fundamentally remake their work practices and their relationships with schools to support teaching and learning improvements for all schools. This is not just a structural change; rather it is a total remake; and constitutes an important focus for reform on its own right. This transcends particular programs or initiatives (Honig et al., 2010).

Similar to Honig et al. (2010) was the UWCEL’s 2007 Report: “Improving Instruction: Developing the Knowledge and Skills of School Leaders,” where the authors shared the partnership formed between the UWCEL and two school districts with the specific purpose of improving instructional leadership, and ultimately, student learning. They delineated how they issued a pre- and post-assessment to leaders within each of two districts (Norwalk-La Mirada in California and Marysville in Washington) in an effort to determine whether or not the leaders’ abilities to analyze instruction and plan feedback for teachers improved as a result of their

collaborative work. The assessment involved watching and analyzing a teaching video, with CEL training between the viewings. After each viewing, participants were asked to respond in writing to three critical questions:

1. What do you notice about teaching and learning in this classroom?
2. What follow-up conversation would you like to have with this teacher?
3. How, if at all, would this observation inform your thinking about future professional development for your teachers? (Center for Educational Leadership, 2007).

Responses were scored against a rubric by two readers and established where each school leader was on the continuum of ‘novice’ to ‘expert’ with regard to instructional knowledge. At the end, both sets of leaders showed statistically significant improvement.

A similar ‘success story’ was documented by Fink and Silverman (2014) and occurred at Highline Public Schools’ White Center Heights Elementary in 2012. After just one year of a new principal receiving direct support from “top levels of the central office to focus her job on instructional improvement” (p. 23), student achievement results were some of the highest in the state (Fink & Silverman, 2014). In essence, “The district empowered [her] to become the instructional leader of the school and created the conditions for her to turn around a demoralized teaching staff” (Fink & Silverman, 2014, p. 23). Fink and Silverman’s (2014) study concluded with a question in perfect alignment with this study: Can districts create systems to support and train principals to serve as learning leaders?

Models from High-Achieving Districts

It is necessary to review a sampling of public school districts of various student enrollments along with the structures they have implemented and the corresponding results. First, a study from the UWCEL sought to improve instruction with content-focused leadership

through a partnership with Norwalk-La Mirada Unified School District in Southern California and Marysville School District in Washington. In both districts, consultants from the UWCEL facilitated general study group sessions; leadership coaching with principals and district leaders; specialized study group sessions with coaches and teacher leaders; content coaching with coaches and teacher leaders; and the creation of demonstration classrooms (University of Washington Center for Educational Leadership, 2007). In addition, they worked closely with district leaders to ensure that policies, procedures, and systems supported powerful instruction. In both districts, principals and coaches improved in their ability to analyze instruction and plan feedback to teachers. As shared in the report,

CEL's work with school and district leaders in these sites provided a ready-made laboratory for exploring instructional improvement work, and testing assumptions about whether or how leaders' skills with critical analysis and reflection on instructional practice improve over time. (University of Washington Center for Educational Leadership, 2007, p. 3)

Table 2.1 depicts information about the districts in the study and the results achieved.

Table 2. 1

Two District Studies on Principal Coaching Models

District	Enrollment	# Principals/ Coaches	Length of Work	Results
Norwalk-La Mirada Unified School District	24,000	36	2 years	Statistically significant improvement in all 4

				broad categories and 11 of 13 subdivisions
Marysville School District	12,000	8	1 year	Statistically significant improvement in 1 of 13 subdivisions

Note: Data taken from University of Washington Center for Educational Leadership, 2007.

An additional study by The Wallace Foundation and Honig et al. (2010), which included district initiatives in Atlanta, New York, and Oakland also cited improvements in student learning as a result of the central office prioritizing the relationship between district office staff and site principals. In all three districts, central office coaches were deployed to sites to support teachers and principals, and there was a restructuring of regional district offices into school support teams. Additionally, New York/Empowering Schools piloted a program at 30 sites that emphasized new relationships between district and site leaders. This program also provided more autonomy and discretionary resources. Oakland schools broke large schools into smaller sites. Atlanta Public Schools contracted with outside vendors/consultants like Project GRAD to support 10 low-performing schools. The Atlanta schools, in particular, saw significant improvement in teaching and learning, as evidenced by student standardized test scores.

In 2019, Gates et al. shared the results of their “Principal Pipelines” study, in which six large, urban districts participated and designed models of development, support, and retention that targeted their principals. Strategies utilized included establishing leader standards, selective

hiring and placement processes, evaluation reforms, induction supports, and preservice/residency programs (Gates et al., 2019). The six districts included the following:

- Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (NC)
- Denver Public Schools (CO)
- Gwinnett County Public Schools (GA)
- Hillsborough County Public Schools (FL)
- New York City Department of Education (NY)
- Prince George's County Public Schools (MD)

The findings of this three-year study “show that such efforts undertaken by committed large, urban districts are feasible, affordable, and effective” (Gates et al., 2019, xiii). Gates et al. (2019) went on to explain that the results were “feasible because each district was able to put the recommended processes in place, affordable because the cost was less than 0.5 percent of the district budget, and effective because of the resulting impact on student achievement” (Gates et al., 2019, xiii). Of particular interest was the fact that both reading and mathematics achievement increased between 1 and 2.4 percentile points and one-third of a percentile point to 1 percentile point, respectively, for every \$100 spent per pupil on principal pipeline efforts (Gates et al., 2019). These results demonstrate larger gains for fewer resources than usually seen in research (Gates et al., 2019). In addition, schools within the study with participating principals outperformed comparison schools (with principals not participating) by 6.22 percentile points in reading and 2.87 percentile points in math (Gates et al., 2019). Principals in participating districts “were 5.8 percentage points more likely to remain in their school for at least two years and 7.8 percentile points more likely to remain in their school for at least three years than newly placed principals in comparison schools” (Gates et al., 2019, xviii).

Division Alignment

Most school districts are organized by department, often falling into divisions such as fiscal/business services; human resources and development; student services; and educational support services. Sadly, however, many departments within districts operate as silos and lack coherence (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). They support school sites only with regard to each department's function, not with any central purpose, clarity, or focused direction (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). As a result, only the education/instructional services division assists sites with the district's central purpose – teaching and learning. Other departments engage with schools regarding the specific work of their department, absent any interest or relation to teaching and learning. Rather, each department within a district ought to be focused on the same mission and vision (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Honig et al., 2010). “When central offices participate productively in teaching and learning improvement, everyone in the central office orients their work in meaningful ways toward supporting the development of schools' capacity for high-quality teaching and expanding students' opportunities to learn” (Honig et al., 2010, p. 118). Silverman (2019) shared one superintendent's view that reiterated the importance of aligning all efforts from the central office: “It starts with me (as superintendent) being in classrooms and working with principals. We structure our work in this organization to clearly define how each central office role impacts the classroom” (p. xx). This notion of inter-department coherence and all divisions within a central office playing a role in the support of principals as learning leaders will continue to be explored in future sections on *Mentoring to Equip and Retain Principals to Serve as Learning Leaders* and *The Relationship Between Trust and Successful Mentoring that Promotes Principals as Learning Leaders*.

Reciprocal Relationship

Regardless of the location of the district who chooses to prioritize the work of their learning leaders, Fullan (2002) raised a strong point regarding the importance of a shared vision and goals between the district office and site principals. In other words, it is not only the responsibility of the district office to create systems and structures that support the principal's work as a learning leader, but also for the principal to, in fact, support the 'bigger picture' and work of the district-at-large. This 'reciprocal' relationship (Fink & Resnick, 2001) is critical for sustainability. Fullan (2002) said it beautifully, with:

the goal is system improvement (all schools in the district). This means that a school principal has to be almost as concerned about the success of other schools in the district as he or she is about his/her own school. This is so because sustained improvement of schools is not possible unless the whole system is moving forward. This commitment to the social environment is precisely what the best principals must have. (p. 4)

Models from Around the World

While the most common school leadership priority for a large group of states involved in an effort to boost school leadership was identified as improving on-the-job supports for school site leaders (Riley & Meredith, 2017), there are additional examples of central office supports for schools in other countries, as well.

As with school districts in the United States, those in Victoria, one of six states in Australia, realized that rather than just having good managers, their schools needed principals to be "leaders of schools as learning organizations" (Matthews, Moorman, & Nusche, 2007, p. 4). In Australia "best practices for school improvement rely on communications that are "sustained

across schools, regional offices and the central office to develop a collective understanding of the challenges confronting the government school system” (Matthews et al., 2007, p. 16). To improve school leadership, system-wide participation was necessary, and improvement strategies utilized were evidence-based. As the authors stated, the entire system was “encouraged to sing from the same song sheet” (Matthews et al., 2007, p. 16). The schools in the program were grouped into networking clusters, with each cluster based on shared interests. Coaching and mentoring were considered integral components for leadership development and as such, an integral part of the networks.

Pont, Nusche and Hopkins (2008) utilized a case study approach to research innovative, systemic school leadership improvement programs. They studied 22 countries and found that those in Flanders (Belgium), England, Finland, and Victoria (Canada) appeared the most promising for school improvement. The report stressed the importance of establishing collaboration and trust in leadership roles, and the researchers pressed the point that these system-wide school improvement efforts were producing benefits including “development of leadership capacity, rationalising [sic] of sources, increased cooperation, leadership being distributed further into schools and across education systems, and improving school outcomes” (Hopkins et al., 2008, p. 3).

With the aim of developing quality leaders for its schools, Singapore instituted the Leaders in Education Program (LEP). Prashant Jayapragas of the Ministry of Education reported that the program “has gained worldwide admiration for heightening participants awareness of the interactive nature of the ‘roles’ and ‘minds’ of school leadership” (Pont et al., 2008, p. 92), and he “recommends the ‘borrowing’ of mentoring and networked learning structures” (Pont et al., 2008, p. 91) to increase the scope of the program and the effectiveness of

principals. The foundation for this program was the awareness that leadership affects how students learn and achieve. Regimented selection of candidates formed the basis for this transformational program of principal training. The formation of the LEP called on the work of Linda Darling-Hammond with the goal of training principals with the necessary skills to transform schools into learning communities. The framework for LEP was described as “5R5M (Five Roles and Five Minds)” (Hopkins et al., 2008, p. 94).

In 2013, The Institute for Education Leadership in Ontario (Canada) placed into action “The Ontario Leadership Framework” for system-wide improvement of their schools. One purpose of this framework was to “facilitate a shared vision of leadership in schools and districts” (Institute, 2013, p. 5). In terms of district effectiveness, evidence was presented about the “characteristics of ‘strong’ school districts” (p. 16), or in other words, “districts that are successful at improving the learning of their students” (Institute, 2013, p. 17). Included in these characteristics was a “system-wide focus on achievement (raising the bar, closing the gap, and nurturing student achievement and well-being)” (Institute, 2013, p. 16).

Change Theory

Fullan also (2002) made a compelling argument that cannot be overlooked when districts are making the efforts to provide more supports for principals to serve as learning leaders. Focusing solely on instructional, or learning leader, work, he proclaimed, is insufficient. To “have a deeper and more lasting influence” (Fullan, 2002, p. 17), principals need to serve as ‘Cultural Change Principals,’ demonstrating five essential components: “moral purpose, an understanding of the change process, the ability to improve relationships, knowledge creation and sharing, and coherence making” (Fullan, 2002, p. 17). In addition, a meta-analysis conducted by Marzano et al. (2005) found a .25 correlation between the principal as change

agent and student academic achievement. Fullan (2002) went on to say:

The role of principal as instructional leader has taken us only so far in the quest for continual school improvement. We now must raise our sights and focus on principals as leaders in a culture of change. School improvement depends on principals who can foster the conditions necessary for sustained education reform in a complex, rapidly changing society. (Fullan, 2002, p. 20)

Conclusion

“There is a distinct role that school districts can and must play in the design and implementation of a learning system that supports the improvement of practice from the classroom to the district office” (Fink, 2017, p. 105). As we have seen, studies support a correlation between central office supports of principals and student achievement (Honig et al., 2010).

Bartoletti and Connelly (2013) provide additional thoughts on the district office, and how, despite our best efforts, we "are failing to create the conditions that make it possible for principals to lead school improvement effectively" (p. 6). They go to quote principals with statements such as, "The system itself can be a huge obstacle. I find myself fighting with the people who were supposed to be helping me. That dynamic can be draining" (p. 7). These experiences, sadly, are counter-productive and moving schools farther from their goals. Rather, principals need systemic supports from the central office that not only enable them to serve as learning leaders but ensure that they are adequately trained and inspired to do so.

Mentoring to Equip and Retain Principals to Serve as Learning Leaders

Like all sections within this chapter, this theme on *Mentoring* will explore the historical perspective. Similar to *The Influences of Effective Leadership* theme and *The Relationship*

Between Trust and Successful Mentoring that Promotes Principals as Learning Leaders (coming up next), it will also address the theory behind the concept. In addition, it will include a large quantity of information on mentoring principals to serve as learning leaders as well as the rationale for change.

Theory

Parylo, Zepeda, and Bengtson (2012) described mentoring as “principal preparation and support and a gratifying form of professional development” (p. 126). When and how a principal receives mentoring varies across schools, districts, states, and nations, and the applications of principal mentoring are many. Parylo et al. (2012) reported that principal mentoring can be perceived as a process of recruitment, socialization, support, professional development, and reciprocal learning. Mentoring can build a pipeline of new leadership, provide support, offer face-to-face learning opportunities, build professional relationships, and cultivate success (Mendels & Mitgang, 2013; Parylo et al., 2012). Mentoring is key to developing effective school leaders (Daresh, 2004; Parylo et al., 2012), as “good principals are made, not born” (Yirci & Kocabas, 2010, p. 3). Gray, Fry, Bottoms, and O’Neill (2007) adjusted this phrase and said, “Good principals aren’t born – they’re mentored” (p. 5). Abundant in the literature is the underlying premise that mentoring enhances the quality of leadership, and in turn makes a real difference in the quality of classroom instruction (Mendels & Mitgang, 2013; NAESP & The Education Alliance, 2003).

Historical Overview

The practice of principal mentoring in the field of education dates back approximately thirty years. For most of that time, it was “classical mentoring,” where an aspiring principal was assisted by someone willing to be a guide and counselor (Malone, 2001). Consequently, shared

Malone (2001), this type of mentoring resulted in ‘like producing like,’ with little chance for diversity; in fact, few women or minorities entered the path to leadership.

Early efforts to mentor principals were varied. In 1994, Albuquerque Public Schools utilized coordinators to match new principals with those who were experienced. In another effort, the Southern Regional Education Board’s Leadership Academy employed mentoring opportunities that used an ‘external peer coach,’ or educational expert, to support principals (Malone, 2001). Informal mentoring efforts were especially prevalent in secondary schools. Principals were often ‘home-grown’ in their respective districts; an experienced teacher or counselor moved into the position of assistant principal, shadowed the principal, then stepped into the role of principal when the position opened, again creating a like-producing-like result (Malone, 2001).

In “Making the Case for Principal Mentoring” (2003), a study published by The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), the Education Alliance at Brown University reported that in the past only a small portion of principals received mentoring as part of their leadership training. The report stated that as the need for mentoring became more apparent, programs were initiated to support principals; however, such efforts varied in rationale and practice. Mentoring initiatives were divided into two major categories: training experienced teachers to become principals and implementing support programs for beginning principals.

Justifications for mentoring future educational leaders varied, as well, and included: leadership continuity (Parylo et al., 2012); learning in the schoolhouse - not the university (NAESP & The Education Alliance, 2003); and preparation for projected district vacancies (NAESP & The Education Alliance, 2003). The mentoring programs that targeted experienced teachers or others aspiring to become principals differed in scope. Internships, seminars,

workshops, residency programs, summer institutes, instructional modules, and capstone projects were just a few of the components utilized (Center for Leadership and Educational Equity, 2018; Michelson, 2019; NAESP & The Education Alliance, 2003; NAESP, 2019).

The Principal Residency Network (PRN) was in its infancy when NAESP first showcased it in “Learning by Doing” (2003). Aspiring principals worked alongside their mentors, received feedback, and collaborated, all with the intent of “profoundly changing the design and culture of schools so that kids have better opportunities” (p. 20). Still in operation today, PRN has trained over 170 participants in their residency-based program (Center for Leadership and Educational Equity, 2018).

The Aspiring Principals Academy was introduced by NAESP and The Education Alliance (2003) in “Training for the Future.” It utilized a cohort model with the building principal acting as a mentor and ‘critical friend’ to the aspiring principal. The Aspiring Principals Academy is now a national partnership of The School Superintendents Association (AASA) and NAESP (NAESP, 2019). Similarly, in “Linking Theory and Practice,” NAESP and The Education Alliance (2003) detailed the Danforth Educational Leadership Program at the University of Washington. The heart of this program was mentoring experienced teachers to become principals.

Justifications for mentoring first year principals also varies. Yirci and Kocabas (2010) reasoned that since a new principal is the school leader and less likely to have collegial assistance, it is vital to provide mentoring. Other reasons are based upon the rationale that without mentoring support, novice principals are likely to fall into a sink-or-swim job approach (NAESP & The Education Alliance, 2003; The Wallace Foundation, 2007). According to Lindley (2003), an effective mentor of a beginning principal has the ability to set expectations

and help the new principal survive, improve, and develop. The NAESP and The Education Alliance (2003) report detailed three programs that mentored new (first or second year) principals. In “Focusing on Leadership” (2003), the First-Year Campus Administrators Program sponsored by the Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association (TEPSA) was described. TEPSA designed this as a two-year mentoring program with the recommendation that the mentor not be the new principal’s supervisor. The goal was to “help pull the first-time campus administrator out of the morass of management issues that they’re drowning in and keep them focused on leadership issues” (NAESP & The Education Alliance, 2003, p. 30). “Learning from the Experts” (NAESP & The Education Alliance, 2003) described the Principal Mentoring Program contracted through New Visions for Public Schools by the New York City public schools. This program paired new principals with recently retired veteran administrators. Rather than give answers, the mentors were trained to observe and question. Mentors also helped the new principals create a network to avoid professional isolation. “A Joint Effort” (NAESP & The Education Alliance, 2003) provided insight into the New Administrators Institute at the University of California at Santa Cruz. The theory driving this program was that a new principal learns on the job, not in graduate courses, and coaching support helps the new principal survive in the difficult first year. Although these programs varied in structure and content, they utilized mentoring as the basis for the success of a new principal.

In the *Historical Overview* above, most of the literature reviewed clearly divided principal mentoring programs into two categories, those that mentored pre-service principals and those that focused on novice principals. Since the focus of this research is on the transformation of mentoring practices in order to equip and retain in-service principals as learning leaders, the

literature reviewed in the next two sub-sections will primarily refer to programs and ideas aligned with that purpose.

Need for Change

School leadership is second only to teaching quality in influencing learning (National Association of Secondary School Principals and National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2013; Fink, 2015; Louis et al., 2010; National Association of Secondary Principals, n.d.). All too often, however, principals are immersed in administrative duties with little time or knowledge to become team builders who can shape the success of a school (Jenkins, 2009; Mendels & Mitgang, 2013). Frequently, the work that principals are doing as part of their leadership duties is not directly related to improving instruction (Fink, 2015). “The Making of the Principal: Five Lessons in Leadership Training” (2012), a perspective from The Wallace Foundation, called to attention the importance of “addressing the chronic weaknesses of principal training programs, criticized for decades as unselective in their admissions, academically weak and poorly connected to school realities” (NAESP, 2012, p. 2). “Recruiting, Preparing and Building the Capacity of Effective Principals: What the Research Tells Us” (NAESP, 2014) reported the need for this nation to do a better job in building “the professional capacity of principals to create the optimum conditions for teaching and learning in every school” (p. 1).

There is an abundance of research that supports the need for change in the way principals are mentored. Ever-evolving job descriptions, as well as the achievement gap, necessitate mentoring practices that are better aligned to leadership that is focused on learning. Once a principal served as a principal teacher, but now issues and responsibilities have multiplied (Fink & Rimmer, 2015). Research findings from The Wallace Foundation (2007; DeVita, et al., 2007)

reported that the training mentors receive falls short in terms of effectiveness, skills, and approaches. Buddy systems are not systematic in support, nor do they challenge new principals to reflect and develop. Real guidance from knowledgeable, well-trained mentors, not just a ‘sympathetic ear’ (DeVita, et al., 2007) needs to be the basis of principal mentoring. In addition, mentoring needs to be ongoing; one year of mentoring is not enough for a novice principal to become a “self-assured leader of change” (The Wallace Foundation, 2007, p. 8). Rand’s American School Leader Panel (2016) reported less than one-third of the principals surveyed received district mentoring based on their levels of experience (Johnston, Kaufman, & Thompson, 2016). All districts need innovative ways to provide “strong, instruction-focused support” (Johnston et al., 2016, p. 13); they also need ways to differentiate support and create peer support networks (Johnston et al., 2016). The Wallace Foundation concluded in “Getting Principal Mentoring Right: Lessons from the Field” (2007),

Many if not most existing mentoring programs are falling well short of their potential. Too often, existing state and district-level programs result in “buddy systems” or check-list exercises that don’t do nearly enough to help prepare principals to become knowledgeable and courageous leaders of better teaching and learning in schools. (p. 3)

As Gray et al. (2007) stated, “Quality principals result in quality schools that produce higher student performance. And the opposite is also true: Poorly prepared principals lead schools nowhere — and once certified, they remain in the system for many years, obstructing school improvement” (p. 10).

Transforming Mentoring Practices for Principals

As shared, the literature reviewed in the *Historical Overview* section focused on two major approaches: mentoring aspiring principals before they segued into leadership roles, and mentoring new principals, those in their first or second year of school site leadership. The *Need for Change* literature reviewed the shortcomings of historical approaches and documented the need for mentoring practices to evolve. In the Wallace Foundation's "Educational Leadership: A Bridge to School Reform" (2007), President DeVita concluded, "We have come a long way in understanding how to create more effective school leaders, but we are not there yet" (p. 6). DeVita also addressed the need for professional, knowledgeable mentors who are willing to stay in their mentoring roles long enough to provide real benefits (DeVita et al., 2007). The literature included in this final portion assigns a new meaning to the professional title of principal, that of learning leader. It presents literature that describes approaches and initiatives aimed at transforming mentoring practices to equip and retain principals to serve as learning leaders.

In "The Learning-Centered Principal" (2002) DuFour called attention to the concept that a principal is far more than an instructional leader. He argued that principals must redefine their roles, focusing on being leaders of learning rather than leaders of teachers. Over the past decade, the principal's role has been redefined, as was the design of mentoring. In an effort to reshape perceptions of school leadership, literature employed the phrase 'instructional leader' to characterize the role of principal (Fink, 2015). From instructional leader, the concept of learning leader emerged (NAESP & The Education Alliance, 2003; NAESP, 2014). Although DuFour (2002) first called attention to 'learning leader,' the current connotations behind 'principal as learning leader' are far more complex. Research findings must be pieced together to delineate the leadership qualities that create and retain principals as learning leaders. Whether the

literature of this decade identifies a principal as an instructional leader, a learning leader, or some combination of both, the goals and practices of mentoring have evolved significantly. Special attention has been placed on the development and sustainability of school leaders (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2013; Parylo et al., 2012; Trachtman & Cooper, 2011); continuous, professional learning opportunities (Kwan & Walker, 2009; Parylo et al., 2012; Rieckhoff & Larsen, 2011; Saltzman, 2016); and support through mentoring and networking. As NAESP (2014) stated, “the research is clear that mentoring programs are the most effective method of delivering job-embedded, ongoing, and sustained professional development for principals” (p. 6).

Detailed below are descriptions, as well as relevant findings, of five additional research studies closely attuned to the concept of the principal as learning leader. The summary of each study showcases mentoring practices that can be utilized to create, facilitate, and develop learning leaders.

The Wallace Foundation (2007) listed guidelines designed to improve mentoring in order to “get it right” (p. 7). These guidelines included quality training in the skills and knowledge needed to support principals, gathering information about the efficacy of mentoring as it contributed to leadership, providing sustained mentoring, increased funding for mentoring programs, and stipends that reflected time and expertise of mentors. According to this report, the most important thing was mentoring new school leaders to place their focus on student learning, evaluate what changes were needed to improve teaching and learning, and “have the courage to keep the needs of all children front and center and not shrink from confronting opposition to change when necessary” (The Wallace Foundation, 2007, p. 9).

In “Making of the Principal: Five Lessons in Leadership Training” (2012), The Wallace Foundation again recognized the importance of mentoring principals. Lesson five stated that

equally important to pre-service training was the training and support a school leader received after being hired. This report highlighted the Providence, Rhode Island school district, the Gwinnett County, Georgia Leader-Plus Academy, and the New York City Leadership Academy for their “high-quality, sustained mentoring and professional development” (p. 24). Noteworthy in the highlighted programs were the following mentoring components: continuous training; a state mentoring requirement for new principals; collaborative learning and professional development with national experts; individualized growth plans; and school data-analysis.

Likewise, Mendels and Mitgang (2013) stated that an important factor in creating strong principals was the investment a district made in mentoring and professional development. Historically, mentoring principals was not a priority, and if it did exist, it often fell victim to budget cuts. This study emphasized that now, because principals play such a critical role in school reform, new, high quality programs are emerging - but they come at a price.

NAESP (2014) recommended that high expectations be placed on mentors in order to help principals become leaders of learning. The research detailed eight core competencies that principals as learning leaders must possess; two of these competencies recommended mentoring practices. Competency five insisted on standards-based mentoring programs that included an evaluation process that assessed principal behaviors known to improve teaching and achievement. Competency six recommended that accomplished principals be compensated if they took on the role of master or mentor in a high-need school.

Finally, “A Guide to Support Coaching and Mentoring for School Improvement” (Moyle, 2016) presented information that six principals learned and shared during a three-year study of mentoring programs in their schools and districts. The need to establish a school culture that fostered mentoring for school improvement was a key finding. The guide introduced the Visible

Learning logic model, developed by John Hattie (2009), and as part of this model, it detailed walk-throughs as a characteristic of effective school leaders. Visible Learning was described as a school improvement, mentoring model to “build knowledge, challenge beliefs, strengthen classroom practice, enhance student learning, and improve student achievement” (Moyle, 2016, p. 8). Moyle (2016) delineated that a mentoring program must: establish the role of the mentor as well as the mentee; prepare a plan for identification, strategies, implementation, and assessment of instruction; and reflect on learning outcomes for students. She went on to specify the skills necessary for a positive mentor-mentee relationship, which included: conversation skills that ask questions and are non-judgmental; listening skills, both hearing and understanding; nonverbal language recognition skills; constructive feedback skills; relationship skills that are built on trust; and maintaining skills.

A New Role

In the forefront of current literature, a new approach for mentoring principals as learning leaders has emerged. Central offices are “taking a fresh look at how best to support principals and reduce principal turnover, particularly in the most troubled schools” (Saltzman, 2016, p. 1). In “The Power of Principal Supervisors: How Two Districts are Remaking an Old Role” (2016), Saltzman shared that many districts are remaking an old role – that of principal supervisor, and on a broader scale. They are redefining the job descriptions of the entire district staff to facilitate the new role (Brasher, 2018; Saltzman, 2016). In the past, the job description of most principal supervisors was that of a fixer, the person who supervised a large number of principals and managed problems. Saltzman (2016) described the new role as one that bolstered the work of principals in order to improve teaching and learning. For this new role, principal supervisors had

a smaller number of schools to oversee, spent most of their time at school sites, and worked “hand in hand with their principals to determine the best path for each school” (p. 2).

Research by Rainey and Honig (2015) detailed trends that appeared in district efforts to redefine the role of principal supervisor from oversight to support of principal growth and learning. Listed below are the trends they found:

- Define the principal supervisors’ role as focused on principal growth and learning.
- Define the principal’s role as focused on instructional leadership.
- Principal supervisors report to, or near, the superintendent.
- Principal supervisors work with a manageable caseload of principals.
- Principal supervisors oversee a subset of strategically grouped principals.
- Ensure principal supervisors view their job as teaching principals to be instructional leaders.
- Provide principal supervisors with professional development focused on improving their capacity to help principals grow as instructional leaders.
- Proactively protect principal supervisor’s time.
- Work to transform other central office units for better performance in ways aligned with the principal supervisor-principal relationship. (Rainey & Honig, 2015, pp. 4-5)

In addition, Rainey and Honig (2015) found that the central office culture needed to change to maximize the time principals and supervisors could “devote to instructional improvement” (p. 5). In another report with similar findings, Brasher (2018) detailed the first of three studies of The Wallace Foundation’s Principal Supervisor Initiative. She highlighted the contents of the study and listed five key components needed to reshape the position of principal supervisor. These components were: revise supervisor’s job description to focus on instructional

leadership; reduce the number of principals each supervisor oversees; provide dedicated professional development; redefine the central office's role and functions; and develop and cultivate the new supervisor. Brasher (2018) went on to report that as job descriptions changed and the central office was restructured, supervisors could “step away from operational, administrative and compliance tasks to coach/mentor, and advise principals to be more effective as instructional leaders” (p. 1).

Conclusion

The concept of mentoring is not new to the field of education. Rather, the ‘how’ and the ‘who’ of mentoring have evolved, changing dramatically. From the early ‘like-producing-like’ (Malone 2001) mentoring efforts to prepare future principals, to current innovations in central office support systems (Brasher, 2018; Saltzman, 2016) that endeavor to prepare and retain principals as learning leaders, mentoring efforts have become an educational staple.

As the literature revealed, pre-service certification programs have proven ineffective for preparing school leaders for the challenges of leading today's schools (Grissom & Harrington, 2010; Mendels & Mitgang, 2013; The Wallace Foundation, 2012); consequently, district-sponsored mentoring programs are of paramount importance in ensuring that school leaders are equipped to meet the needs of today's teachers and learners.

The Relationship Between Trust and Successful Mentoring That Promotes Principals as Learning Leaders

This last theme, like most before, includes these sub-sections: historical perspective, theory, and obstructions or common 'barriers' to establishing trusting relationships. Two unique aspects of the need for trust in mentoring relationships are also addressed: trust between principal and mentor, and trust between principal and district, or central office.

Rationale/Theory

In order for a principal to succeed as an effective learning leader, mentoring relationships must be built upon and characterized by trust (Browne-Ferrigno, 2007; Hattie, 2009; Jenkins, 2009; Gray et al., 2007; NAESP & The Education Alliance, 2003). All entities involved in the success of a principal must have a shared vision of learning and achievement, and the success of such a vision requires trust. Relationships must be “built upon trust and respect for every individual within the community” (Moyle, 2016, p. 10). Principals, as learning leaders, must make child-centered decisions; display competence; invest in people by building leadership in all people around them; create transparency through communication; be reliable and always follow through; walk the talk by leading through example and modeling characteristics they hope to see in others; and lead with integrity by doing the right things for the right reasons (Murray, 2017). Mentoring relationships, built upon trust, are necessary for a principal to accomplish all that is asked of a learning leader. In a mentoring relationship, trust is a key element, and to build trust, “you have to start as you mean to go on” (Cull, 2019).

Historical Perspective

The word “trust,” as defined by Webster’s Dictionary (1955) means a “firm belief or confidence in the honesty, integrity, reliability, justice, etc. of another person or thing” (p. 1505). Stephen Covey (2006), however, in *The Speed of Trust* said,

Rather than giving a complex definition, I prefer to use the words of Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric. He said, ‘[Y]ou know it when you feel it.’ Simply put, trust means confidence. The opposite of trust – distrust – is suspicion. When you trust people, you have confidence in them – in their integrity and in their abilities. When you distrust

people, you are suspicious of them – of their integrity, their agenda, their capabilities, or their track record. It's that simple. (p. 5)

While trust is the basis for nearly every relationship known to man (Bonier, 2018), the concept was given only face value (i.e., mentioned, but with no elaboration) in much of the mentoring literature reviewed for this study. The reasons behind the importance of the need for trust received little attention. However, since this researcher firmly supports the works of Stephen Covey (2006) and Anthony Muhammad (2015), in which we see that trust is an underlying, foundational, and critical component for any successful relationship (including mentor and mentee), a closer review is warranted. Trust between principal and mentor, and trust between principal and central office will be explored. In addition, the barriers to initiating and sustaining trust in these mentoring relationships are detailed.

Principal and Mentor

Cull (2010) stated that in a mentoring relationship there could be “no success without trust” (p. 1). Trust building is a process (Brown, 2014) that requires time, patience, openness, mutual reliance, respect, and a willingness to be vulnerable (Scott, 2012). In order to work together effectively, it is important for principal supervisors, as coaches and mentors, to build trust with principals. Simply put, a trusting relationship provides “a shoulder to cry on and a safe place for principals to share their struggles” (Saltzman, 2016, p.10).

Principals who participated in one research project “noted that they needed to have trusting relationships in order to facilitate sharing of responsibilities and reflective conversations” (Adams, 2013, p. 121). In “Navigating the Journey through Principal Land,” Lamar (2018) described trust building as a pillar of mentoring. A principal and National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) certified principal mentor, Lamar found

that openness, honesty, and non-judgmental communication were hallmarks of a trust-based mentoring relationship. She emphasized that building trust required the mentor to know the mentee as an individual, determine leadership strengths and goals, and utilize an approach that would help the mentee feel comfortable during the process. Browne-Ferrigno (2007) added, “leadership mentoring fosters reciprocal learning and develops collegial relationships” (p. 4).

In “Best Practices in Mentoring for Teacher and Leader Development,” editors Searby and Brondyk (2016) noted that the recurring theme of trust was one of four major findings in a study of new principal experiences. From narratives provided by new principals who felt supported by their mentors, trust was the key factor. They stated that trust was a necessity, and it was “established over time through building relationships with those who offered support” (p. 209).

Principal and Central Office

Central, or district offices vary in size, function, and organization. While some are extremely small, sharing a site with a school campus and led by a single leader who serves in two roles: ‘Superintendent/Principal,’ others are massive in size (e.g., Los Angeles Unified School District) and oversee more stakeholders than many cities and even states. In fact, almost one-fifth of districts have less than 250 students, while several of the largest districts serve several hundred thousand students (Aritomi, Coopersmith, & Gruber, 2009, as cited in Johnston et al., 2016). In terms of function, though, one would think every district’s mission would be similar (i.e., to educate its youth), yet they are often fragmented with misaligned goals that work in opposition to the central purpose (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Likewise, districts can be organized in a plethora of ways, with positions and departments often representing what was valued at one time or another within the organization, but not necessarily related to the current mission and

vision (Honig et al., 2010). Regardless of the size of a district, its function and organization should be focused around a central purpose that is shared (Fullan & Kirkman, 2019). DuFour and Marzano (2009), Goldring et al. (2018), and Gates et al. (2019) reiterated the importance of all divisions within a central office being committed to supporting and developing principals as learning leaders. This includes the superintendent, governing board, human resources department, and instructional division, as well as the business services department. In successful districts, everyone acts as “mentors” for principal success.

Utilizing mentoring, the district office must build trusting relationships in order to establish a community of leadership (Browne-Ferrigno, 2007). In “A Matter of Trust” (2018), authors Berg, Connolly, Lee, and Fairley stated “obviously, trust makes work more pleasant for everyone” (p. 56). In addition: trust supports engagement. When there is trust, people are willing to cooperate with and learn from one another. Trust also increases productivity. In a trusting environment, people feel accountable to one another and themselves in a way that gets work done and challenges all to work harder toward shared goals. Most importantly, “trust inspires hope” (Berg et al., 2018, p. 56).

It is not easy to shift the central office from practices that have been in place for years to a new focus centered on teaching and learning (Saltzman, 2016). Principals fear that commitment for change won’t last. Kayla Robinson, a principal supervisor in Tulsa, stated that “it takes time and it takes hard work to build that trust with principals” (Saltzman, 2016, p. 9). Trust between a principal and the district office is a two-way street. “The district must trust its principals to do the right thing, and principals must trust the district office to provide meaningful support and to make them a true partner in framing and achieving the district plan” (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010, p. 26). “In a trusting environment, people feel accountable to one another

and themselves in a way that gets work done and challenges all to work harder toward shared goals” (Berg et al., 2018, p. 1). Trust in the central office commitment is essential to the success of a learning leader. “When principals know they are trusted, they are more open to expressing their needs and concerns and will be more confident, innovative, collaborative, and timely to create a highly engaging, high-performing school culture” (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010, p. 26).

The Superintendent has a foundational role in creating and sustaining an environment of trust for principals and mentors. Carl Cohn, former Superintendent of the Long Beach Unified School District, said that building trust required good listening. He noted that building trust was essential, because schools were “more like families than factories” (EdSource, 2007, p. 3). “A superintendent’s trustworthiness affects a principal’s willingness to provide that extra contribution or effort so essential to a successful school district” (West & Derrington, 2009, p. 52).

Barriers to Building and Sustaining Trust

If the principals’ supervisor or mentor is also the principals’ evaluator, the contradiction in those roles “can make it difficult to build trusting relationships” (Saltzman, 2016, p. 10). In “Evaluating and Supporting Principals,” a Principal Pipeline Initiative report, it was noted that some principal-supervisor relationships didn’t meet district expectations because supervisors lacked the capacity to help principals or did not visit school sites often enough, thus failing to gain enough trust from the principal to have candid discussions about needed improvements (Anderson & Turnbull, 2016). The report also stated: “some principals were unsure about the extent to which they could trust their supervisors with information about their needs” (Anderson & Trumbull, 2016, p. 44), and new principals, in particular, feared negative consequences.

Bottoms and Schmidt-Davis (2010) reported that in interviews conducted in an earlier study, “high school principals said that they did not trust that their district staff had the capacity to provide meaningful assistance in improving curriculum and instruction” (p. 26). Brewster and Railsback (2003) listed the following as breakdown points in building and sustaining a trusting, district-principal relationship:

- Top-down decision making that is perceived as arbitrary, misinformed, or not in the best interests of the school
- Ineffective communication
- Lack of follow-through on or support for school improvement efforts and other projects
- Unstable or inadequate school funding
- Failure to define and address past causes of school mistrust. (pp. 10-11)

Principals might harbor mistrust about district leadership and team building if they feel their voices are not heard and they are not part of decision making (West & Derrington, 2009). A lack of trust between a superintendent or supervisor and the principal can lead to a breakdown in communication; without a trusting relationship, a principal may fear repercussions if bad news is shared (West & Derrington, 2009).

In the following passage, Bottoms and Schmidt-Davis (2010) pointed to the concern that a school board also plays a significant part in a district’s efforts to effectively mentor their principals:

Board members in the minimally supportive districts were less focused on student achievement, did not have confidence in central office personnel, and did not trust that they were being given all details of student and system performance. The school boards

in these districts find themselves refereeing disputes, rather than focusing on effective school and classroom practices. (p. 16)

“High-trust teams risk, care, and share” (West & Derrington, 2009, p. 59). When a principal and the district office team build trust in a mentoring relationship, they are able to collaborate and achieve district-wide goals (West & Derrington, 2009). As Jane MODOONO (2017) stated in an online exclusive for *Educational Leadership*, “Trust is the foundation of collaboration, and collaboration is what makes organizations excel” (para. 5).

Conclusion

Principals “can no longer function simply as building managers, tasked with adhering to district rules, carrying out regulations and avoiding mistakes. They have to be (or become) leaders of learning who can develop teams to deliver effective instruction” (The Wallace Foundation, 2013, p. 6). This requires trust – trust between and among all stakeholders: individual teachers, teams of teacher, support staff, parents, students, community members, and the central office.

Summary of Literature Review

Chapter 2 sought to provide a detailed review of the literature related to Central Office Supports for Principals as Learning Leaders and the Impact on Student Achievement. The literature was divided into five themes relevant to the study: 1) *principals as learning leaders*; 2) *the influences of effective leadership*; 3) *central office structures* to create the conditions for principals to serve as learning leaders; 4) *mentoring to equip and retain* principals to serve as learning leaders; and 5) *the relationship between trust and successful mentoring* that promotes principals as learning leaders. As we have seen, the role of the school principal has evolved over time from that of plant manager to instructional leader and more recently to that of a learning

leader. These learning leaders have immense responsibilities to establish and sustain collaborative cultures focused on learning vs. teaching (DuFour, 2002). Research acknowledges the vital role and influence of the school leader on student achievement (Marzano et al., 2005) as well as the fact that central office support of principals increases effectiveness, job satisfaction, and ultimately student achievement (Honig et al., 2010). One of the primary modes of central office support for principals is through mentoring programs, which traditionally were utilized for teachers but have been shown to be very effective for school leaders (Daresh, 2004; Parylo et al., 2012). As we learned, “good principals are made, not born” (Yirci & Kocabas, 2010, p. 3). And finally, the literature behind the concept of trust, between and among all stakeholders (principals, central office leaders, and mentors) was reviewed. Not only is trust paramount in all relationships (Covey, 2006), the principal is charged with building it on his or her campus, and the mentor and central office staff are charged with providing the supports that enable the principal to be successful at it!

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This research examined how central office leadership impacts principals as learning leaders. It sought to answer how central office leadership can design systems of support to ensure that principals are equipped, retained, and able to serve as learning leaders. It reviewed models from high-achieving districts and also examined the role of trust between and among principals, mentors, and the district office. Finally, it explored the impact of each department within the central office on principals as learning leaders.

As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, this study began by acknowledging the significant impact of school site leaders on student achievement. Literature points to the fact that principals are second only to classroom instruction when it comes to the effect on student learning (National Association of Secondary School Principals and National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2013; Marzano et al., 2005; National Association of Secondary Principals, n.d.), yet it is important to note that these site leaders have an immense ability to influence the number one effect: classroom instruction. Principals are responsible for hiring, training, and evaluating day-to-day classroom experiences (Linda Darling-Hammond, as cited in A Bridge to School Reform, 2007), and they typically make the decisions on whether or not to retain teachers year-after-year.

The unique contribution of this study is that specific strategies have been outlined that district leaders can implement to ensure they have created a limited number of initiatives, the conditions that allow principals to serve as learning leaders, and coherence of all actions (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). This requires a shared commitment (Fullan, Cuttress & Kilcher, 2005) as well as the skill-set to coach principals and district leaders toward these roles. Success will not only

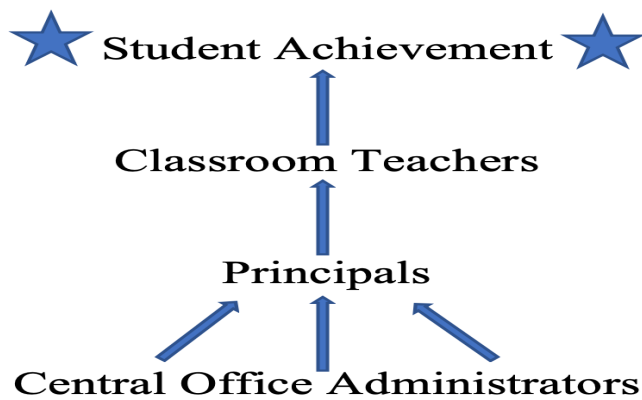
increase job satisfaction among principals, but ultimately student achievement (Honig et al., 2010).

Educational research ascribes an indirect correlation between student achievement and the leader on the campus (aka: the principal) (Marzano et al., 2005). Grants from The Wallace Foundation (Goldring et al., 2018; Gates et al., 2019) have funded research in this area, establishing that students perform better when a district's priority is developing and supporting principals to improve instruction. Marzano et al. (2005) demonstrated that the school leader is the most important element impacting student learning, and Horng et al. (2010) showed the direct correlation between the amount of time spent by the principal on instructional activities and student achievement.

Given the amount of research on the principal's role and influence, as well as the distractions they face, the mandate of this study was to take a closer look at the practices and perceptions of both school and district leaders regarding the principals' abilities, focus, and impact of serving as learning leaders. It emphasized the tasks associated with being learning leaders and endeavored to provide guidance for districts interested in building this capacity within their principals. Figure 1 is a visual representation of the central office's role in supporting student achievement. By focusing intently on principals, who in turn, focus intently on classroom teachers, student achievement is positively impacted.

Figure 1

Central Office Support of Principals as Learning Leaders Model



Saphier and Durkin (2011) utilized a horizontal model to portray the relationship and importance of supporting principals to impact student learning. It is depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Relationship and Importance of Supporting Principals

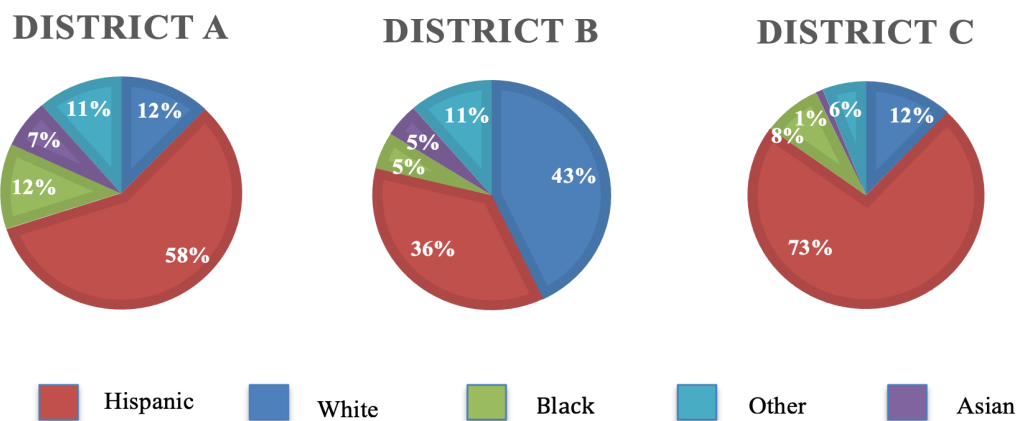


The quantitative portion of the study comprised Phase I, where surveys were sent to nearly 400 public school district superintendents and assistant superintendents within counties throughout Southern and Northern California. Though four open-ended, qualitative questions were included, the majority of the data obtained from these initial surveys was quantitative in nature. After data was collected and analyzed from the Phase I responses, qualitative tools of open-ended, face-to-face interviews were conducted with three districts and their superintendents, three directors who provide support for principals, and four school site principals. The interviews represented Phase II.

This chapter is now presented to describe the methodology in-depth. It is organized in six sections: a) setting and participants; b) sampling procedures; c) instrumentation and measures; d) data collection; e) data analysis; and f) ethical issues.

Setting and Participants

As shared, nearly 400 initial surveys were sent to superintendents of public, TK-12 school districts in several counties within Southern and Northern California. One hundred eighty-six superintendents and assistant superintendents responded to the initial Phase I surveys. Since many districts had multiple participants, the total number of districts represented was 118. After reviewing the data on demographics and principal support programs from the 118 responding districts, which ultimately represent a convenience sampling, three public school districts were chosen to engage in Phase II: Interviews and Document Reviews. Criteria to select the three districts included size, demographics, geography, the levels served by the district, and programs to support principals. These will be described further in the section on Sampling Procedures. Figure 3 shows the demographics of each of the three districts selected to participate in Phase II.

Figure 3*Demographics of Phase II Districts*

(McClay, 2020)

In addition, the percentage of English learners in each district was 14%, 7%, and 18% respectively. The percentage of Socio-Economically Disadvantaged in each district was 62%, 30%, and 82%, respectively.

Each school district utilized in Phase II was considered a large district by the California Department of Education, serving 20,000 or more students in grades TK-12. All three district superintendents participated in Phase II, as did a district office administrator who work directly with site principals. Finally, one or two principals from each of the districts participated, one just completing her second year as a school principal, one beginning her eleventh year as a school principal, and two having served in their roles for seven years. Table 3.1 shows how many years each interviewee has been in their current role.

Table 3. 1*Phase Two Participants' Titles and Years of Service*

District	Superintendent	District Administrator	Principal
A	1	Director of Leadership Development; 5 years	Grades 6-8; 10 years, Grades TK-5; 7 years
B	8		Grades TK-5; 7 years
C	7	Executive Director of Elementary Education; 5 years	Grades 9-12; 2 years
		Director of Elementary Curriculum & Instruction; 2 years	

Note. District A's Superintendent spent six years as the district's Deputy Superintendent prior to becoming the Superintendent. Also, as shown, at least one principal represented each level: elementary (2), middle school (1), and high school (1).

Sampling Procedures

Convenience sampling was utilized In Phase 1, where nearly 400 superintendents from counties throughout California received an initial survey by email. These superintendents and assistant superintendents represent a subset of the 1,000 superintendents in the State of California and share two common characteristics: they serve as the leader (superintendent) or executive cabinet member (assistant superintendent) of public school districts, and their districts reside in Southern or Northern California. Convenience sampling, a non-probability sampling technique where subjects are selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the

researcher, was intentionally utilized so access to the selected districts for Phase II interviews and document reviews would be more attainable. This researcher believes the sample size is sufficient. Not only was it 10% of the total number of superintendents in the State, the nearly 400 surveyed represent a wide array of districts, including some of the state and country's largest, smallest, most successful, and most at-risk. This researcher is confident that the initial stratum represents the population within California.

Purposeful, non-probability, and criterion sampling techniques (where the researcher selects participants based on predetermined criteria) were then utilized to determine the districts who would be participating in Phase II: Interviews and Document Reviews (Patton, 1990). This is due to the fact that criteria were established and used to select just three districts from the 118 who responded to the initial survey. After considering their beliefs and practices associated with supporting principals as learning leaders, two exemplar districts and one 'middle-road' district were selected. Factors such as district size, geographic location, demographics, the levels served by the district, and the programs used by the district to support principals were also reviewed in an attempt to achieve similar districts. However, the assumption cannot be made that the three districts selected fully represent the total population. As with all non-probability sampling, the degree to which the sample differs from the population remains unknown. While it might be argued that the researcher intentionally chose these three districts to participate in the study, utilizing purposive sampling, with criteria for selection from the survey responses diminishes the argument. Justifications for each selected district will be presented in Chapter 4.

Once preferred districts were selected, the researcher sent personal requests via email to the superintendents and assistant superintendents of each educational support division. After ensuring each district's interest in participating, phone calls were made to share additional details

about the research, determine the district administrators who oversaw site principals, and select those who were therefore best suited to participate. A similar process, beginning with emails and then telephone conversations, was utilized to obtain the principals from each district once the superintendent and district-level administrators were secured.

It is important to note that due to the researcher's work, she believes she was able to secure a better sampling of districts and increased participation from the Phase I survey as a result of her relationships within the several of the local counties. She also had prior knowledge of two of the final three districts selected for participation in Phase II. One is a neighbor district and often the comparison point for her district; another is a district she had read a great deal about and followed their work in the area of principal support. However, the researcher believes she maintained neutrality and avoided bias.

The researcher served as the facilitator: she crafted the survey tools as well as the interview protocols and questions. She conducted the interviews and was cautious to follow the plans intensely to ensure authentic responses and avoid 'leading' the interviewees. To assist in documenting each interaction, a quality recording device was utilized. While she conducted a thorough data analysis, she also had colleagues review the data to validate her findings.

Instrumentation and Measures

The primary research question addressed by this study was: How does central office leadership impact principals as learning leaders? The independent variable, therefore, was district/central office supports for principals. The constructs used to measure this variable were the responses to the Phase I Survey of district-level supports for principals by superintendents and assistant superintendents. These were measured using five-point Likert-scale statements #14, #15, #19, #20, #21, #22, and #23; and open-ended questions #24, #25, #26, and #27. The

dependent variable, on the other hand, was principals as learning leaders, and was measured by interviews with questions about learning leader tasks, abilities, and focus of superintendents, directors, and principals (Likert-scale statements #16, #17, #18, #19, and #20; and open-ended questions #24, #25, and #26), as well as a review of relevant documents. The sources for both variables are described in detail in Table 4.1

Table 4. 1*Variables, Concepts, and Constructs*

Variable	Concept	Construct	Source
Independent	District/central office supports for principals	Responses and scale of district-level supports (e.g., mentoring, trust) for principals by superintendents, assistant superintendents, directors, and principals	Phase I Survey Phase II Interviews Review of district documents outlining principal support programs
Dependent	Principals as learning leaders	Responses and scale of learning leader tasks, abilities, and focus by superintendents, assistant superintendents, directors, and principals	Phase I Survey Phase II Interviews
Demographics	District size, levels served, number of sites, and number of principals	Survey questions 8-11 by superintendents and assistant superintendents	Phase I Survey California Department of Education statistics

Confounding Variables	Respondent's age, gender, ethnicity, highest level of education completed, and household income	Survey questions 2-6 by superintendents and assistant superintendents	Phase II Interviews
	Mentor experience	Interview responses of superintendents, directors, and	
	Attitude of mentee	principals (including open-ended questions)	
	District level supports for principals		
	District level coherence among departments		
	Trust level between principal and mentor and principal and the district office		

As Creswell and Poth (2018) shared so succinctly, the triangulation of sources, investigators, and methods must all work collaboratively in order to establish credibility within the body of a research study. Achieving this balance, along with the need to ensure both validity

and reliability, were vital research considerations. A notable statement about qualitative research that affected this study was “we are not just collecting numerical data; we are collecting information that some may interpret in different ways and in different means” (B. Karge, personal communication, May 12, 2019). This resonated, as one of the researcher’s biggest concerns was that of bias. Passion for the topic, combined with beliefs and experiences, could not influence the work and therefore required a plan to address and avoid bias. Ensuring objectivity throughout the study, especially when writing survey questions and conducting interviews, was critical. Success with this goal was validated by having colleagues review the questions and protocols. It was even considered when choosing districts as participants, as this researcher’s colleagues and districts throughout the region knew her belief system and areas of passion.

The initial survey sent to all superintendents and assistant superintendents can be viewed in its entirety in Appendix B. The survey included demographic questions such as title, age, gender, ethnicity, highest level of education completed, and household income, as well as information about their districts, such as the name, number of students, grade levels served, number of schools, and how many new principals had been placed within the past two years. Respondents were then asked to respond to 12 Likert statements, indicating their levels of disagreement or agreement on a five-point scale. The following statements were constructed by the researcher and informed by theory and research:

1. Based on what I observe in classrooms, I believe the quality of teaching and learning in my district is outstanding.

2. As the Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent, one of my highest priorities within our district is to provide ongoing staff development to our administrators, particularly principals.
3. One of our district's top Governing Board priorities is to provide staff development to administrators, particularly principals.
4. Our district strongly or firmly believes that site principals play a significant role in impacting student achievement.
5. The role of principals as learning leaders, instructional leaders, and plant managers is clearly understood throughout our district.
6. Our district has an ongoing, formal program to train and support principals in each role (learning leader, instructional leader, and plant manager).
7. Our district has an effective formal mentoring program designed specifically for new principals.
8. Our district has an effective formal mentoring program for all principals, regardless of the number of years served.
9. Principal mentoring practices in our district have made a strong, positive impact on student achievement.
10. The mentors who coach principals in our district are highly trained in effective coaching techniques.
11. Our district administrators are highly trained in how to build and maintain trust with principals.
12. Our district has specific programs and efforts to support the mental health of principals.

Finally, the survey concluded with short answer and open-ended, free-response questions regarding the mentoring offered to principals within the participants' districts. Questions such as these were posed: *What does principal mentoring look like in your district?*, *What topics are addressed when mentoring/coaching occurs on campuses (e.g., school budget, curriculum, hiring, etc.)?*, and *What role does each department at the district office (e.g., business services, human resources, educational services, etc.) play in the mentoring of principals?*

“Interviews play a central role in the data collection in a case study” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 161). As such, one of the primary instrumentations within this research was that of interviews, which were conducted face-to-face and one-on-one and ranged from 45-75 minutes each. Surveys were also a critical instrumentation tool and incorporated both qualitative and quantitative elements. Demographic information, Likert scale agree/disagree statements about support models for principals, and open-ended questions were asked, with an emphasis on free response. Questions from both The Wallace Foundation and the University of Washington's Center for Educational Leadership were modified slightly. Table 5.1 displays the adjustments:

Table 5. 1

Proposed Changes to UWCEL's Survey Questions

UWCEL's Survey Question	This Study's Proposed Question
What do leaders notice and wonder about teaching and learning when they are in classrooms observing instruction? (Fink, 2017).	What do you look for when observing teaching and learning in classrooms?
Based upon what they notice and wonder about teaching and learning, what feedback would they provide for the teacher? (Fink, 2017).	What type of feedback do you provide the principal or teacher based upon your

	observations of teaching and learning? What does the feedback look and sound like?
How would they use what they noticed and wondered about within and across classrooms to lead, guide and support the professional learning of their teachers? (Fink, 2017).	How do you use what you observed within classrooms to guide and support the professional learning of your principals or teachers?

In addition, based on responses from the Phase I Survey completed by 186 superintendents and assistant superintendents, questions were crafted specifically for the one-on-one interviews (see Appendix B).

Reliability

One key element within qualitative research is that of confirmability (Gibbs, 2012b). In other words, if the study is done again by others, would the results be the same? (Gibbs, 2012a). This is something this researcher was committed to keeping at the forefront of the work, but most critically during the planning, data analysis, and writing stages. To address reliability, a quality recording device and coding process were utilized to provide the opportunity to review data to ensure consistency. In an effort to achieve intercoder agreement, or inter-rater reliability, the researcher had others code the data, as well.

The self-constructed instruments utilized in the study were informed by theoretical and empirical work in the field, which increases their content and concurrent validity. A plethora of studies were reviewed and incorporated, including works on the principal as instructional or learning leader, the influence of the principal on student achievement, central office supports for principals as learning leaders, mentoring of principals, and the role of trust. Tables 7.1 – 11.1 depict the most frequently cited works for each section.

Last, the researcher assured participants of confidentiality in an effort to ensure authentic and honest responses. Each district administrator and principal involved was part of a district where the superintendent was also a participant, so it was especially important to maintain strict confidentiality. Names of the districts were removed, and any information that could link a particular participant to his or her work was omitted.

Validity

Clarifying the researcher's biases was a critical component of this study. While this was not an easy task, it was of paramount importance. In addition, the amount of time for the study was increased – three months were spent surveying and interviewing participants, including a revisit (member checking) with interviewees when needed to clarify or confirm the highlights extracted from the interview. Two peers also reviewed the data and validated the findings.

Another aspect establishing strength within the study was the multitude of districts who provided preliminary information through the survey distributed in Phase I. Surveys were sent to superintendents and assistant superintendents from 97 school districts throughout California. Responses were received from 186 participants, representing 118 districts, and information from the data served to inform and shape questions utilized for the one-on-one interviews of superintendents, district administrators, and principals, as well as the requests for supporting documents.

Data Collection

The primary methods used to provide the necessary data for this study were surveys and interviews. Initial surveys were sent to nearly 400 superintendents and assistant superintendents. Three districts were intentionally selected with similar size, geographic location, levels served, and demographics. Student performance data was collected and reviewed as an additional factor

for selection as a participating district. This was to ensure the exemplar districts had student achievement data commensurate with their central office supports for principals as learning leaders. In other words, to support the hypothesis and test the theory, the district selected for strong models of principal support needed high levels of student achievement. The district selected for low levels of principal support needed low levels of student achievement. The quantities as well as the types of strategies utilized by central offices to support principals were used to select exemplars. Within these districts, one-on-one interviews were conducted with the superintendent, a director who oversees principal development or works directly with principals, and one-two principals representing the different school levels and years of experience - with the purpose being to “attempt to understand the world from the subjects’ point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experience, to uncover their lived world” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 164). In total, interviews were conducted with a total of four principals, three district-level administrators, and three superintendents. Interview protocols were utilized for all three groups, beginning with questions designed to get each interviewee talking. Interviews were conducted via Zoom or Google Meets (due to COVID-19 restrictions).

In addition to surveys and interviews, documents relevant to the research from each district were reviewed. These included schedules of site visits with goals and objectives of each visit; lists of who is assigned as support providers for each principal; notes from recent site visits; principal evaluations; Local Control Accountability Plans – when positions or actions related to principal support were included in the plan; California Department of Education (CDE) Dashboards; and more.

Last, using the Case Study approach, descriptive notes were kept throughout the process. Beginning with initial survey results, email correspondence, and preliminary phone

conversations, and concluding with memos, member checking, and coding of several rounds of data, comprehensive notes assisted the researcher in keeping track of all information. Multiple visual representations of the findings were also created in an attempt to make the results more understandable to readers. Table 6.1 depicts all variables utilized in the study. Tables 7.1 – 11.1 summarize the most frequently cited works for each section. The visual on Figure 4, following Table 11.1, represents the process undertaken by the researcher to arrive at the conclusions.

Table 6. 1

Variables and Variable Types

Demographic Question 1:	Independent Variable
<i>Title</i>	
Demographic Question 2:	Independent Variable
<i>Age</i>	
Demographic Question 3:	Independent Variable
<i>Gender</i>	
Demographic Question 4:	Independent Variable
<i>Ethnicity</i>	
Demographic Question 5:	Independent Variable
<i>Highest Level of Education Completed</i>	

Demographic Question 6: <i>Household Income</i>	Independent Variable
Demographic Question 7: <i>District Name</i>	Independent Variable
Demographic Question 8: <i>The number of students served by my district is...</i>	Independent Variable
Demographic Question 9: <i>The grade levels served by my district are...</i>	Independent Variable
Demographic Question 10: <i>The number of active school sites/campuses in my district is...</i>	Independent Variable
Demographic Question 11: <i>The number of principals in my district is...</i>	Independent Variable
Demographic Question 12: <i>How many NEW principals have been hired or promoted (not moved or transferred sites as existing principals) in the past year?</i>	Independent Variable
Demographic Question 13:	Independent Variable

How many NEW principals have been hired or promoted (not moved or transferred sites as existing principals) in the past two years?

Likert Scale Question 14:

Independent Variable

As the Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent, one of MY highest priorities within our district is to provide ongoing staff development to our administrators, particularly principals.

Likert Scale Question 15:

Independent Variable

One of our district's top GOVERNING BOARD priorities is to provide staff development to administrators, particularly principals.

Likert Scale Question 16:

Independent Variable

Our district strongly or firmly believes that site principals play a significant role in impacting student achievement.

Likert Scale Question 17:

Independent Variable

The role of principals as learning leaders, instructional leaders, and plant managers is clearly understood throughout our district.

Likert Scale Question 18:

Independent Variable

Our district has an ongoing, formal program to train and support principals in each role (learning leader, instructional leader, and plant manager).

Likert Scale Question 19:

Independent Variable

Our district has an effective formal mentoring program designed specifically for NEW principals.

Likert Scale Question 20:

Independent Variable

Our district has an effective formal mentoring program for ALL principals, regardless of the number of years served.

Likert Scale Question 21:

Independent Variable

Principal mentoring practices in our district have made a strong, positive impact on student achievement.

Likert Scale Question 22:

Independent Variable

The mentors who coach principals in our district are highly trained in effective coaching techniques.

Likert Scale Question 23:

Independent Variable

Our district administrators are highly trained in how to build and maintain trust with principals.

Independent Variable

Short Answer Question 24:

How many hours per week do those who mentor/coach principals spend on campuses supporting principals?

Short Answer Question 25:

Independent Variable

What topics are addressed when mentoring/coaching occurs on campuses (e.g., school budget, curriculum, hiring, etc.)?

Open-Ended Question 26:

Independent Variable

What does principal mentoring look like in your district? Consider:

- a) Who facilitates the mentoring?*
- b) How often does it occur?*
- c) Where does it occur?*
- d) What activities do the mentor/mentee do together?*
- e) What are the intended outcomes?*

Open-Ended Question 27:

Independent Variable

What role does each department at the district office (e.g., business services, human resources, educational services, etc.) play in the mentoring of principals?

Student Achievement Data	Dependent Variable
District Location	Dependent Variable
Unduplicated Pupil (UDP) Percentage	Dependent Variable
English Learner Percentage	Dependent Variable
Ethnicity Percentages of White, Hispanic or Latino, Black or African American, and Asian	Dependent Variable
Annual Operating Budget	Dependent Variable
Interview Responses	Dependent Variable
Document Review	Dependent Variable

The following five tables display the most significant sources utilized in the Literature Review. For the sake of space, the researcher chose to include any source used three or more times within the section.

Table 7. 1*Variable #1: Principals as Learning Leaders*

Most Significant Sources	Main Points/Summary
DuFour, R., & Mattos, M. (2013). How do principals really improve schools? <i>Educational Leadership</i> , 70(7), 34–40.	DuFour and Mattos highlighted the faulty logic behind national reform movements such as No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top and instead advocated for principals to focus on supporting their collaborative teams as they work alongside them to analyze evidence of student learning. In addition, they listed five critical steps to success for principals on the professional learning community journey.
DuFour, R., & Marzano, R. (2009). High-leverage strategies for principal leadership. <i>Educational Leadership</i> , 62–68.	This article introduced the concept of eliminating a low-leverage strategy (traditional teacher evaluations) and instead focusing on promoting teacher learning in collaborative teams. It presented a sound argument for principals utilizing this time to support teams of teachers in examining evidence of student learning.
DuFour, R. (2002). The learning-centered principal. <i>Educational Leadership</i> , 59(8), 12-15.	DuFour shared his experience as a principal striving to be an instructional leader and emphasized the mindset change when he realized many years into his principalship that striving to be an instructional leader by coaching and supporting one teacher at a time was not, in fact, the best way to achieve positive movement with his staff and ultimately increases in student achievement.

- Fullan, M. (2000). *The role of the principal in school reform*. Principals Institute at Bank Street College. New York, NY. This article reviewed the ever-evolving demands on school leaders and acknowledged the frustrations and turnover. Fullan shared other researchers' findings and outlined the characteristics of principals who are successful leading change efforts.
- Fullan, M. (1991). *The meaning of educational change*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University. In this first edition - now on the fifth iteration (2016), Fullan described the steps necessary for large-scale educational reform. Examples from multiple countries were provided, with specific strategies to achieve sustainability provided.
- Hallinger, P. & Wang, W.C. (2015). *Assessing instructional leadership with the principal instructional management rating scale*. New York, NY: Springer. This book began with a review of the history and evolution of instructional leadership. It then presented the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS), a tool used in numerous countries to assess principal effectiveness.
- Jenkins, B. (2009). What it takes to be an instructional leader. *Principal*. January/February. 34-37. Jenkins chronicled the history of the principal's role and provided a definition of 'instructional leader,' stating "Principals who pride themselves as administrators usually are too preoccupied in dealing with strictly managerial duties, while principals who are instructional leaders involve themselves in setting clear goals, allocating resources to instruction, managing the curriculum, monitoring lesson plans, and evaluating teachers" (p. 35).
- Johnston, J. (2008). The principal's priority 1. This article also referenced the history and change in principal duties. It then presented Public Agenda survey results to answer the

Educational Leadership, (66)1, 72-76. questions, “How is instructional leadership really working out in schools? Are principals changing the way they do their jobs? What obstacles do they face in carrying out this facet of their work?” (p. 72).

Lovely, S. (2004). *Staffing the principalship: Finding, coaching, and mentoring school leaders*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD In this book, Lovely provided practical, down-to-earth advice for building the capacity of school leaders. She made the point that there is an intricate relationship between performance during a principal’s inaugural year and their long-term effectiveness. It is imperative they “get it right the first time” (p. 13).

Michelson, J. (2019). *Making the case: Transforming teacher professional learning*. University of Washington Center for Educational Leadership, 1-10. Learning challenges that face leaders are: vision, professional learning cultures, and misalignment. Michelson discussed each of these in depth. A vision of “collective efficacy” is described, with a model showing that through collaboration, problem solving, and improvement, student learning will happen.

Peterson, K.D. (2001). The roar of complexity: A principal’s day is built on fragments of tasks and decisions. *Journal of Staff Development*, 22(1), 18-21. Peterson acknowledged the changing role of the school principal, as well as the fact that site leaders are pivotal to a school’s success and student achievement. He detailed the myriad tasks and skills required of principals and provided strategies for ensuring they are prepared and equipped for success.

Peterson, K. (1982). Making sense of a principal’s work. *The Australian Administrator*, 3(3), 1-4.

This work by Peterson is referenced in many subsequent studies, as his practical advice for ‘making sense’ of the site leader’s duties and goals is timeless.

Table 8.1

Variable #2: The Influences of Effective Leadership

Most Significant Sources	Main Points/Summary
<p>Bartoletti, J. & Connelly, G. (2013). <i>Leadership matters: What the research says about the importance of principal leadership</i>. National Association of Secondary School Principals & National Association of Elementary School Principals.</p>	<p>This document, created as a joint program by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), reinforced the importance of the principal's role. It referenced several studies on the most effective use of the principal's time to impact student achievement, including The Wallace Foundation (2013) and Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003). The authors re-emphasized the ever-increasing demands placed on principals' time and the importance of constant prioritization.</p>
<p>Leithwood, K., Louis, K., Anderson, S., Wahlstrom, K. (2004). <i>Executive summary: How leadership influences</i></p>	<p>This study reviewed evidence in five areas in order to build a knowledge base about effective educational leadership. Questions addressed were: to what extent does education leadership matter, how important are the effects of leadership in promoting learning,</p>

<p><i>student learning.</i> University of Minnesota, University of Toronto, The Wallace Foundation: Learning from Leadership Project.</p>	<p>and what are the essential ingredients of successful leadership? Two critical points were presented: leadership is second only to classroom interactions, and the greater the challenge the greater the impact of a school leader.</p>
<p>The Wallace Foundation. January 2013. <i>The school principal as leader: Guiding schools to better teaching and learning.</i></p>	<p>The Wallace Foundation acknowledged the research showing “that most school variables, considered separately, have at most small effects on learning” (p. 4) and set out to describe the actions/priorities of the most effective principals. This study was the first in their series on “school leadership and how it is best developed and supported” (p. 4).</p>

Table 9. 1

Variable #3: Central Office Structures to Create the Conditions for Principals to Serve as Learning Leaders

Most Significant Sources	Main Points/Summary
<p>Bartoletti, J. & Connelly, G. (2013). <i>Leadership matters: What the research says about the importance of principal leadership.</i> National Association of</p>	<p>Authors Bartoletti and Connelly discussed the relationship between principals' skills and teacher retention, as well as ways the district office can support (versus hinder) the progress and efficacy of principals. One interesting section was on the district office, and how, despite our best efforts, we "are failing to create the conditions</p>

-
- Secondary School Principals & National Association of Elementary School Principals. that make it possible for principals to lead school improvement effectively" (p. 6).
- Fink, S. (2017). *School and district leaders as instructional experts: What we are learning*. Seattle, WA: Center for Educational Leadership, University of Washington.
- Fink, S., & Silverman, M. (2014). Principals as instructional leaders. *School Administrator*, 71(4), 23-26.
- Fullan, M. & Quinn, J. (2016). *Coherence: The right drivers in action for schools, districts, and systems*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- This article highlighted three challenges: 1. Districts have not developed a common understanding of the daily work principals should be doing to improve teaching and learning; 2. Principals are not receiving strategic and ongoing professional development to build their skills; 3. Districts are not providing principals with the support they need to focus on teaching and learning.
- Similar to some of Fink (2015) and Silverman's (2016) other works, this article highlighted a familiar story of a principal inheriting a school with dismal academic results. Student achievement after just one year of the district's strategic support of the principal's efforts to impact instruction were some of the highest in the state. The authors then presented the Principal Support Framework (2016).
- Fullan and Quinn recognized the overload, fragmentation, and distractions experienced by principals and provided a framework for all leaders to increase the coherence of the district. They emphasized the importance of a shared purpose and small number of goals tied to student learning, as well as the importance of all stakeholders knowing the strategies for achieving the goals.

Fullan, M. (2002). The change leader. *Educational Leadership*, (59)8, pp. 16-21.

In this article, Fullan argued that schools need more than just instructional leaders. They need “leaders who can create a fundamental transformation in the learning culture” (p. 16) by inspiring and transforming teachers’ working conditions.

Gates, S.M, Baird, M.D., Master, B.K., & Chavez-Herrerias, E.R. *Principal pipelines: A feasible, affordable, and effective way for districts to improve schools*. (2019). The Wallace Foundation.

This study expanded on many previous works by The Wallace Foundation to assess the impact of principal pipeline programs within districts. Three key findings were reported: 1. The principal pipeline work is feasible and affordable; 2. Principal pipelines are effective for principal retention; and 3. Cultivating strong principal pipelines is beneficial for students.

Honig, M., Copland, M., Rainey, L., Lorton, J., Newton, M. (2010). *Central office transformation for district-wide teaching and learning improvement*. Washington: Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy.

In this study, districts were chosen based on gains in student achievement that were credited to radical changes in their central offices. Findings reiterated that central offices are critical in helping districts improve.

Pont, B., Nusche, D., & Hopkins B. (2008). *Improving School Leadership. Volume 2: Case Studies on*

This report highlighted “examples of innovative practices that focus on system-wide school improvement by encouraging and developing school leaders to work beyond the school borders for the benefit of the school system as a whole” (p. 4).

System Leadership. Paris,
France: OECD Publishing.

The Ontario Leadership Framework. (2013).
The Institute for Education
Leadership in Ontario
(Canada).
This framework established core leadership competencies for principals, assistant principals, and those who supervise them. It is divided into two sections: 1. Skills and practices supported by research to increase student learning; and 2. System practices that districts need in place to support school and district leaders.

Matthews, P., Moorman, H., &
Nusche, D. (2007). *Building
Leadership Capacity for
System Improvement in
Victoria, Australia: Improving
School Leadership Case Study
Report*. OECD, Paris.
This report presented an approach to building leadership skills utilized in the State of Victoria in Australia. It detailed the structure, successes, and replicable features for other districts and countries. The overall purpose was to provide policymakers with the tools necessary to establish school leadership policies that would lead to increased student learning.

Silverman, M. (2016, January
28). *3 things all principals
need from their central office
to be successful*.
This document expanded on the CEL's Principal Support Framework (PSF) by emphasizing three new updates to its version two, including clear vision statements, guiding questions, and support in building partnerships.

University of Washington
Center for Educational
Leadership. (2007). *Improving
instruction: Developing the
knowledge and skills of school*
This brief described the work of the Center for Educational Leadership within two urban, public school districts. It included the research design and methodology, as well as findings and recommendations for future studies.

leaders (Research Brief III).

Seattle, WA: Author.

Table 10. 1

Variable #4: Mentoring to Equip and Retain Principals to Serve as Learning Leaders

Most Significant Sources	Main Points/Summary
Brasher, J. (2018). Coaching principals. <i>Vanderbilt University Magazine</i> , 17.	The findings of this three-year study show that school districts have the ability to change the principal supervisor role into a source of support for principals in leading, teaching, and learning.
Brasher, J. (2018, July 9) Report: How six school districts changed the principal supervisor role to better support principals. <i>Vanderbilt News</i> .	In this report, Brasher reiterated that principal supervisors must be both coach and mentor, moving beyond the role of administrator. This requires central office restructuring to enable more time and support to mentor principals as learning leaders.
Fink, S. (2015, January 30). Building a better principalship. Leadership in Action (Blog). Retrieved from http://blog.k-12leadership.org/instructional-leadership-in-action/building-a-better-principalship	The author reported that even though principal leadership is second only to teaching quality in improving student achievement, research shows that only a small portion of a principal's time is devoted to student achievement. The 4 Dimensions of Instructional Leadership™ framework is introduced as a tool to mentor principals with the knowledge and skills of instructional leaders.

- Gray, C., Fry, B., Bottoms, G., and O'Neill, K. (2007). Good principles aren't born – they're mentored: Investing enough to get the school leaders we need. Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) and The Wallace Foundation.
- Often, new principals do not have adequate preparation and must learn “on the job.” Rather, Gray et al. emphasized that new principals must have rigorous training with an “internship” supervised by experts. Also, good mentors provide new principals with coaching that enables school change and improvements in student achievement.
- Johnston, W. R., Kaufman, J.H., & Thompson. (2016). *Support for instructional leadership: Supervision, mentoring, and professional development for U.S. school leaders*. Findings from the American School Leader Panel: RAND Corporation, 1-24.
- Findings from a Wallace Foundation study demonstrate that 1. Principals value support, and districts need to do more to consistently support the principal's role as instructional leaders; 2. In districts of all sizes, innovative ways are needed to provide support that is centered around instruction; and 3. It is necessary to continue the study.
- Malone, R.J. (2001). *Principal mentoring* (Report No. ED457535). Eugene, OR: ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management.
- This digest discussed the utilization of experienced administrators in a mentoring program to train new principals for success. Matching the correct mentor and school are critical to a new principal's success. Several examples of mentoring programs were detailed, and challenges to successful mentoring were identified.
- Mendels, P. & Mitgang, L.D. (2013). *Creating strong*
- The article cited the importance of standards to shape how leaders are selected, hired, trained, and evaluated in order to build a strong

principals. *Educational Leadership*, 70(7), 22-26.

pipeline of school leaders. In addition, the authors believe that principals need support throughout their careers.

Moyle, K. (2016). *A guide to support: Coaching and mentoring for school improvement*. Melbourne, Australia: Northern Territory Principals Association, Australian Council for Educational Research, (1-20).

This guide contains information learned and shared by six principals over a period of three years. It explored conversations and observations as coaching/mentoring approaches for school improvement.

Parylo, O., Zepeda, S.J., & Bengston, E. (2012). The different faces of principal mentorship. *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, 1(2), 120-135.

Interview data from 16 principals was analyzed to determine themes about principal mentoring. This study resulted in five themes based upon the experiences and perceptions of these principals: mentoring as recruitment; mentoring as socialization; mentoring as support; mentoring as professional development; and mentoring as reciprocal learning.

Rainey, L.R. & Honig, M.I. (2015). *From procedures to partnership: Redesigning principal supervision to help principals lead for high-quality teaching and learning*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington

Educational researchers Rainey and Honig emphasized nine specific strategies that central office administrators can utilize to best support site principals in their quest to be instructional leaders.

Center for Educational
Leadership.

*Recruiting, preparing and
building the capacity of
effective principals: What the
research tells us.* (2014).

Alexandria, VA: National
Association of Elementary
School Principals, 1-12.

This NAESP research detailed areas that underscore competent instructional leadership. Two foci included: Invest in identifying and retaining effective principals and dedicate ongoing professional development that strengthens core competencies.

Saltzman, A. (2016). *The power
of principal supervisors: How
two districts are remaking an
old role.* The Wallace
Foundation.

This article highlighted the differences between the traditional role and revised role of principal supervisor.

NAESP and The Education
Alliance at Brown University.
(2003). *Making the case for
principal mentoring.*

The information in this guide is designed to help new mentoring programs or “fine-tune” existing programs.

Table 11. 1

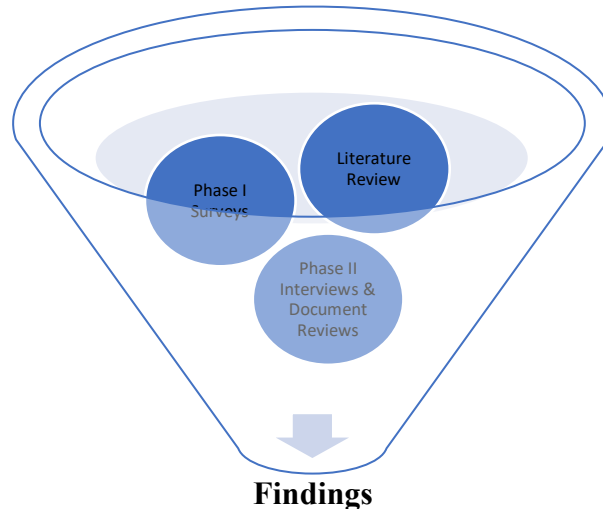
Variable #5: The Relationship Between Trust and Successful Mentoring that Promotes Principals as Learning Leaders

Most Significant Sources	Main Points/Summary
<p>Berg, J. H., Connolly, C., Lee, A., & Fairley, E. (2018). A matter of trust. <i>Education Leadership, (75)6</i>, pp. 56-61.</p>	<p>These authors documented and outlined efforts to turnaround a low-performing school in Boston. Shared decision making, common planning, peer observation cycles, teacher-led professional development, and shared values all played a role, with developing and maintaining trust serving as a key component.</p>
<p>Browne-Ferrigno, T. (2007). Developing school leaders: Practitioner growth during an advanced leadership development program for principals and administrator-trained teachers. <i>Journal of Research on Leadership Education 2(3)</i>, 1-30.</p>	<p>This article detailed a school leadership development program for practicing principals and teachers trained as administrators. A goal of this program was to transform the role of principal from school manager to that of learner-centered leader. Developing cohorts of veteran, novice, and prospective principals helped develop the trust needed to reach this goal.</p>
<p>Gray, C., Fry, B., Bottoms, G., and O’Neill, K. (2007). <i>Good principals aren’t born – they’re</i></p>	<p>This article utilized survey data from experienced principal mentors of participants in a university-based principal preparation programs. Establishing trust was noted as an essential competency for a</p>

mentored: Are we investing enough to get the school leaders we need? Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) and The Wallace Foundation. mentor. Furthermore, mentors asked for training in ways to develop rapport and trust.

Saltzman, A. (2016). *The power of principal supervisors: How two districts are remaking an old role.* The Wallace Foundation. This report from the Wallace Foundation described the initiatives of two districts, Tulsa and Washington, D.C., to change the roles of their principal supervisors. Supervisors were given fewer schools to oversee and provided with professional development. Barriers to overcome included funding, buy-in from principals and central office staff, and the trust factor (as the supervisors were also the evaluators of the principals).

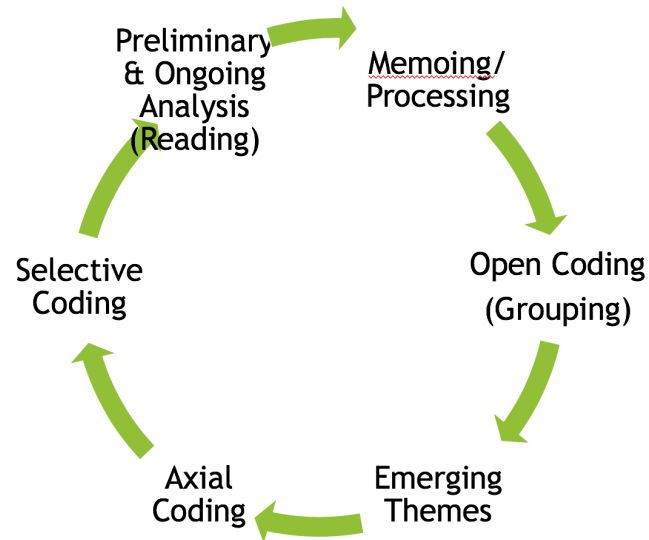
West, C.E. & Derrington, M.L. (2009). *Leadership teaming: The superintendent-principal relationship.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. This book provided suggestions and comments about what the authors feel is the most important team in a district (i.e., the team responsible for student outcomes) – that of a cohesive superintendent-principal team. The complex role of trust and direct communication were emphasized; “whether or not there is trust between the superintendent and principal distinguishes strong and weak teams” (p. 52).

Figure 4*Visual Representing Methodology*

(McClay, 2020)

Data Analysis

This researcher chose the Case Study approach to data analysis. To manage and organize both the interview and survey data, she created and organized data files (Creswell & Poth, 2018). She read and annotated the text, forming initial codes from patterns and themes. As suggested by Creswell and Poth (2018), she reviewed two open coding strategies and selected one to expand upon. Next, the “casual conditions, context, intervening conditions, strategies, and consequences” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 199), also known as axial coding, were identified to develop and assess the interpretations. Finally, in an effort to represent and visualize the data, she utilized selective coding and interrelated the categories for a ‘story’ and conclusions. More common with the Grounded Theory approach, but helpful in this study, nonetheless, she created a visual representation for the findings. Figure 5 provides a visual to depict the process utilized to arrive at the findings.

Figure 5*Visual Representing Data Analysis*

(McClay, 2020).

Ethical Issues

One of the key goals of a strong qualitative study is to ensure that the work is conducted in an ethical manner (Creswell & Poth, 2018). “This involves more than simply the researcher seeking and obtaining the permission of institutional review committees or boards. It means that the researcher considers and addresses all anticipated and emergent ethical issues in the study.” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 48)

Creswell and Poth (2018) detailed ethical issues to be aware of during each phase of a study – from before conducting any research to analyzing, reporting, and publishing the results. In an effort to address potential ethical issues, this researcher reviewed many examples and acknowledged several as potential pitfalls worthy of close attention. First, she needed to determine whether or not to request permission from the University of Washington’s Center for Educational Leadership to modify some of their questions for use in her survey. After

determining that it was not necessary, as she opted not to use their questions, she set out to select her Phase II districts. She needed to be cautious and methodical, as she desired some similar characteristics (i.e., district size and geographical location) and some variant (i.e., the types and quantity of supports provided to principals). Next, as the interview facilitator, she needed to be certain there was no bias in her questions or responses and that she did not ‘lead’ any interviewees, either intentionally or unintentionally. Finally, it was important to include multiple perspectives and ideas that did not support her beliefs. Table 12.1 represents some of the ethical issues and the researcher’s plan to address them.

Table 12. 1

Ethical Issues and the Plan to Address

Timing	Type of Ethical Issue	Plan to Address
Prior to Conducting	Reviewing the need for University/Foundation approvals; Selection of district participants	Research the guidelines and submit requests early, if needed Establish and communicate criteria for district and participant selection
Data Collection	Respecting participants and roles/exploitation	Craft non-leading questions and withhold sharing personal opinions
Data Analysis	Avoidance of agreeing	Include multiple perspectives,

	with participants and sharing only positive conclusions	including contrary beliefs
Publication	Sharing reports	Ensure all participants receive reports and findings

(Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The researcher made the decision to conduct the interviews herself for several reasons. First, she believed she could remain objective and exercise an intense focus on receiving the necessary data in a neutral fashion; second, she believed that due to her relationships and experiences in the fields, she would have more access to authentic information and an increased number of participants willing to spend time with her. Finally, she believed she would be able to get more information out of each participant and make adjustments spontaneously based upon their responses.

Summary

Previous research in the area of central office supports for principals has been minimal, primarily focused on identifying the need. Previous research in the area of mentoring focused mostly on mentoring for teachers, not principals. In contrast, the present study provides a broader understanding of the concept through a mixed-method approach. As presented in Chapter 4, the findings come from the results of surveys completed by 186 superintendents and assistant superintendents and interview responses with ten superintendents, directors, and principals from three exemplar districts. The survey was designed to measure the beliefs and

behaviors of districts, superintendents, and governing boards related to supporting the professional development of principals. One-on-one interviews with superintendents, district administrators responsible for supporting principals, and principals then provided deeper insights into the variety of factors involved in central office supports for principals. Through both quantitative and qualitative analyses, several themes and best practices were revealed. These findings will be presented and reviewed at-length in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Introduction

The intent of this study was to analyze supports from the central office for principals as learning leaders and the subsequent impact on student achievement. As discussed in Chapter 2, previous research has focused primarily on support for teachers, not principals. As presented in Chapter 3, this researcher utilized a mixed-methods approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018) by comparing superintendent and assistant superintendent survey responses about support for principals ($N = 181$) and English Language Arts and Math student achievement data from their districts. Data resulting from quantitative analysis were compared alongside qualitative data obtained from open-ended responses in the Phase I survey and subsequent interviews with superintendents, directors responsible for supporting principals, and principals. This mixed-methods approach was used to explore the following research questions:

Primary Research Question

1. How does central office leadership impact principals as learning leaders?

Sub-Questions

2. How does central office leadership design systems of support to ensure principals are equipped to serve as learning leaders?
3. What models are high-achieving districts using to support the development and ability of principals to serve as learning leaders?
4. To what degree does trust between and among principals, mentors, and departments play a role in supporting the development, ability, and retention of principals to serve as learning leaders?

5. What is the unique impact of each department within a central office on principals as learning leaders?

Combining results from both quantitative and qualitative findings provided the researcher with insights into: the priorities of district superintendents and their respective governing boards; the types of support offered from the central office for principals as learning leaders; the successes and obstacles of the efforts; administrator's perceptions on the quality of teaching and learning within classrooms; efforts to build and maintain trust with principals; and efforts to support the mental health of principals. Following a brief overview, this chapter will present the findings from the study.

Overview

As described in Chapter 3, this study was approached in two phases. In the first phase, a survey was sent to public school superintendents and assistant superintendents throughout Southern California. The survey included demographic information, Likert statements regarding the district's beliefs and behaviors, and open-ended questions about the supports provided to principals within the districts. One hundred eighty-one current superintendents and assistant superintendents, representing 118 school districts, responded to the Phase I survey. Student achievement data was then collected from the California Department of Education website and analyzed in relation to the survey responses. For Phase II, three districts were selected to participate in one-on-one interviews with the researcher in order to further examine underlying beliefs as well as behaviors utilized by the districts to support their principals. This phase also added principals and directors who oversee principals to gain their perspectives.

Descriptive Statistics

The demographic information of the participants in the sample is highlighted below. One hundred eighty-seven participants consented to participate in the study, 181 in Phase I and six additional participants in Phase II. Table 13.1 displays the breakdown of gender, ethnicity, highest degree earned, and household income of Phase 1 participants. As depicted, gender division between males and females was nearly equal, the majority of respondents (75%) reported White as their ethnicity, the majority (59%) hold doctorate degrees, and a near majority (49%) report a household income between \$200,000 and \$299,000.

Table 13. 1

Demographics of Phase I Survey Respondents

Respondent Demographic	Percent of Total ($N = 181$)
Gender	
Male	47
Female	53
Ethnicity	
White	75
Black	3
Latino	15
Asian	3
Other	4

Highest Degree Earned

Bachelors	2
Masters	39
Doctorate	59

Household Income

100-199K	20
200-299K	49
300-399K	26
400-499K	5

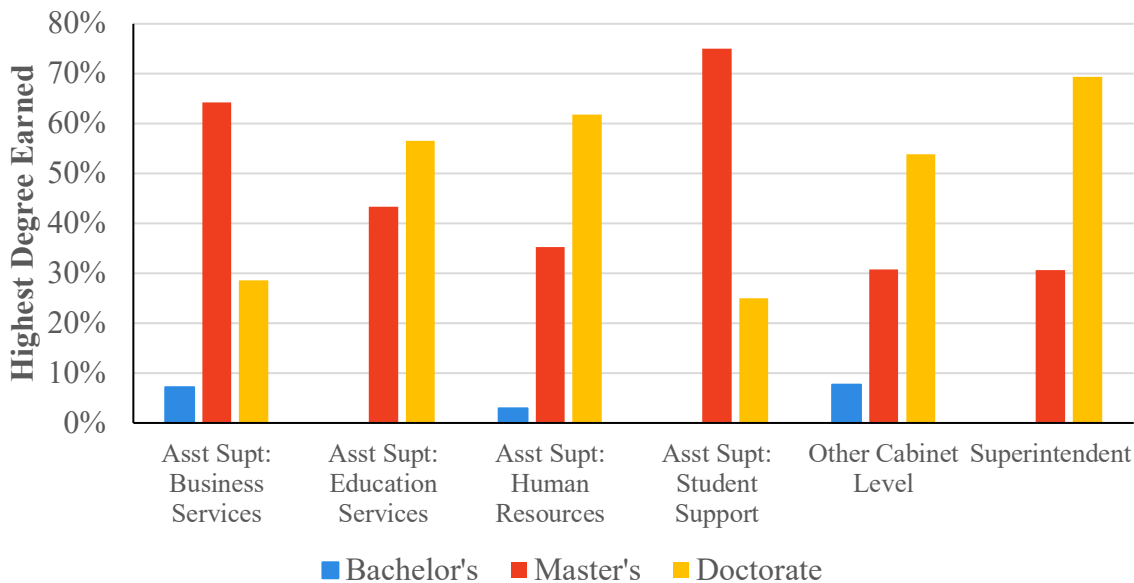
Correlations were run to see the relationships between respondents' highest degrees earned and job titles, household income, and ethnicity, respectively. Figures 1-3 depict the results.

Of the participants ($N = 186$), 41 have doctorate degrees. As Figure 6 indicates, those with doctorate degrees are typically superintendents; in fact, 40% of those with doctorate degrees are serving as superintendents. Interesting to note, the number of superintendents with doctorate degrees is twice that of those with master's degrees. In addition, there are no superintendents with just a bachelor's degree. In the Assistant Superintendent of Business Support Services positions, the number with master's degrees is vastly larger than that of doctorates, almost the reverse of what the data presents for superintendents. The Educational Support Services and Human Resources and Development results are closer to superintendents, with more in these

positions holding a doctorate degree; however, participants in Student Support Services positions present a stark contrast, with only 25% holding doctorate degrees.

Figure 6

Highest Degree Earned and Job Title of Phase I Survey Respondents



Further exploration was also done with regard to the highest degrees earned by respondents, their average household incomes, and ethnicities. Those with bachelor's degrees report earning less in household income than those with graduate level degrees. It is important to note, however, that the survey question asked respondents to report 'household' income, not individual income. Consequently, interpretation of this data is subjective. In addition, the majority of respondents were White (75%), and the majority of those with doctorate degrees were also White (78%). Of the respondents who selected Asian as their ethnicity (4%), all had doctorate degrees.

The researcher also ran Chi Square analyses to assess the relationships between the demographic categorical factors of ethnicity, grade levels served, highest degree earned, and job title. Interesting to note, four significant relationships emerged and are depicted in Table 14.1.

Table 14. 1

Chi Square Correlations of Phase I Survey Respondents' Demographics

Demographics	χ^2
	($N = 186$)
Ethnicity & Grade Levels	***
Ethnicity & Highest Degree	***
Income & Highest Degree	*
Title & Degree	*

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Table 15.1 displays the characteristics of the districts represented by Phase I respondents. The grade levels served by the district, number of schools within the district, and the number of principals in the district are included. As depicted in the table, the majority of responses came from districts serving grade levels of Transitional Kindergarten (TK) through Grade 12 and smaller in size, with under 10 schools and principals.

Table 15. 1*District Characteristics of Phase I Survey Respondents*

District Characteristics	Percent of Total
	(N = 181)
Grade Levels Served	
TK-5	11
TK-8	27
9-12	7
TK-12	55
Number of Schools	
1-9	37
10-19	25
20-29	26
30-39	3
40+	9
Number of Principals	
1-9	42
10-19	25
20-29	22
30-39	2
40-49	9

A large portion of the Phase I survey asked respondents to provide a score for 12 Likert statements, on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 5 being “Strongly Agree.” For the purposes of data analysis, these 12 statements were further divided into two categories, beliefs and behaviors. These beliefs and behaviors became critically important to the study, as

they provided a glimpse into both the personal and organizational beliefs of the districts as well as the district's behaviors. In many instances, it allowed the researcher to assess whether or not and to what degree beliefs aligned with actions and vice versa. Figure 7 depicts the statements and how they were categorized.

Figure 7

Phase I Likert Statements Represented as District Beliefs or Behaviors

Beliefs	Behaviors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Based on what I observe in classrooms, I believe the quality of teaching and learning in my district is outstanding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Our district has an ongoing, formal program to train and support principals in each role (learning leader, instructional leader, and plant manager).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● One of MY highest priorities within our district is to provide ongoing professional development to our principals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Our district has an effective formal mentoring program designed specifically for NEW principals.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● One of our district's top GOVERNING BOARD priorities is to provide staff development to principals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Our district has an effective formal mentoring program for ALL principals, regardless of the number of years served.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Our district strongly or firmly believes that site principals play a significant role in impacting student achievement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The mentors who coach principals in our district are highly trained in effective coaching techniques.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The role of principals as learning leaders, instructional leaders, and plant managers is clearly understood throughout our organization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Our district administrators are highly trained in how to build and maintain trust with principals.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Principal mentoring practices in our district have made a strong, positive impact on student achievement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Our district has specific programs and efforts to support the mental health of principals.

Each respondent ($N = 181$) rated each of the statements. As evident in Table 16.1, the belief that site principals play a significant role in impacting student achievement (*Principal* =

Student Achievement) yielded the highest mean, followed closely by the superintendent rating for the statement “One of my highest priorities within our district is to provide ongoing professional development to our principals” (*Training Principals is Highest Priority*). Interesting to note, while three of the ‘belief’ statements averaged 4 or above, none of the ‘behavior’ statements yielded a mean higher than 3.6. The statement with the lowest mean score was “Our district has specific programs and efforts to support the mental health of principals,” yielding a 2.8 mean.

Table 16. 1*Univariate Descriptives of District Beliefs and Behaviors from Phase I Respondents*

District Beliefs and Behaviors	Mean	Standard Deviation
Beliefs		
Quality of Teaching & Learning	3.7	0.79
Training Principals is Highest Priority	4.5	0.68
Training Principals is a Board Priority	3.6	1.1
Principal = Student Achievement	4.8	0.57
Principal Roles Understood by All	4.2	0.79
Mentoring = Increased Achievement	3.5	1.1
Behaviors		
Programs to Train Principals	3.6	1.1
Program to Mentor New Principals	3.4	1.3
Program to Mentor All Principals	3.2	1.2
Mentors Are Trained	3.5	1.1
Efforts to Build Trust with Principals	3.5	1.1
Efforts for Principal Mental Health	2.8	1.2

One-Way Analysis of Variance

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to compare each of the categorical factors (ethnicity, grade levels served, and the district) with the interval variables of each of the Likert Statements. As seen in Table 17.1, one of the variables (*Principal = Student Achievement*, the belief that principals play a significant role in student achievement) had a

statistically significant relationship with ethnicity; one variable (the *Quality of Teaching and Learning* within the district) had a statistically significant relationship with the grade levels served by the district; and eight variables (*Quality of Teaching and Learning, Training Principals is a Board Priority, Program to Mentor New Principals, Program to Mentor All Principals, Mentoring = Increased Achievement, Mentors Are Trained, Efforts to Build Trust with Principals, and Efforts for Principal Mental Health*) had statistically significant relationships with the district ($N = 181$).

Table 17. 1

Statistically Significant Results from ANOVAs on District Beliefs and Behaviors

District Beliefs and Behaviors	Ethnicity ($N = 181$)	Grade Levels ($N = 181$)	District ($N = 181$)
Quality of Teaching & Learning		$F=6.3^*$	$F=2.2^*$
Training Principals is Highest Priority			
Training Principals is a Board Priority			$F=1.5^{***}$
Principal = Student Achievement	$F=8.2^*$		
Principal Roles Understood by All			
Mentoring = Increased Achievement			$F=2.2^{***}$
Behaviors			
Programs to Train Principals			
Program to Mentor New Principals			$F=2.2^{***}$

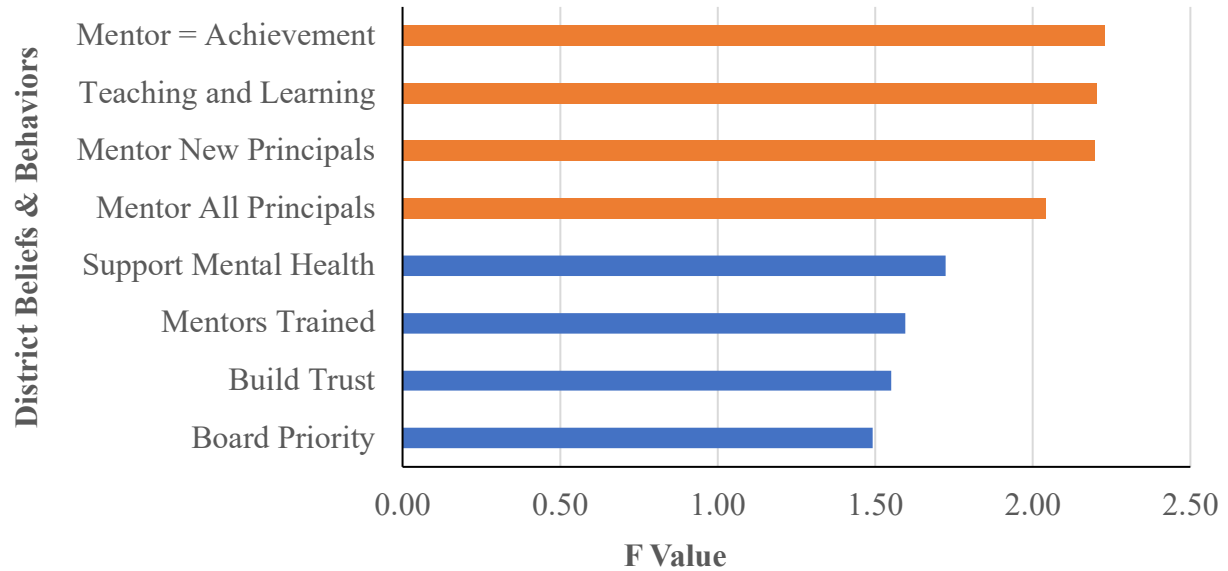
Program to Mentor All Principals	$F=2.0^{**}$
Mentors Are Trained	$F=1.6^*$
Efforts to Build Trust with Principals	$F=1.6^{***}$
Efforts for Principal Mental Health	$F=1.7^{**}$

Note: $*p < .05$. $**p < .01$. $***p < .001$

Figures 7 and 8 depict some of the most statistically significant relationships. Figure 8 displays the relationship between districts and the eight variables with moderate or strong relationships ($N = 181$). It is organized by the strength of the relationship, with orange indicating strengths greater than 2.0 and blue indicating strengths less than 2.0.

Figure 8

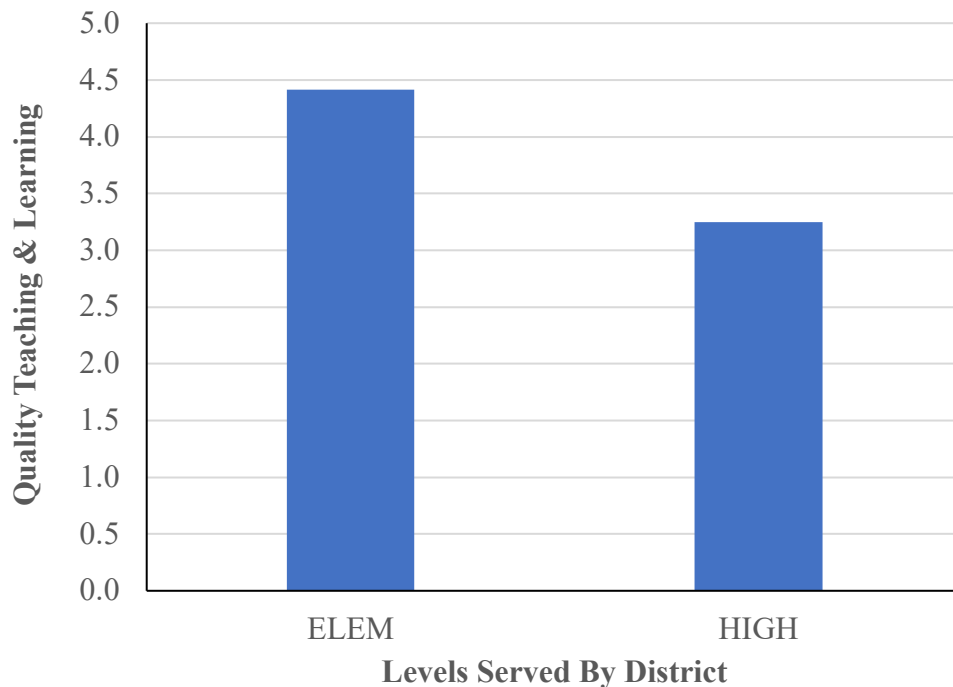
Relationships Between Districts and Beliefs and Behaviors



There is a relationship between the levels served by the district (e.g., TK-5, TK-8, 6-12, 9-12) and the perceptions related to the *Quality of Teaching and Learning* within classrooms. As highlighted in Figure 9 ($N = 181$), elementary districts report the highest ratings on *Quality of Teaching and Learning*, far higher than high school districts. Information on other levels, such as TK-8 and 6-12 can be found in Appendix D.

Figure 9

Relationship Between Grade Levels Served and Perceptions of the Quality of Teaching and Learning



Correlations

Correlations were performed to compare each of the demographic interval factors (number of students, number of schools, number of principals, and number of principals within their first two years) with the interval variables of each of the Likert Statements.

As seen in Table 18.1, seven of the variables (*Training Principals is a Board Priority*, *Principal Roles Understood by All*, *Program to Train Principals*, *Program to Mentor New Principals*, *Mentoring = Increased Achievement*, *Efforts to Build Trust with Principals*, and *Efforts for Principal Mental Health*) had a statistically significant relationship with the number of students in the district; four variables (*Training Principals is a Board Priority*, *Principal Roles Understood by All*, *Efforts to Build Trust with Principals*, and *Efforts for Principal Mental*

Health) had a statistically significant relationship with the number of schools in the district; two variables (*Training Principals is a Board Priority* and *Efforts for Principal Mental Health*) had a statistically significant relationship with the number of principals in the district, and six variables (*Training Principals is a Board Priority*, *Program to Train Principals*, *Program to Mentor New Principals*, *Program to Mentor All Principals*, *Mentoring = Increased Achievement*, and *Efforts to Build Trust with Principals*) had a statistically significant relationship with the number of principals in their first two years in the district ($N = 181$).

It is important to note that *Training Principals is a Board Priority* was correlated with each of the demographic interval factors. Both *Efforts to Build Trust with Principals* and *Efforts for Principal Mental Health* were correlated with three out of four of the demographic interval factors.

Table 18. 1

Significant Results from Correlations of District Beliefs and Behaviors and District Demographics from Phase I Respondents

District Beliefs and Behaviors	Number Students ($N = 181$)	Number Schools ($N = 181$)	Number Principals ($N = 181$)	Year 2 Principals ($N = 181$)
Beliefs				
Quality of Teaching & Learning				
Training Principals is Highest Priority				
Training Principals is a Board Priority	$R=0.17^*$	$R=0.19^*$	$R=0.18^*$	$R=0.18^*$

Principal = Student Achievement			
Principal Roles Understood by All	$R=0.16^*$	$R=0.16^*$	
Mentoring = Increased Achievement	$R=0.30^*$		$R=0.04^{***}$
Behaviors			
Programs to Train Principals	$R=0.34^{***}$		$R=0.18^*$
Program to Mentor New Principals	$R=0.40^{***}$		$R=0.25^{**}$
Program to Mentor All Principals			$R=0.15^*$
Mentors Are Trained			
Efforts to Build Trust with Principals	$R=0.17^*$	$R=0.14^*$	$R=0.07^{***}$
Efforts for Principal Mental Health	$R=0.17^*$	$R=0.19^*$	$R=0.19^*$

Note: $*p < .05$. $**p < .01$. $***p < .001$

Student Achievement

“California’s accountability system is based on multiple measures that assess how local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools are meeting the needs of their students. Performance on these measures is reported on the California School Dashboard” (California Department of Education, 2020). In an effort to assess the relationships between student achievement and the beliefs and behaviors of each district, the researcher accessed and coded student achievement data in English Language Arts (ELA) and Math for each of the districts ($N = 118$) represented by Phase I survey participants ($N = 181$). Information gathered included the 2019 status and growth from 2018 for both content areas.

Student achievement in California is compiled by looking at chronic absenteeism, graduation rates, suspension rates, college and career readiness, and academic performance on

the State’s standardized test for students in grades 3, 8, and 11, the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CASPP). For the purposes of this study, only academic performance (which includes English Language Arts and Math) was included. The same color system used by the State, as depicted in Figure 9, was utilized in this study.

Figure 10

California Department of Education (CDE) Student Achievement Reporting System



(California Department of Education, 2020)

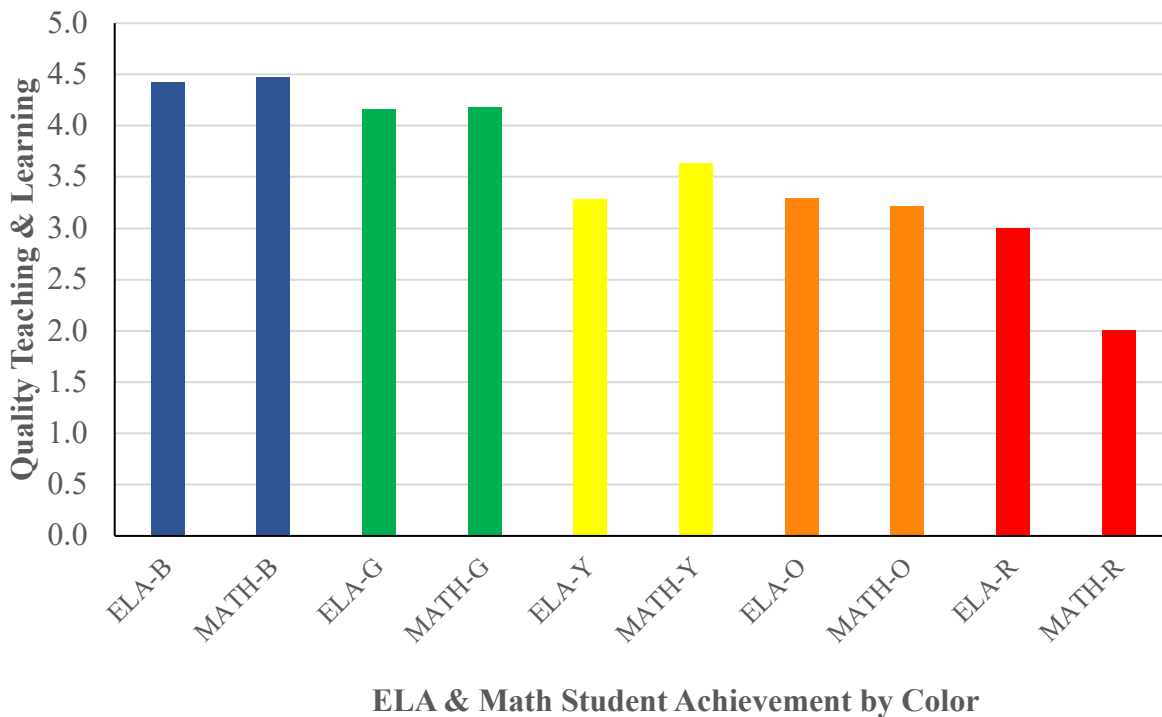
Overall, there were many relationships between student achievement and the beliefs and behaviors reported by districts. *The Quality of Teaching and Learning, Efforts to Build Trust with Principals*, and *Efforts for Principal Mental Health* all showed positive relationships to how students in the district were achieving academically in 2019 or how student performance had improved from 2018 to 2019. During the Phase II interviews, one Superintendent stated,

After assigning coaches to our new principals, we saw a fast increase in student achievement, as well as an increase in College and Career Readiness (CCR) indicators. We also experienced increased levels of trust, likely as a result of showing our vulnerabilities, and developed a ‘heart’ for one another. In essence, we built a family by focusing on the development of principals. (Superintendent C, personal communication, July 16, 2020)

The first evident relationship regarding student achievement (ELA Color and Math Color, to be specific) had to do with the perception of the *Quality of Teaching and Learning* within classrooms. It can be stated that districts who report higher levels of *Quality of Teaching and Learning* within their classrooms have higher student achievement scores; likewise, districts who report lower levels of *Quality of Teaching and Learning* within their classrooms have lower student achievement scores. As seen on Figure 11, student achievement (as indicated by ELA Color) and *Quality of Teaching and Learning* were two variables with a statistically significant relationship within the sample ($N = 177$), $F(5, 172) = 19.53, p < 0.05$. Likewise, student achievement (as indicated by Math Color) and *Quality of Teaching and Learning* were also variables with a statistically significant relationship within the sample ($N = 178$), $F(5, 172) = 17.66, p < 0.05$. The mean scores are provided in Appendix E. To view additional figures related to the relationship between English Language Arts and Math and the *Quality of Teaching and Learning*, see Appendixes F - H.

Figure 11

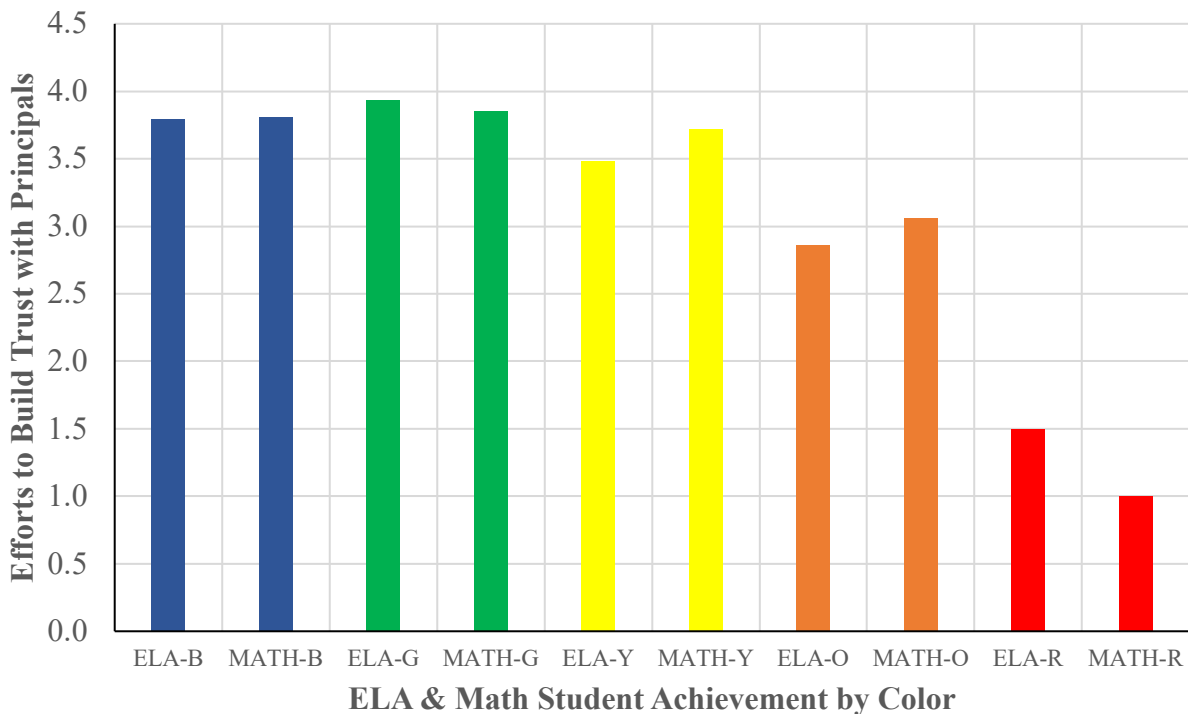
Relationship Between Student Achievement in English Language Arts and Math and Perceptions of the Quality of Teaching and Learning



There is also a relationship between student achievement (ELA Color and Math Color) and the perceptions related to the district’s *Efforts to Build Trust with Principals*. Districts who do more to establish high levels of trust have higher student achievement scores; likewise, districts who do less to build and maintain trust with principals have lower student achievement scores. As seen on Figure 12 student achievement (as indicated by ELA Color) and *Efforts to Build Trust with Principals* had a statistically significant relationship within the sample ($N = 178$), $F(5, 172) = 7.05, p < 0.05$. Similarly, student achievement (as indicated by Math Color) and *Efforts to Build Trust with Principals* had a statistically significant relationship within the sample ($N = 178$), $F(5, 172) = 6.19, p < 0.05$. The mean scores are provided in Appendix I.

Figure 12

Relationship Between Student Achievement in English Language Arts and Math and Perceptions of Trust



In addition, there is a relationship between the student achievement (ELA Color and Math Color, to be specific) and the district's *Support for Principal Mental Health*. It can be stated that districts who report doing more to support the mental health of their principals have higher student achievement scores; likewise, districts who report doing less to support the mental health of their principals have lower student achievement scores. As stated by a Superintendent during the Phase II interviews,

I begin every school visit and conversation with principals by chatting about their families. Some people like a candy bar (that's their love language), but that's not me. I

say I'm more interested in you as a mother, father, husband, or wife than principal...it's more important to be better there than in their role as a principal, because what we typically see is that when they excel in their familial roles they also excel as principals. (Superintendent B, personal communication, July 8, 2020)

A director in a different Phase II district stated,

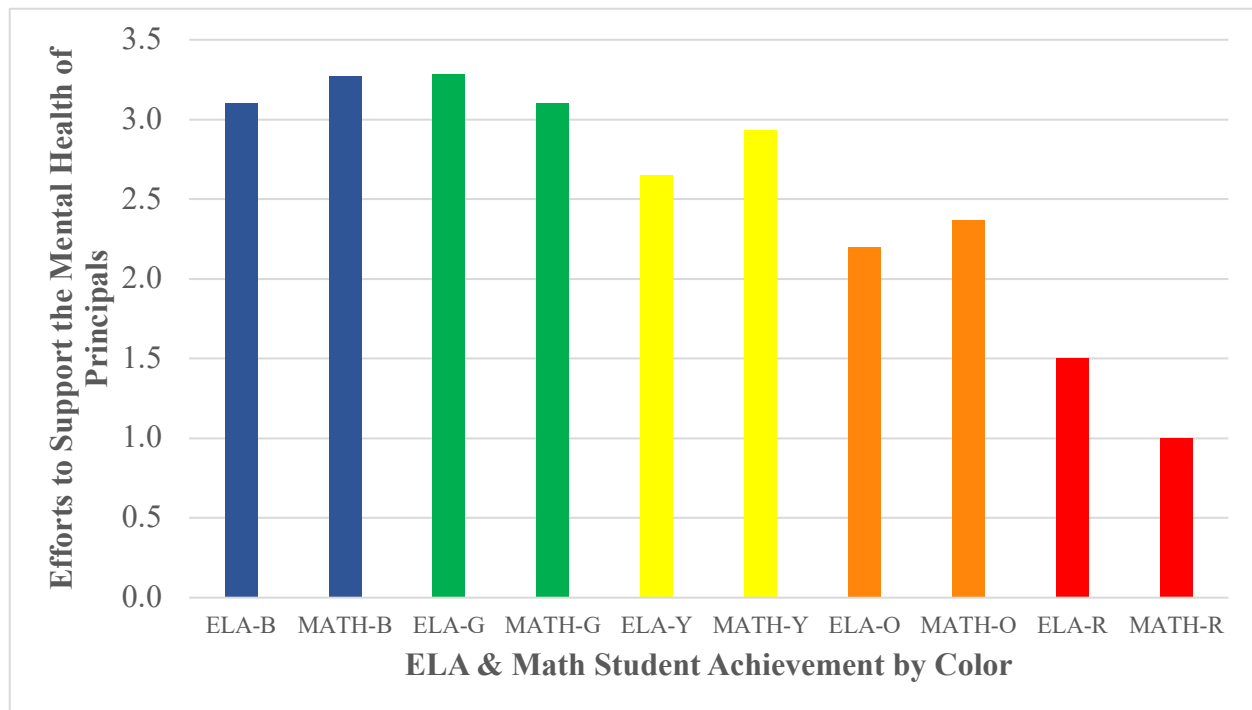
Having somebody to talk to and reach out to is critical. Being able to share the daily stressors of our jobs is helpful to our mental health. Unfortunately, I think that we forget that the principals are human and they they're going to take all of that home with them. (Director C, personal communication, July 22, 2020)

Also, a principal from an additional district in Phase II shared, "I benefit tremendously from having conversations and really being able to talk things through" (Principal D, personal communication, July 28, 2020).

Figure 13 shows that student achievement (as indicated by ELA Color) and *Support for Principal Mental Health* were two variables with a statistically significant relationship within the sample ($N = 179$), $F(5, 174) = 5.83, p < 0.05$. It also shows that student achievement (as indicated by Math Color) and *Support for Principal Mental Health* were also two variables with a statistically significant relationship within the sample ($N = 180$), $F(5, 174) = 4.43, p < 0.05$. The mean scores are provided in Appendix J. To view additional figures related to the relationship between English Language Arts and Math and *Support for Principal Mental Health*, see Appendixes K - M.

Figure 13

Relationship Between Student Achievement in English Language Arts and Math and Perceptions of Support for Principal Mental Health

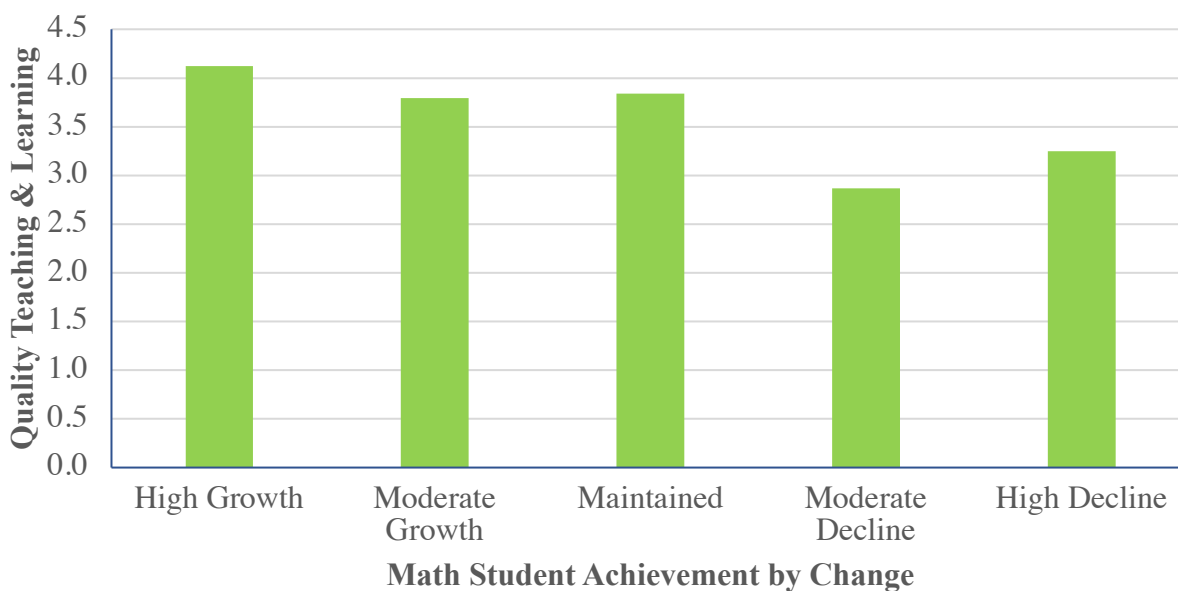


Similar to the relationship between the student achievement indicators of both ELA and Math Color with the *Quality of Teaching and Learning*, a relationship also exists between the student achievement indicator of Math Change and the *Quality of Teaching and Learning* within classrooms. It can be stated that districts who report higher levels of *Quality of Teaching and Learning* within their classrooms have experienced greater positive change/growth in student achievement scores within Mathematics; likewise, districts who report lower levels of *Quality of Teaching and Learning* within their classrooms have experienced less change/growth in student achievement scores within Mathematics. As seen on Figure 14 student achievement (as indicated by Math Change) and *Quality of Teaching and Learning* were two variables with a

statistically significant relationship within the sample ($N = 177$), $F(5, 172) = 6.13, p < 0.05$. The mean scores are provided in Appendix N.

Figure 14

Relationship Between Growth in Math Student Achievement and Perceptions of Quality of Teaching and Learning



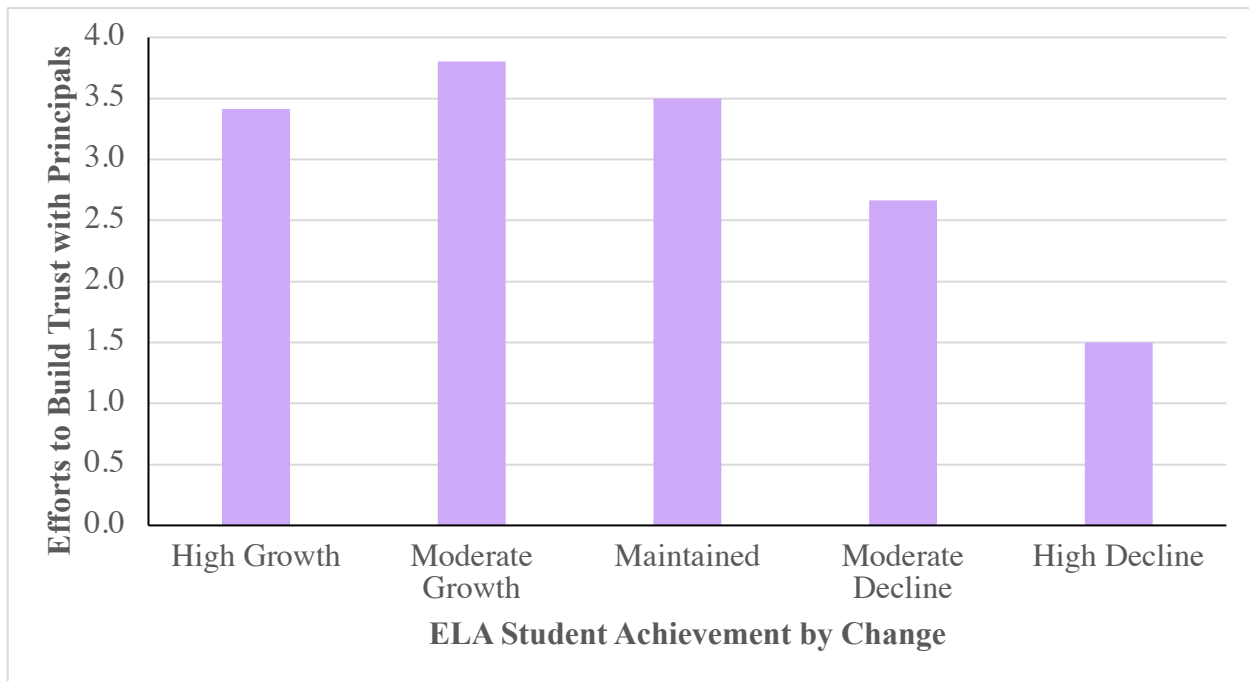
It can also be stated from the data that districts who make *Efforts to Build Trust with Principals* and have high levels of trust experienced greater positive change/growth in student achievement scores within English Language Arts; likewise, districts who make less *Efforts to Build Trust with Principals* and have low levels of trust experienced less change/growth in student achievement scores within English Language Arts. Each person interviewed during Phase II spoke to the importance of trust in mentoring principals. A superintendent shared, “Trust is built when you’re authentic about needs and keep things simple” (Superintendent B, personal communication, July 8, 2020). A principal stated, “Without trust, I firmly believe the

mentoring system would not benefit me. I can see how hard my coach works to ensure we have it. She is responsive, confidential, and has my back” (Principal C, personal communication, July 17, 2020).

As seen on Figure 15, student achievement (as indicated by ELA Change) and *Efforts to Build Trust with Principals* were two variables with a statistically significant relationship within the sample ($N = 178$), $F(5, 172) = 5.78, p < 0.05$. The mean scores are provided in Appendix O. Figure 15 also shows compelling data regarding schools with high growth in student achievement and levels of trust. It is possible that too much emphasis on student achievement can result in decreased levels of trust.

Figure 15

Relationship Between Growth in English Language Arts Student Achievement and Perceptions of Trust

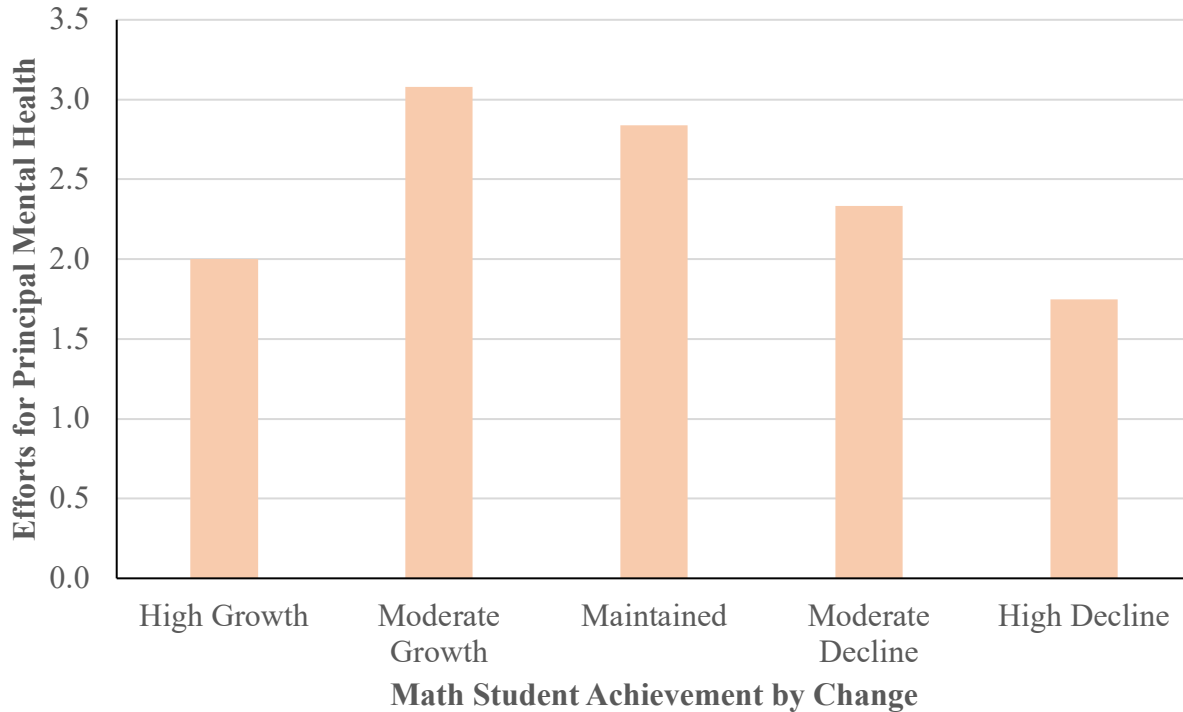


There is also a relationship between the student achievement (Math Change, to be specific) and support provided by the district for principals' mental health. Districts who perceived they have more programs and strategies to support the mental health of principals experienced greater positive change/growth in student achievement scores within Mathematics; likewise, districts who perceived they have less programs and strategies to support the mental health of principals experienced less change/growth in student achievement scores within Mathematics. As seen on Figure 16 student achievement (as indicated by Math Change) and mental health were two variables with a statistically significant relationship within the sample ($N = 180$), $F(5, 174) = 3.41, p < 0.05$. The mean scores are provided in Appendix P.

Similar to what was displayed in Figure 15 regarding student achievement (specifically growth in English Language Arts) and *Efforts to Build Trust with Principals*, Figure 16 shows similar results with student achievement (specifically growth in Math) and *Efforts for Principal Mental Health*.

Figure 16

Relationship Between Growth in Math Student Achievement and Perceptions of Support for Principal Mental Health



Chi-Squares

To further analyze the relationships between district beliefs and behaviors and student achievement, Chi-squares were utilized because the independent variable was interval and the dependent variable was categorical. Table 19.1 depicts the significant relationships between student achievement in both English Language Arts and Math (for status and change) and the district's beliefs and behaviors. As evident, there were many significant correlations. Three of the four student achievement indicators (ELA Color, Math Color, and Math Change) showed

significant correlations to *Quality of Teaching and Learning*. Likewise, *Efforts to Build Trust with Principals* also correlated with three indicators: ELA Color, ELA Change, and Math Color.

Table 19. 1

Significant Results Utilizing Chi Squares of District Beliefs and Behaviors and Student Achievement

Student Achievement Correlations	χ^2 ($N = 181$)
ELA Color	
Quality of Teaching & Learning	***
Principal Roles Understood by All	**
Efforts to Build Trust with Principals	**
Efforts for Principal Mental Health	*
ELA Change	
Training Principals is Highest Priority	*
Efforts to Build Trust with Principals	**
Math Color	
Quality of Teaching & Learning	***
Training Principals is Highest Priority	***
Principal = Student Achievement	**
Mentoring = Increased Achievement	*
Efforts to Build Trust with Principals	***
Efforts for Principal Mental Health	*
Math Change	
Quality of Teaching & Learning	***
Program to Mentor All Principals	**
Efforts for Principal Mental Health	*

Note: * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Selecting Districts for Phase II

After analyzing the data from the Phase I survey responses, and in conjunction with student achievement as indicated on the California Department of Education website from each of the responding districts, the researcher began narrowing the focus to just three districts to interview staff more thoroughly about the beliefs and behaviors surrounding support for principals. Criteria to select the Phase II districts included a review of responses to the Phase I survey (see Appendix Q). It also included grade levels served, number of students enrolled in the district, number of schools in the district, number of principals serving in their first or second year of the principalship. This information is depicted in Table 20.1. The researcher also ensured that multiple executive cabinet members from each of the Phase II districts had responded to the Phase I survey.

Table 20.1

Demographics of Districts in Phase II

Phase II District Demographics						
	Levels Served	Number of Students	Number of Schools	Number of Principals	Year 1 Principals	Year 2 Principals
District A	TK - 12	71,000	84	84	8	15
District B	TK - 12	23,000	22	20	2	2
District C	TK - 12	10,000	13	13	0	3

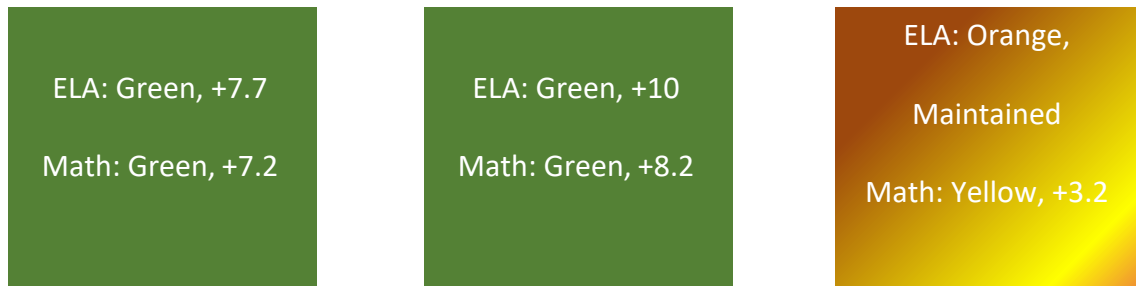
Table 21.1 displays the demographics of the superintendents of the three districts selected for Phase II. Their highest degree earned, gender, and ethnicity are shown. Also included are their average household incomes and number of years in their current positions as superintendent.

Table 21. 1

Demographics of Superintendents in Phase II

Phase II Superintendent Demographics					
	Highest Degree	Gender	Ethnicity	Household Income	Years in Position
District A	Ed.D.	Female	White	\$300,000-399,000	6
District B	M.A.	Male	White	\$200,000-299,000	8
District C	M.A.	Female	Hispanic	\$300,000-399,000	7

Student achievement, using the same California Dashboard protocols utilized in Phase I, was also reviewed for the three Phase II districts. It is displayed in Figure 17.1 and Appendix R.

Figure 17. 1*English Language Arts and Math Student Achievement Data for Phase II Districts***Interviews**

As described in Chapter 3, Phase II of the study was comprised of ten one-on-one interviews of the superintendent, a director who oversees principals, and one or two principals from within three different districts. After obtaining their consent to participate (see Appendix A) and record the sessions, the researcher briefly summarized the research and process. For those who had not completed the Phase I survey (i.e., directors and principals), since the Phase I survey was sent only to superintendents and assistant superintendents, six common Likert statements regarding the districts beliefs and behaviors were read next to obtain ratings from the interviewees. This allowed the researcher to complete across-district comparisons for each belief and behavior (see Appendix S), as well as job-alike comparisons, i.e., all superintendents, all directors, or all principals (see Appendixes T - U), and within district comparisons (see Appendixes W - Y). Figure 18.1 shows these comparisons and is color-coded accordingly.

Figure 18. 1

Phase II Responses to District’s Beliefs and Behavior Statements

Common Likert Statement Responses						
	Quality Teaching & Learning	Training Principals is High Priority	Program to Train All Principals	Programs to Mentor New Principals	Mentoring = Increased Achievement	Mentors Are Trained
District A						
Superintendent	3	5	3	5	5	4
Director	4	5	5	5	5	5
Principal	3.5	4.5	5	5	5	5
Principal	3	5	4	4	3	4
District B						
Superintendent	4	4	4	5	4	3
Director	4	4	4	3	3	3
Principal	4	3	2	3	4	4
District C						
Superintendent	3	5	5	5	4	4

Director	3	3	3	4	4	5
Principal	3	4	2	3	4	4

Note: Each response receiving a 5 is marked in blue; 4 is green; 3 is yellow; and 2 is orange. No participant rated any of the statements with a “1.” Each statement can also be viewed with all responses in Appendixes Z - EE).

Qualitative Data

Many of the tables and figures presented in this chapter represent quantitative data gleaned from the research. Equally important to the design of the study, however, is the use of qualitative data, which was derived from both the open-ended questions of the Phase I survey (see Appendix B) as well as the Phase II interviews (see Appendix C). Though this information is more subjective in nature, several things became apparent as a result of the open-ended survey questions and interviews. First, many survey participants and all interview participants acknowledge the importance of mentoring principals. Though each district seems to go about it differently, the participants (superintendents, assistant superintendents, directors, and principals) support the work and belief that principals, and subsequently student achievement, benefit from mentoring. As one superintendent shared,

We know principals are second only to classroom teachers in their impact on student learning; thus, it is critical we invest in them. Many districts continue to see losses in student achievement, despite their new curricula or device initiatives. Though we are already high performing, we continue to see improvements in student performance, and we continue to close achievement gaps. I firmly believe this is related to our principal

mentoring and coaching programs (Superintendent A, personal communication, July 3, 2020).

Second, nearly all participants see a difference in the mentoring needs of new principals vs. experienced principals and design supports accordingly.

“We run 13 programs geared toward moving teacher leaders all the way into assistant principal, principal, director, and eventually assistant superintendent roles. We have intentional and specific coaching models that prepare them for each. For example, first and second year principals are assigned a peer coach and receive 40 hours of mentoring each year. Every principal in his or her third year and beyond attends ongoing ‘coach’ trainings where we train them in the Association for California School Administrator’s ‘Blended Coaching’ model, which focuses on providing candid and compassionate feedback (Director A, personal communication, July 22, 2020).

In this particular district, each principal also has a ‘principal supervisor’ who visits each site two times per month to conduct classroom walk-throughs with the principal, calibrate feedback, and discuss leadership growth toward the principal’s goals. Each of these ‘principal supervisors’ mentor 13 principals as their primary responsibility within the district.

In District C, new principals receive mentors or coaches in two ways: 1) a consultant is assigned to each new principal to provide an outside, expert view of school leadership, and 2) internal coaches are assigned to support the daily work by observing together in classrooms, and talking about personal and school-wide goals. “Each mentor is very purposefully assigned to principals match the needs and skill-sets” (Director B, personal communication, July 7, 2020).

Third, nearly all participants cite the importance of building and maintaining trust with principals in order to develop them effectively to serve as learning leaders. “If we don’t have

trust, we have nothing” (Director C, personal conversation, July 22, 2020). Several shared specific strategies. “As coaches, we work specifically on developing our skills of building relationships with principals. One way we do that is by role-playing a lot with each other” (Principal A, personal conversation, July 22, 2020). “One of the things I do is meet with our new principals for coffee meetings several times each year. These casual, informal opportunities to share and converse have helped build trusting relationships and a collaborative team” (Director B, personal conversation, July 7, 2020).

All three superintendents in Phase II rated two of the statements about the district’s beliefs and behaviors with “5” – strongly agree. The first statement is depicted in Table 11.1, as it was also asked of all directors and principals within Phase II: “*Our district has an effective formal mentoring program designed specifically for NEW principals.*” While superintendents shared many statements to support the “5” rating, such as “We are very strategic and deliberate about assigning our strongest coaches to our newest principals” (Superintendent C, personal communication, July 16, 2020), one superintendent stated,

We have created a differentiated model so that a veteran principal may have slightly less in-person contact with the mentor than a new principal. A new principal may see their principal supervisor three to four times per month and the veteran principal ... once per month, sometimes for an extended period of time, and then have regular contact with them. (Superintendent A, personal communication, July 3, 2020)

Figure 19.1 has been created and included to represent the most frequently used words that superintendents in Phase II utilized when responding to interview questions about mentoring new principals. The bigger the word in the graphic, the more times it was utilized in the responses.

Figure 19. 1

Word Cloud Representing Superintendent's Comments on Mentoring



A second statement that superintendents originally responded to with a “5” – strongly agree, yet was new to directors and principals, was “*Our district strongly or firmly believes that site principals play a significant role in impacting student achievement.*” The directors and principals also strongly agreed.

Figure 20.1 depicts the most frequently used words that superintendents in Phase II utilized when responding to interview questions regarding the impact of principals on student achievement. The bigger the word in the graphic, the more times it was utilized in the responses.

Figure 20. 1

Word Cloud Representing Superintendent's Comments on the Impact of Principals on Student Achievement



(McClay, 2020).

Finally, qualitative data support the retention factor of this research. Every principal interviewed made reference to the relationships they have in their districts and the fact that they stayed in their current districts in large part due to these relationships and the support they have received from their mentors and the central office. One even shared that she had never planned or had a desire to become a site leader but agreed to the challenge when assured by her district

director, “We will not let you fail” (Principal D, personal communication, July 28, 2020). She finished the interview by sharing that,

Everyone at the district office exhibits a confidence in me that I did not know I had. They have allowed me to stumble and fall forward; they expect that I will make mistakes.

There’s no judgment. They have never tried to make me into them. They have helped me determine what works for me...and listened to me vent. In essence, they saw something in me I didn’t see. They have helped me find my voice and presence...led me to where I was meant to be. (Principal D, personal communication, July 28, 2020)

From self-doubt as she stepped into the role of principal, through mentoring and district support, she gained confidence and ability. She is now in her fourth year as principal and seeing continued improvements in teaching and learning on her campus. This is just one example of the many comments that interviewees made to reinforce the value and impact of their mentoring experiences.

Remember, as mentioned in Chapter 2, the most recent national study of public school principals found that, overall, approximately 18 percent were no longer in the same position one year later (Levin & Bradley, 2019). The four principals in Phase II of this study, however, who all reported feeling supported and mentored with trusting relationships, are now entering their 11th, 8th, 8th, and 3rd years, respectively, as principals in their districts.

Summary

One hundred eighty-one superintendents and assistant superintendents responded to the Phase I survey about district support provided for principals as learning leaders. District beliefs and behaviors were assessed through 12 Likert statements. Student achievement was also collected for each of the 118 districts represented and correlated to the district beliefs and

behaviors. Data from ANOVAs, Chi-Squares, and correlations established significant relationships between and among the beliefs and behaviors as well as student achievement.

Three districts were selected for participation in Phase II, which included one-on-one interviews with ten administrators: the superintendent, one director, and one or two principals from each district. Quantitative data from these interviews, as well as responses to open-ended questions in the Phase I survey, complement the findings.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

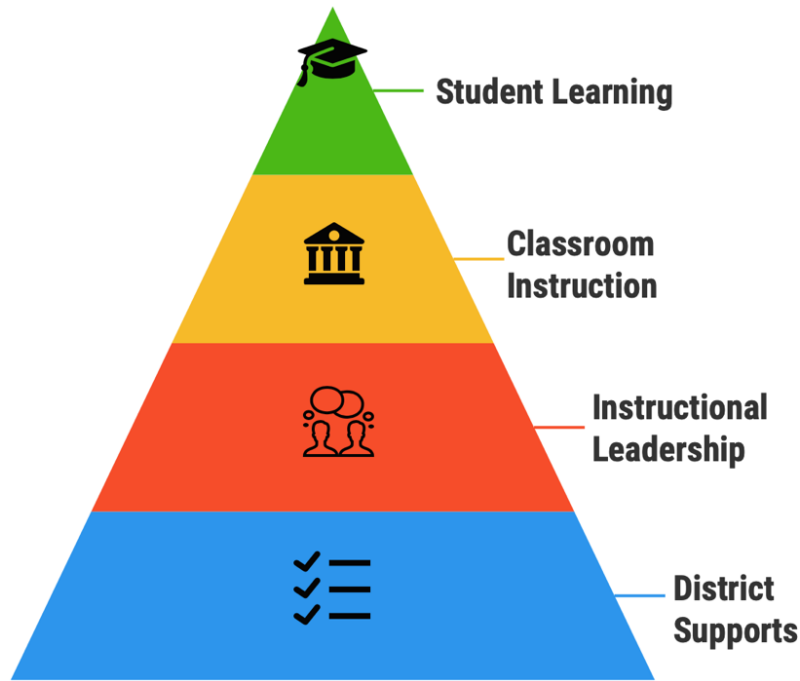
Summary of the Study

This research set-out to answer the following primary question: **How does central office leadership impact principals as learning leaders?**

The results affirm, both quantitatively and qualitatively, that central office leadership impacts principals as learning leaders through the supports provided. Results from the survey and interviews in this research indicate that most superintendents, central office administrators, and governing boards believe in the importance of providing support and mentoring to principals so they evolve as learning leaders. In addition, principals report in interview responses the depth of the impact central office support has on their ability to grow as learning leaders. The question of ‘how’ this occurs is best represented by Figure 21.1.

Figure 21. 1

The Impact of Central Office Leadership on Principals as Learning Leaders



(McClay, 2020)

Figure 21.1 is a visual representation of what the literature says: principals are second only to classroom instruction in impacting student achievement (National Association of Secondary School Principals and National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2013; Fink, 2015; Louis et al., 2010; National Association of Secondary Principals, n.d.). It is therefore critical that central office leaders and their governing boards prioritize the ongoing development of principals (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010). As Fink (2015), Fullan (2016), Hallinger and Wang (2015), Jenkins (2009), and Johnson (2008) pointed out in research highlighted in Chapter 2, principals can easily fill their days with ‘plant management’ and administrative tasks. If they are to serve as learning leaders, however, and truly impact the teaching and learning processes, they must not only be skilled at doing so (which requires

ongoing training) but also have the time and support provided from the central office to do so (DuFour & Marzano, 2009; Silverman, 2016). In a nutshell, the combination of data from previous research as well as this study supports the claim that central offices play a significant role in teaching and learning improvement (Honig et al., 2010). The results of this research conclude that in order to maximize the impact on principals as learning leaders, central offices should deliberately and thoughtfully focus on five concepts. These concepts, along with coordinating studies and ideas referenced in Chapter 2, are presented below:

I. Prioritize the Importance of Principal Mentoring

Mentoring is key to developing effective school leaders (Daresh, 2004; Parylo et al., 2012); remember, as Gray et al. (2007) so poignantly stated, “Good principals aren’t born – they’re mentored” (p. 5). In fact, Fullan (2000) reminded us in Chapter 2 that “we will continue to reproduce only small numbers of heroic leaders ... until we change how we recruit, support, and develop leadership on the job” (p. 16). Prior research (Mendels & Mitgang, 2013; NAESP & The Education Alliance, 2003) has shown that mentoring enhances the quality of leadership, and in turn, positively impacts the quality of classroom instruction. Likewise, this study has confirmed the theory through the beliefs of survey respondents and interviewees, as well as student achievement data in districts who focus on mentoring their principals. As presented in Chapter 4, the highest yielding scores from survey respondents were recorded for beliefs such as ‘principals play a significant role in impacting student achievement’ and ‘one of the highest priorities within our district is to provide ongoing professional development to our principals.’ Student achievement in districts who exhibited beliefs and behaviors in support of mentoring principals yielded significant gains in student achievement in both English Language Arts and Math.

II. Design Systems and Structures that Allow for and Foster Principal Mentoring

Chapter 2 shared the Wallace Foundation (2012) study, which emphasized the need to train principals after they are hired, as well as the NAESP (2014) study, which compiled a large volume of research to make the statement, “mentoring programs are the most effective method of delivering job-embedded, ongoing, and sustained professional development for principals” (p. 6). Bartoletti and Connelly (2013) reiterated that district offices can sometimes be obstacles to this work unless they intentionally create the conditions that “make it possible for principals to lead school improvement effectively” (p. 6). Whether this is through the hiring of new, specific principal coaches (a strategy seen in this study’s District A), the restructuring of existing roles to prioritize principal coaching (as seen in districts throughout the literature), and/or a deliberate focus of Cabinet, etc., it needs to happen. Central offices must establish the supports and structures, or ‘conditions’ (National Association of Secondary School Principals and National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2013) by which principals can be developed and thus able to serve as learning leaders. In addition, creating systems to mentor *new* principals is critical and reinforced not only by prior research (NAESP & The Education Alliance, 2003; The Wallace Foundation, 2007; Yirci & Kocabas, 2010) but also by this study, where principals cited the benefits to themselves when serving in their first year as well as how they continue to benefit now as veteran peer coaches supporting new principals. As Parylo et al. (2012) reported, principal mentoring is a process of reciprocal learning. This study finds that mentor/mentee relationships are also reciprocal in benefits.

III. Train Mentors in How to Coach and Build Trust

Training mentors was an area all Phase II interviewees referenced as important, yet it received a rather low mean score (i.e., 3.5) on the Phase I survey. The message here is while

school leaders believe it is an important concept, many are doing little to bring it to fruition. In this study, District A exemplifies a district investing a large amount of attention to training their mentors; likewise, District A continues to see gains in student achievement and the closing of achievement gaps. Brasher (2018), Saltzman (2016), and Rainey and Honig (2015) identified the strategies districts should utilize to redefine the principal coach or supervisor's role, which included providing them with professional development focused on improving their capacity to help principals grow as instructional leaders. As discussed in Chapter 2, we cannot expect that successful principals will be effective coaches without training (Gray et al., 2007; NAESP & The Education Alliance, 2003). 'Doing' and 'coaching' are different actions that require different skill-sets and strategies.

As this study and many others have found, training mentors in the art of building trust is as important as training them to coach, as trust is foundational to any sustainable relationship and growth (Covey, 2006; Muhammad, 2009). Prior studies, including Browne-Ferrigno (2007), Hattie (2009), Jenkins (2009), NAESP and The Alliance (2003), and Southern Regional Education Board (2007), all concur that mentoring relationships must be built upon and characterized by trust in order for a principal to succeed as an effective learning leader. In fact, as pointed out in Chapter 2, there can be "no success without trust" (Cull, 2010). This study confirmed these findings, with every interviewee bringing up the importance of trust. However, similar to the topic of 'efforts to train mentors in effective coaching techniques,' trust was identified as important but earned a mean score of 3.5 on the Phase I survey statement: "Our district administrators are highly trained in how to build and maintain trust with principals." This reiterates the premise that while school leaders believe trust is an important concept, they are not doing enough to train coaches in how to establish and maintain it.

IV. Establish Supports for the Mental Health of Principals

Socio-emotional wellbeing is essential to overall success. Sadly, issues related to socio-emotional and mental health are increasing fast (Mental Health America, 2020). Reports of rises in anxiety, depression, and suicide among children, teens, and adults are rampant. Dating back to the work of Maslow (1943), it is widely recognized that this relates not only to students as learners but also everyone else within school organizations. Principals have stressful jobs (Fullan, 2016; National Association of Secondary School Principals and National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2013). Yet, all too often central offices pile more and more demands on them as professionals without taking any time to support their mental health. Research confirms that high levels of stress impact the wellbeing of principals due to the emotional demands and workload of the leadership position (Kelly, 2019; Shields, 2007). Also, as the data revealed, too much emphasis on student achievement can have negative impacts on mental health. As learning leaders, principals strive for perfection. They want to meet all requests, responsibilities, and problems head-on, ensure gains in student achievement, and maintain a successful learning community of teachers, students, staff, parents, and community members.

Perhaps best stated by Brené Brown (2010), “Understanding the difference between healthy striving and perfectionism is critical to laying down the shield and picking up your life. Research shows that perfectionism hampers success. In fact, it's often the path to depression, anxiety, addiction, and life paralysis” (p. 56). The data and former research reiterate the need to find balance between emphasizing increases in student achievement, levels of trust, and the mental health of our stakeholders.

Principals interviewed in this study reiterated how much it means to them when district office staff members begin conversations with them by inquiring about their families, referencing their children or spouses by name. The principals in this study repeatedly mentioned how simple acts of kindness and friendliness make them feel valued as human beings, cared about, and willing to take risks and show vulnerabilities with their district office personnel. In turn, they remain in their districts and loyal to their supervisors. This will also be discussed in the section: Recommendations for Further Research.

V. Ensure all Departments Within the District are ‘Recultured’ to Support the Work and Priorities

In Chapter 2 of this study, Fullan and Quinn (2016) emphasized the importance of aligning all departments with the central purpose of the district – teaching and learning. In addition, DuFour and Marzano (2009), Goldring et al. (2018), and Gates et al. (2019) expressed the need for all departments – including the Governing Board, superintendent, and all divisions – within a district to be committed to the development and mentoring of principals. In this study, District A provided several examples of ways to ensure that the Governing Board and cabinet members see the value and priority of the work; however, it appears that the official principal mentoring in all three Phase II districts is facilitated primarily by the educational support services team. There is clearly a need for additional strategies that support this concept. It will therefore be revisited in the section: Recommendations for Further Research.

Sub-Questions

The four sub-questions of the study are presented next, followed by responses based on the results. The first sub-question was: “How does central office leadership design systems of support to ensure principals are equipped to serve as learning leaders?” As gleaned from the

Phase II interviews, central office leaders must recognize and acknowledge the role that principals play in impacting student achievement and then prioritize principal mentoring and support from all central office staff. The Superintendent from District A spoke largely about her attention and strategies for educating the Governing Board about this work. This included annual reports at board meetings and twice-annual tours to school sites, where board members are able to participate in classroom observations and hear summaries from principals that highlight the work they are doing with their mentors. Her district created an entire department dedicated to building the capacity of principals, including specific positions established for staff members who serve as principal mentors. District B's approach was less formal, but also effective, citing the importance and use of more informal strategies to focus on trust and mental health. Finally, District C emphasized the role of the entire cabinet, sharing that principals and their coaches attended bi-annual sessions with cabinet to ensure they had an opportunity to share their goals, progress, and needs.

The second sub-question addressed was: "What models are high-achieving districts using to support the development and ability of principals to serve as learning leaders?"

The study looked closely at three moderate- to high-performing districts (based on the State's student performance data) to assess the systems of support they utilize for principals and the subsequent impact on student achievement. District A has prioritized this work for nearly twenty years. They have an entire department and specialized "Principal Supervisor" roles dedicated to it; additionally, they have 13 research-based and intensive 'pipeline' programs to support not only principals but also the advancement of teachers, assistant principals, and directors. District A has continued to see significant improvements in student achievement, especially in terms of closing achievement gaps, despite already being considered a high-

performing district (which statistically, makes continued improvement even more difficult). District B has implemented a more casual, informal model, but nonetheless ensures that each principal has an assigned peer mentor, as well as a director who is responsible for coaching and evaluating. This district places a large amount of emphasis, albeit informal, on building trust and the mental health of principals. Important to note, District B experienced the highest student achievement growth of the three districts within one year of the director implementing the informal program to support principals. And finally, District C has many components in their model. They assign four mentors to each new principal: a peer, a consultant focused on administrative duties, a district-level coach, and a consultant focused on building their collaborative teams. Veteran principals receive the latter two mentors. All principals in this district engage in the comprehensive National Institute of School Leadership (NISL) training to provide a common lens by which they analyze instruction. District C also saw improvement in Math achievement and the closing of achievement gaps. In essence, this research shows there are myriad ways to approach the mentoring of principals. The important component is that it remains a priority of central offices.

The third sub-question was: “To what degree does trust between and among principals, mentors, and departments play a role in supporting the development, ability, and retention of principals to serve as learning leaders?” As noted in Chapter 4, many significant statistical findings of this research involving student achievement were related to the element of trust. Both English Language Arts and Math showed a significantly positive relationship ($N = 178$) with *Efforts to Build Trust with Principals*, including not only performance (status) in ELA and Math but also growth (change) in ELA and Math. In addition, *Efforts to Build Trust with Principals* had a statistically significant relationship with the levels served by the district,

number of students in the district, number of schools in the district, and number of principals in their first two years in the district ($N = 181$).

Perhaps the most compelling evidence for the importance of trust in supporting principals came directly from the principals during the Phase II interviews. Each one emphasized the positive mentoring experiences they had when trust was in place, negative experiences when trust was lacking, efforts they recognized their mentors made to build and maintain it, and their incorporation of the strategies modeled when working with their own staffs. Likewise, directors and superintendents each addressed the importance of trust, most even before asked, and cited examples of improvement in their principal mentees' performance and confidence, as well as the quality of instruction on their campuses when trust was evident.

Interesting to note, however, is the relatively low mean score (i.e., 3.5) that Phase I survey respondents ($N = 181$) rated this statement: "Our district administrators are highly trained in how to build and maintain trust with principals." In fact, only three beliefs and behaviors ranked lower. This indicates that while these leaders value the importance of trust, and they support the research that suggests trust is critical in all relationships (MODOONO, 2017; Southern Regional Education Board, 2010), they do not believe their districts are doing significant training in how trust is built and maintained. This finding aligns with that of Gray et al. (2007) where the conclusion is drawn that not enough is being done to ensure the development of the high-quality principals that make high-quality schools. More on this issue will be addressed in the section: Recommendations for Further Research.

Finally, the fourth sub-question posed was: "What is the unique impact of each department within a central office on principals as learning leaders?" It is well established that most districts are comprised of several departments. Commonly, 'several' means some variation

of these four departments, depending on the size and organizational structure of the district: educational support services, business support services, human resources and development, and student support services. Some districts in the Phase I survey noted difficulties in ensuring that all departments play a role in the mentoring of principals; they claimed that the majority of the work to support the professional growth of principals was facilitated by the educational support services department. This actually seems to be the norm when looking at the Phase I open-ended responses. However, it was definitely a priority of the superintendents interviewed in Phase II, who all continue to see positive impacts in student achievement. Likewise, qualitative responses from principals in the interviews support the idea that they benefit more when all departments within a district play even a small role in their mentoring. This may be a critical distinction between those districts seeing positive results from principal mentoring and those seeing less. This will also be discussed in the section: Recommendations for Further Research.

Implications for Practice

Four Themes

As a result of this research, four themes emerge as implications for further practice:

- Prioritize the Work;
- Train Mentors in how to Effectively Build and Maintain Trust;
- Develop Programs to Support the Mental Health of Principal; and
- Ensure Division Alignment that is Dedicated to the Work of Mentoring Principals.

These four areas, although needing further research to provide specific strategies, will be incorporated into the researcher's work immediately. Prioritizing the work within the Executive Cabinet is a relatively quick philosophical discussion and commitment; ensuring the continued focus and priority may prove more challenging with the onslaught of issues facing schools and

districts today, but Fullan's (2016) *Coherence* theory and strategies should prove helpful.

Obtaining Governing Board support will take additional time, though the strategies shared by District A in this study will assist.

Programs and processes need to be discovered and implemented to support the training of mentors in how to effectively build and maintain trust. While many districts have studied Steven Covey's *The Speed of Trust* (2008), more specific strategies for the mentor/mentee relationship will need to be found and implemented. District A utilizes ACSA's Blended Coaching model, which incorporates a great deal to merge compassion with candid dialogue.

Efforts to support the mental health of principals can begin with less formality. As repeated by the principals interviewed in this study, simply showing how much principals are cared about is critical. The old adage spoken by Theodore Roosevelt, "they don't care how much you know until they know how much you care," has somehow been lost beyond the teacher-student relationship. Why have we not ensured that our principals are also taking heed of this sage advice with their teachers? Why have we not ensured that district office staff also employ this wisdom when working with principals? This concept will be re-visited in the researcher's district, with time dedicated to involving all stakeholders in the cycle of reflection and goal setting in the area.

Striving to ensure division alignment that is dedicated to the work of mentoring principals will also be an ongoing focus. The entire organization of a public school district exists to support teaching and learning – and if the first and second most impactful ways to do that (classroom teachers and principals) can be influenced and supported by the central office, there is no greater work.

Finally, an additional item that has significant implications for practice relate to the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic of 2020.

Recovering from a Pandemic

This research cannot be finished without addressing the massive, recent changes to public education as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Even though participants were asked to complete the Phase I survey and Phase II interviews with a mindset matching their beliefs ‘prior’ to the virus, it is not possible to ignore the reality that every participant was professionally impacted, most in immense ways, by the school closures, quick transition to distance learning, and planning for safe re-openings. Unfortunately, most district and site administrators will say that very little instructional and learning leadership has been able to take place during the past six months. School leaders have been forced to redefine the logistical and managerial components of their schools. Even when students and staff are permitted to return, school will likely look ‘differently’ for some time. This means that principal mentoring will also look differently. Principals and their mentors may not even be able to conduct physical classroom observations, and when they do, what will teaching and learning look like? Will the previous goals and initiatives regarding pedagogy even be evident or will educators be ‘starting from scratch?’

After having different priorities for over six months, principals and district office leaders will need a firm reminder of the research that states: principals are the second most important factor in influencing student achievement. They will need to act accordingly and create ways that not only encourage and allow principals to impact teaching and learning but also train and support them with what will undoubtedly look very different than it has in the past. In essence, central office leaders will need to define how support for principals is prioritized, delivered, and assessed.

Recommendations for Further Research

Further research as a result of this study is indicated in several areas:

Central Office Supports for the Mental Health of Principals

The concept of mental health supports for principals was a late addition to the study at the wise suggestion of committee member Dr. Gregory Merwin. As shared in Chapter 4, and perhaps also because of the COVID-19 pandemic, it became a critical finding. Not only were there significant correlations between *Efforts to Support the Mental Health of Principals* and student achievement, most district administrators recognized the importance of supporting the mental health of principals even though there was little evidence of programs or strategies within their districts to do so. Given all we are seeing worldwide with increases in the social-emotional needs of our students and communities, it makes perfect sense that our site leaders will also need these supports. It is evident that continued research and specific strategies districts can use to support the mental health of these critical educators are indeed needed.

Programs or Curriculum to Train Mentors on Building and Maintaining Trust

The findings related to trust were very similar to those of mental health. There were significant correlations between *Efforts to Build and Maintain Trust with Principals* and student achievement, and most district administrators recognized the importance of establishing trusting relationships with principals, yet the evidence did not show that their districts had specific programs or strategies to do so. As discussed in Chapter 2, there is a plethora of research on the importance of trust, but it appears that districts need specific strategies to utilize in order to place the research into practice. Exactly how do principal mentors and others at the central office build and maintain trust?

Strategies to Align all Departments Within a District

It is clear that when central offices have a shared vision for their principals as learning leaders, teaching and learning improves (Fink & Silverman, 2014). Honig et al. (2010) presented five dimensions to central office transformation, which include a dimension specific to aligning and involving all departments. It provides a project management approach, as described in Chapter 2, which focuses on questions like,

Who are the individual principals in the schools I am responsible for? What are these school principals and their staff trying to do to improve teaching and learning? What kinds of resources do they need and how can I help them secure them? (Honig et al., 2010, p. viii)

However, more work is needed to define just how districts can do this. The paradigm shift is large, especially for central office leaders (e.g., business services administrators) who may never have served as principals. This researcher would advocate not only for more research to establish the rationale and need, but specific strategies that districts can utilize to support the alignment.

Conclusions

As this study draws to a close and I reflect on the process, I am reminded of some of the things shared at the beginning. I fell in love with mentoring/coaching teachers when I was first introduced to the concept of instructional leadership in the early 1990's. Working for the consummate instructional leader, my first principal 'set the bar' and provided first-hand evidence of the positive impact a strong principal can have on both teaching and learning in the classrooms. I spent the first part of my career training fellow teachers and then welcomed the opportunity to work as an instructional leader/principal dedicated to promoting student

achievement through the advancement of teacher capacity. In this role, I firmly believed that the work to enhance the instructional prowess of the teachers on my campus was having a positive impact on student learning. This fueled my priorities and passion for instructional leadership even more!

When I moved to the district office, I implemented a formal system to support and build the capacity of principals to serve first as instructional leaders and then as learning leaders. The program began small, with weekly site visits and classroom observations alongside our four ‘new’ principals that year. Very quickly, however, we began to note significant improvements within classrooms. Principals began requesting to continue in the program even after their first year. Veteran principals also began asking to join and receive the support. After two years, all 27 principals within the district were receiving weekly (for new principals) and bi-weekly (for experienced principals) site visits with a support provider. In these sessions, and to this day, the pairs walk the campus to observe in classrooms; they craft feedback for individual and teams of teachers; they plan appropriate staff development based on both formal standardized data and classroom observations; and they strategize how best to continue supporting individual teachers, teams of teachers, and the principals’ personal growth. The “Principal Support Providers,” as we call them, strive to impact student achievement by: Building the instructional and learning leader capacities of each of our principals; establishing and maintaining trusting relationships with each principal; supporting the mental health of each principal; and advocating for the principals’ and sites’ needs at the district office.

This study provided an amazing opportunity to further explore the research behind central office supports for principals; the beliefs and behaviors of 187 superintendents, assistant superintendents, directors, and principals from around the State; the impacts of principal

mentoring on student achievement within 118 public school districts; and the principal mentoring practices of three large TK-12 public districts in Southern California. After nearly three years of reading, studying, interviewing, and analyzing, my passion is only further ignited...until we have successfully closed all achievement gaps and made the principal job a true 'leader of learning,' let the work continue!

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Consent to Participate

CENTRAL OFFICE SUPPORTS FOR PRINCIPALS AS LEARNING LEADERS AND THE IMPACT ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to investigate the impact on student achievement of central office supports for principals. The study is being conducted by Jodi McClay under the supervision of Dr. Eugene Kim, Concordia University - Irvine, Educational Leadership. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board, Concordia University - Irvine, in Irvine, CA.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to understand the role of central offices in developing and retaining principals to serve as learning leaders and the ultimate impact on student achievement. Results of the research will help to clarify and investigate models of support for principals and assist in creating a plan or program to increase principal effectiveness and retention, as well as student learning.

DESCRIPTION: Participation in this survey or interview will allow me to gather data about districts and the programs of support they offer their principals.

PARTICIPATION: Participation is voluntary. Respondents and interviewees may opt not to participate or may discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

CONFIDENTIALITY OR ANONYMITY: Please note that answers to this survey's or interview's questions will be held in the strictest of confidence. All data will be stored on the researcher's personal, password-protected computer. Pseudonyms will be assigned to each district and participant.

DURATION: The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete; the interview will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

RISKS: There are no foreseeable risks for participating.

BENEFITS: The research may provide generalizable knowledge to help central offices ensure that principals are equipped and able to serve as learning leaders.

CONTACT: Please contact Dr. Eugene Kim for answers to pertinent questions about the research and research subjects' rights. Eugene Kim, Executive Director, Master of Arts in International Studies Degree Program, Associate Professor of International Studies, Concordia University - Irvine, 949-214-3367, Eugene.Kim@cui.edu

RESULTS: At the conclusion of the research, the results will be shared with each Phase II participant via an emailed link. The finished dissertation will also be available through the Concordia University - Irvine library of doctoral students' final dissertations.

Appendix B: Phase I Survey

Consent to Participate: Yes/No

Email Address:

Respondent Demographics

- a. Title
- b. Age
- c. Gender
- d. Ethnicity
- e. Highest Level of Education Completed
- f. Total Household Income

District Demographics

- a. District Name
- b. The number of students served by my district is:
- c. The grade levels served by my district are:
- d. The number of active school sites/campuses in my district is:
- e. The number of principals in my district is:
- f. How many NEW principals have been hired or promoted (not moved or transferred sites as existing principals) in the past year?
- g. How many NEW principals have been hired or promoted (not moved or transferred sites as existing principals) in the past two years?

Likert Statements (5 – Strongly Agree; 1 – Strongly Disagree)

1. Based on what I observe in classrooms, I believe the quality of teaching and learning in my district is outstanding.
2. As the Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent, one of MY highest priorities within our district is to provide ongoing staff development to our principals.
3. One of our district's top GOVERNING BOARD priorities is to provide staff development to principals.
4. Our district strongly or firmly believes that site principals play a significant role in impacting student achievement.
5. The role of principals as learning leaders, instructional leaders, and plant managers is clearly understood throughout our district.
6. Our district has an ongoing, formal program to train and support principals in each role (learning leader, instructional leader, and plant manager).
7. Our district has an effective formal mentoring program designed specifically for NEW principals.
8. Our district has an effective formal mentoring program for ALL principals, regardless of the number of years served.
9. Principal mentoring practices in our district have made a strong, positive impact on student achievement.
10. The mentors who coach principals in our district are highly trained in effective coaching techniques.

11. Our district administrators are highly trained in how to build and maintain trust with principals.
12. Our district has specific programs and efforts to support the mental health of principals.

Short Answer Questions

1. How many hours per week do each of the individuals who mentor/coach principals spend on campuses supporting principals?
2. What topics are addressed when mentoring/coaching occurs on campuses (e.g., school budget, curriculum, hiring, etc.)?

Free-Response Questions

1. What does principal mentoring look like in your district? Consider: a) who facilitates the mentoring, b) how often does it occur, c) where does it occur, d) what activities do the mentor/mentee do together, and e) what are the intended outcomes?
2. What role does each department at the district office (e.g., business services, human resources, educational services, etc.) play in the mentoring of principals?

One Last Item About the Future

- If schools remain closed (or close again) in the Fall, how will you support principals as learning leaders in a distance learning model? What have you learned this Spring that will help you make an effective plan? What might the plan look like?

Appendix C: Phase II Interview Questions

Superintendent	Director	Principal
Years in Position	Age, Gender, Ethnicity Highest Level of Education, Total Household Income, Years in Position, Years in District	
<p data-bbox="207 709 477 739">Done in Phase I Survey</p> <ul data-bbox="227 1709 578 1801" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="227 1709 578 1766">• What strategies and programs do you use to provide ongoing 	<p data-bbox="620 709 831 739">Likert Statements:</p> <ol data-bbox="662 768 1422 1650" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="662 768 1422 861">1. Based on what you observe in classrooms, the quality of teaching and learning in your district is outstanding. <li data-bbox="662 890 1422 982">2. One of our district’s highest priorities is to provide ongoing staff development to our principals. <li data-bbox="662 1012 1422 1104">3. Our district has an ongoing, formal program to train and support principals as learning leaders. <li data-bbox="662 1134 1422 1226">4. Our district has an effective formal mentoring program designed specifically for NEW principals. <li data-bbox="662 1255 1422 1407">5. Our district has an effective formal mentoring program for ALL principals, regardless of the number of years served (<i>only asked of directors</i>) <li data-bbox="662 1436 1422 1528">6. Principal mentoring practices in our district have made a strong, positive impact on student achievement. <li data-bbox="662 1558 1422 1650">7. The mentors who coach principals in our district are highly trained in effective coaching techniques. <ul data-bbox="620 1709 1003 1860" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="620 1709 1003 1860">• What strategies and programs do you use to provide staff development to your principals? 	<ul data-bbox="1065 1709 1432 1860" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1065 1709 1432 1860">• What staff development does your district provide as to you as a principal?

staff development to your principals?

- Let's talk about the mentoring of principals.
- What specifically do the mentor/coach and principal do together?
 - How often and where does it occur?
 - What are the intended outcomes and how do you know the efforts are being successful?
 - What data do you use to assess the effectiveness?
 - How does support provided by the district office differ for NEW vs. VETERAN principals?
 - What do you believe are the greatest successes of principal mentoring in you district and to what do you attribute the successes to?
- Describe a little more about what the mentor/coach and principal do together.
 - What are the intended outcomes and how do you know the efforts are being successful?
 - Ask additionally, if not included in the response:
Does the mentor have a formal agenda each visit or does it vary?
 - How does support differ for NEW vs. VETERAN principals?
 - What do you believe are the greatest successes of your principal mentoring/coaching program and to what do you attribute the successes to?
- Who mentors you and what does that look like? What do you do together? How often? Does the mentor have a formal agenda each visit or does it vary?
 - How does what you and your mentor do impact instructional growth and student achievement at your school?
 - How does the support differ for NEW vs. VETERAN principals?

- How do you ensure your mentors are trained in effective coaching techniques?
- If applicable, how do you ensure your mentors are calibrated with how they're supporting the principals?
- What specifically do your mentors do to build and maintain TRUST with the principals? What do you at district level to build trust?
- What, if anything, does your district or the mentors do to support the MENTAL HEALTH of your principals?
- What obstacles have you encountered with the mentoring/principal support program?
- Do you and the other mentors receive training in effective coaching techniques? If so, what does it look like?
- Are efforts made to ensure that the mentors are calibrated with how they're supporting the principals? If so, what does that look like?
- What specifically do you and the mentors do to build and maintain TRUST with the principals?
- What, if anything, does your district or the mentors do to support the MENTAL HEALTH of your principals?
- What obstacles have you encountered with the mentoring/principal support program? Or what might you do differently if beginning such
- What do you believe are the greatest successes of the principal mentoring/coaching program and to what do you attribute the successes to?
- Do you believe your mentor has established a trusting relationship with you? What specifically has your mentor done do to build and maintain TRUST with you as a principal?
- What, if anything, does your district or the mentors do to support the MENTAL HEALTH of principals?
- What obstacles have you encountered with the mentoring/principal support program?
- How has the mentoring program impacted you as an instructional leader?

support in another district?

- What strategies do you utilize to ensure the Governing Board, community at-large, and labor associations value the development of principals?
 - What role does each department at the district office play in mentoring the principals?
 - Has the mentoring and support you have received from your district impacted your job satisfaction and desire to remain in your position and district? If so, how?
 - Given all of the potential changes to teaching and learning this Fall with COVID-19, how might your model of supporting principals as learning leaders change?
 - Given all of the potential changes to teaching and learning this Fall with COVID-19, how might your model of supporting principals as learning leaders change?
 - What role does each department at the district office play in mentoring you?
-

Appendix D: Figure Representing Levels Served and Quality Teaching and Learning

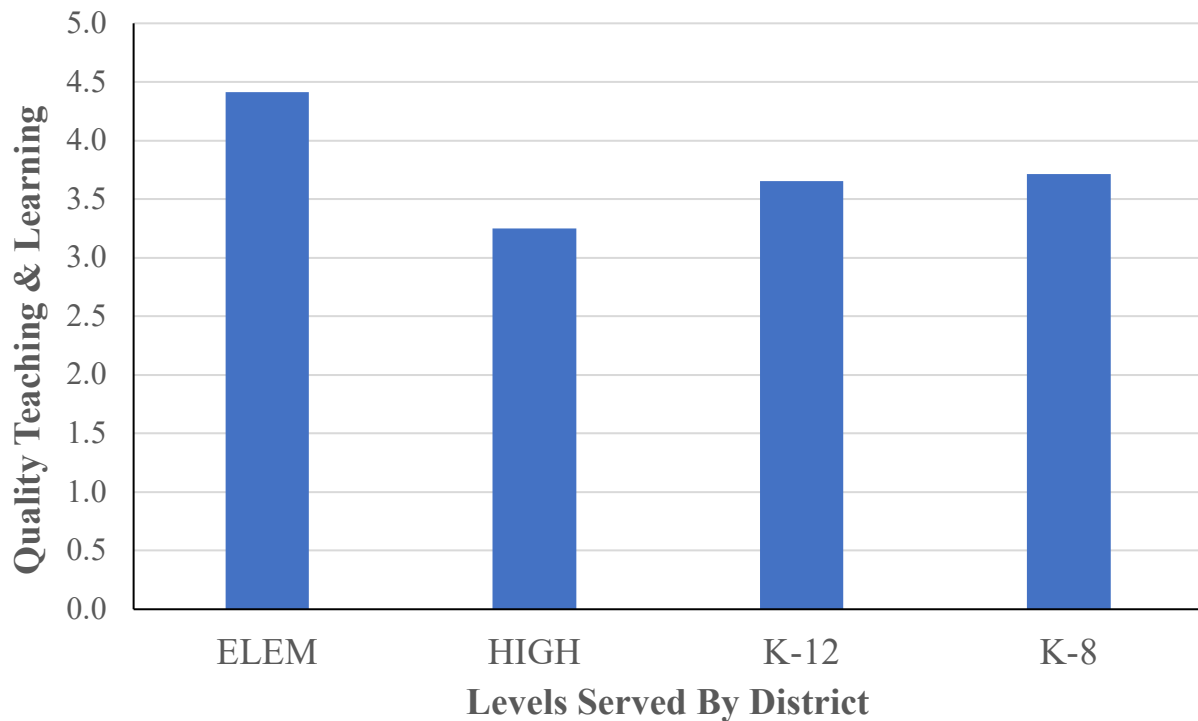
Figure 22*Levels Served and Quality Teaching and Learning*

Figure 22. Bar graph representing the relationship between the levels served by the district and the perception of the quality of teaching and learning within the district ($N = 181$).

Appendix E: Table Representing Mean Scores for Student Achievement (ELA Color and Math Color) and Quality Teaching and Learning

Table 22

Mean Scores for Student Achievement (ELA Color and Math Color) and Quality Teaching and Learning

ELA Groups	Mean	Math Groups	Mean
ELA-B	4.42	MATH-B	4.48
ELA-G	4.16	MATH-G	4.18
ELA-Y	3.29	MATH-Y	3.63
ELA-O	3.30	MATH-O	3.21
ELA-R	3.01	MATH-R	2.00

Appendix F: Figure Representing Student Achievement (ELA Color and Math Color) and
Quality Teaching and Learning

Figure 23

Student Achievement (ELA Color and Math Color) and Quality Teaching and Learning

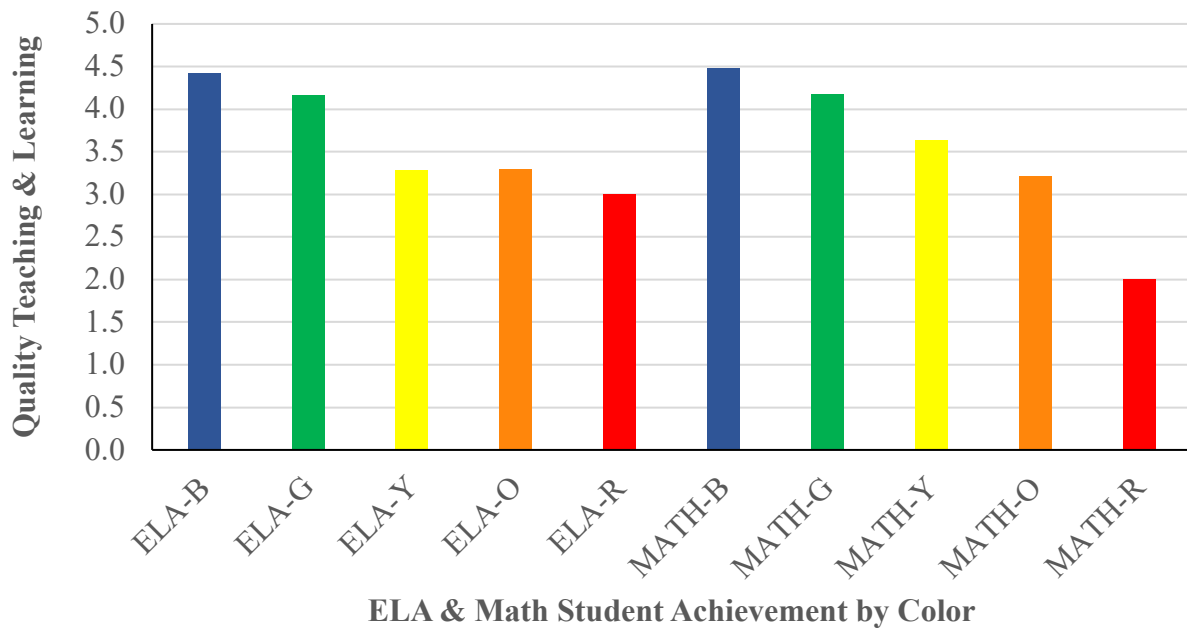


Figure 23. Bar graph representing the relationship between student achievement in ELA and Math and the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms ($N = 181$).

Appendix G: Figure Representing Student Achievement (ELA Color) and Quality Teaching and Learning

Figure 24

Student Achievement (ELA Color) and Quality Teaching and Learning

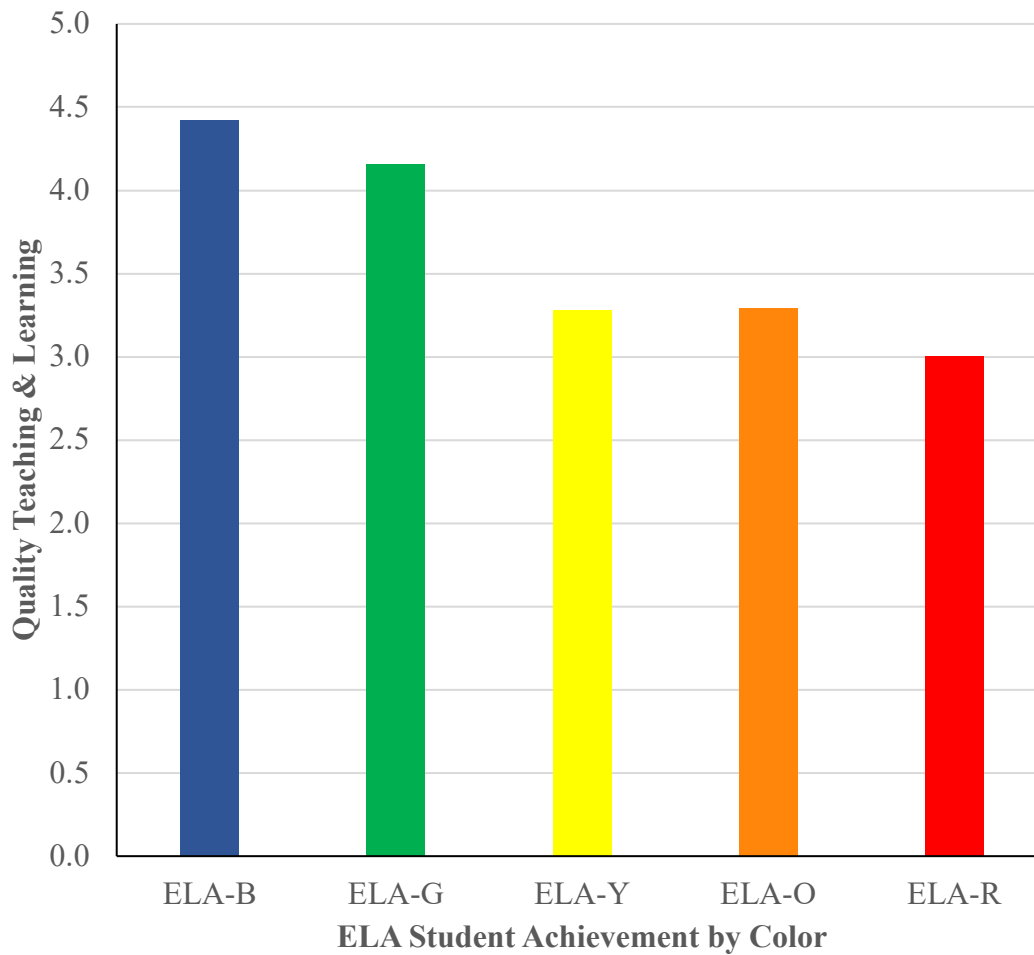


Figure 24. Bar graph representing the relationship between student achievement in ELA and the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms ($N = 181$).

Appendix H: Figure Representing Student Achievement (Math Color)
and Quality Teaching & Learning

Figure 25

Student Achievement (Math Color) and Quality Teaching & Learning

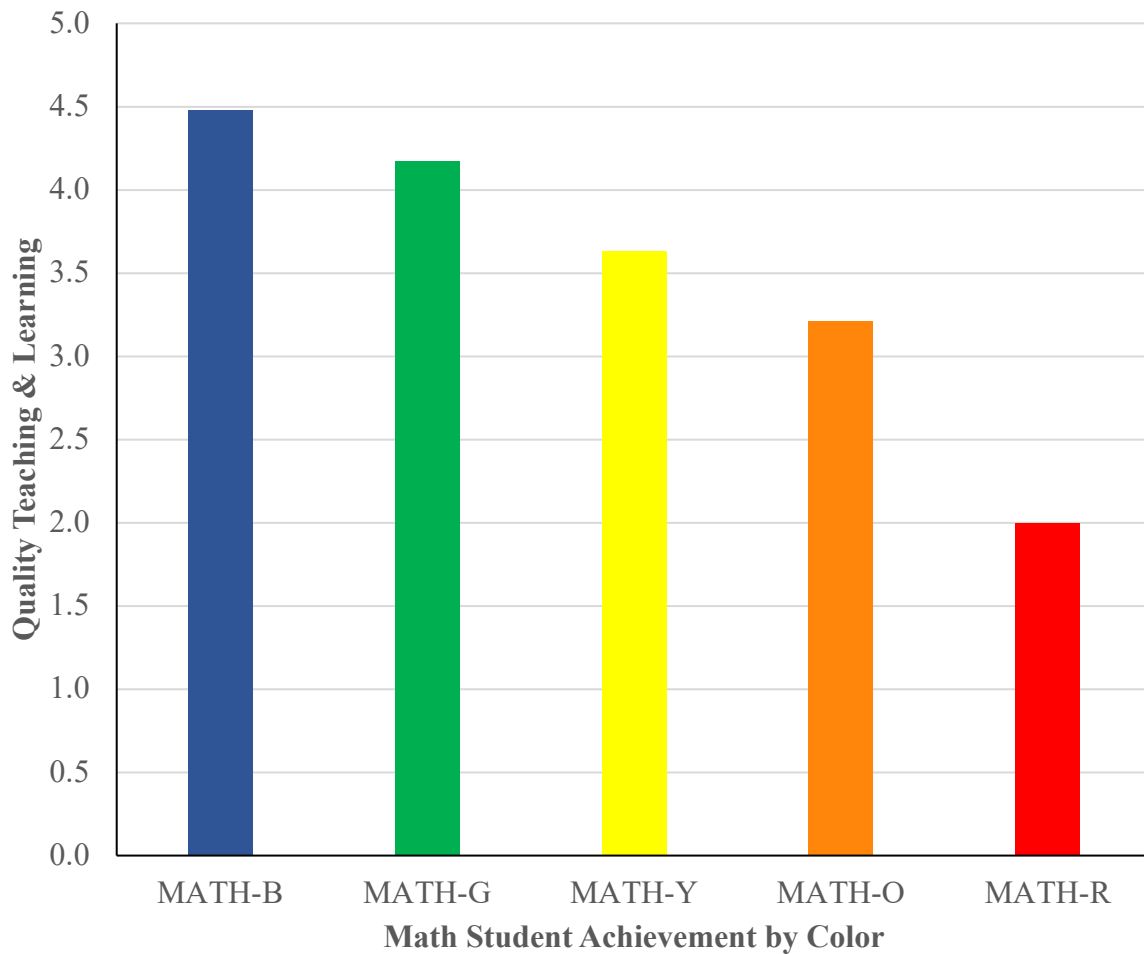


Figure 25. Bar graph representing the relationship between student achievement in Math and the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms $N = 181$).

Appendix I: Table Representing the Mean Scores for Student Achievement (ELA Color and Math Color) and Efforts to Build Trust with Principals

Table 23

Mean Scores for Student Achievement (ELA Color and Math Color) and Efforts to Build Trust with Principals

ELA Groups	Mean	Math Groups	Mean
ELA-B	3.79	MATH-B	3.81
ELA-G	3.94	MATH-G	3.85
ELA-Y	3.48	MATH-Y	3.72
ELA-O	2.86	MATH-O	3.06
ELA-R	1.50	MATH-R	1.00

Appendix J: Table Representing the Mean Scores for Student Achievement (ELA Color and Math Color) and Efforts to Support Principal Mental Health

Table 24

Mean Scores for Student Achievement (ELA Color and Math Color) and Efforts to Support Principal Mental Health

Groups	Mean
ELA-B	3.10
ELA-G	3.28
ELA-Y	2.65
ELA-O	2.20
ELA-R	1.50
MATH-B	3.27
MATH-G	3.10
MATH-Y	2.94
MATH-O	2.37
MATH-R	1.00

Appendix K: Figure Representing Student Achievement (ELA Color and Math Color) and Efforts to Support Principal Mental Health

Figure 26

Student Achievement (ELA Color and Math Color) and Efforts to Support Principal Mental Health

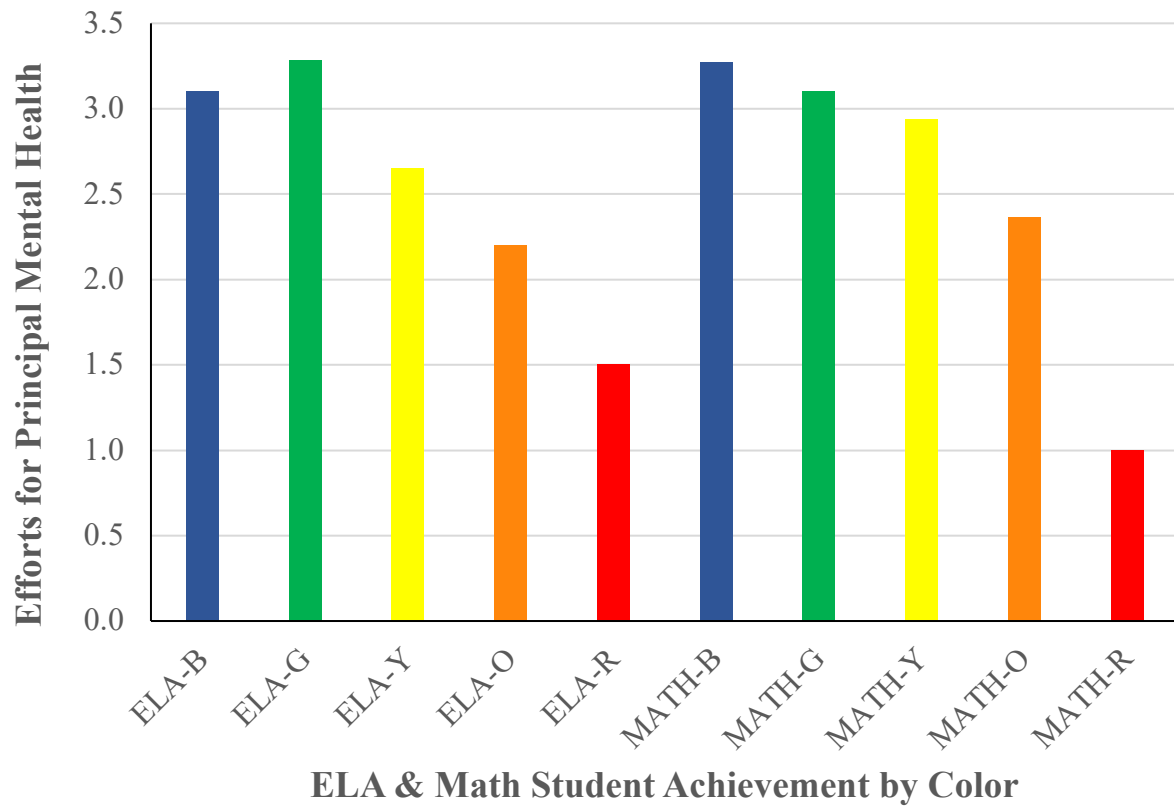


Figure 26. Bar graph representing the relationship between student achievement in ELA and Math and Health ($N = 181$).

Appendix L: Figure Representing Student Achievement (ELA Color) and Efforts to Support
Principal Mental Health

Figure 27

Student Achievement (ELA Color) and Efforts to Support Principal Mental Health

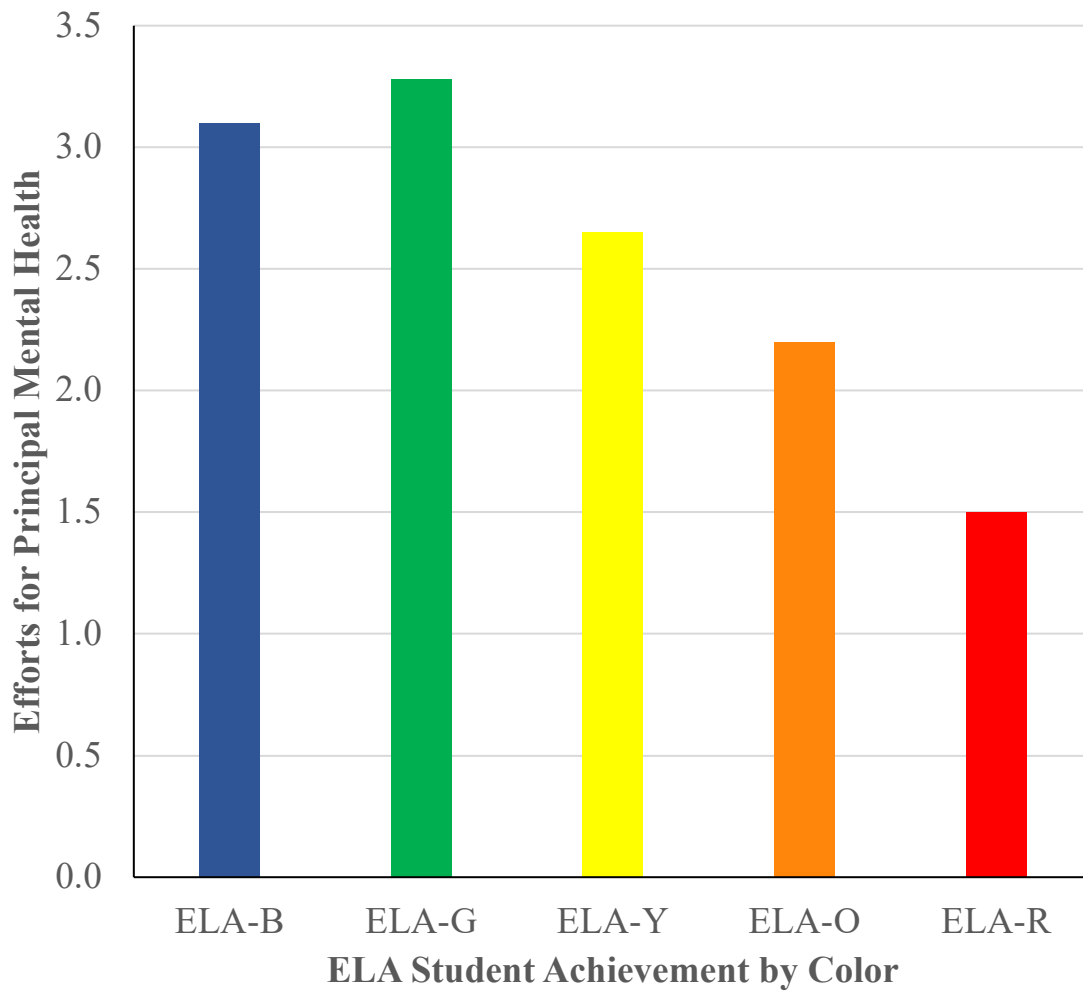


Figure 27. Bar graph representing the relationship between student achievement in ELA and Health ($N = 181$)

Appendix M: Figure Representing Student Achievement (Math Color) and Efforts to Support
Principal Mental Health

Figure 28

Student Achievement (Math Color) and Efforts to Support Principal Mental Health

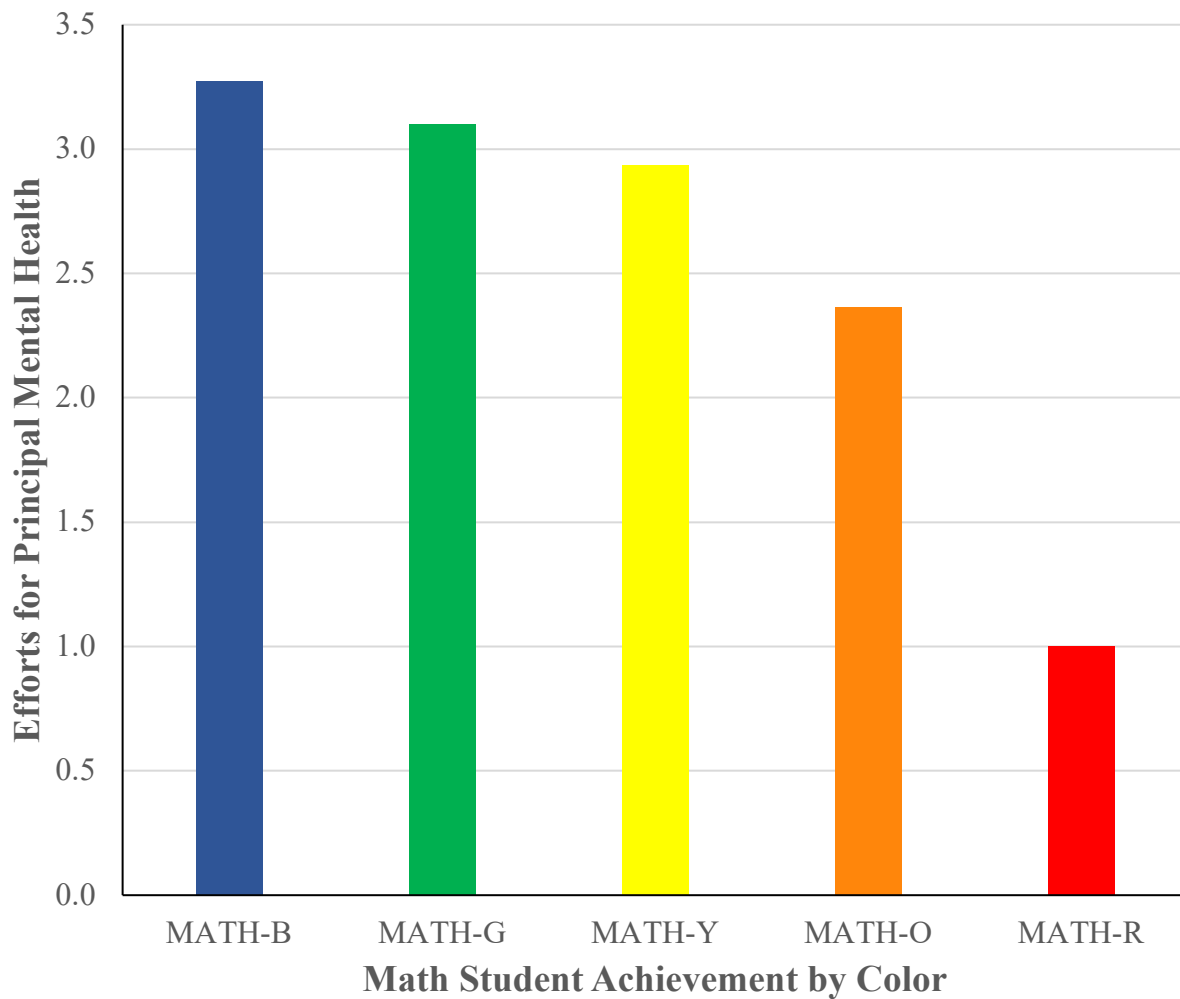


Figure 28. Bar graph representing the relationship between student achievement in MATH and Health ($N = 181$).

Appendix N: Table Representing the Mean Scores for Student Achievement (Math Change) and
Quality of Teaching and Learning

Table 25

Mean Scores for Student Achievement (Math Change) and Quality Teaching & Learning

Groups	Mean
High Growth	4.13
Low Growth	3.79
Maintained	3.84
Low Decline	2.87
High Decline	3.25

Appendix O: Table Representing the Mean Scores for Student Achievement (ELA Change) and Efforts to Build Trust with Principals

Table 26

Mean Scores for Student Achievement (ELA Change) and Efforts to Build Trust with Principals

Groups	Mean
High Growth	3.42
Low Growth	3.80
Maintained	3.50
Low Decline	2.67
High Decline	1.50

Appendix P: Table Representing the Mean Scores for Student Achievement (Math Change) and Efforts to Support Principal Mental Health

Table 27

Mean Scores for Student Achievement (Math Change) and Efforts to Support Principal Mental Health

Groups	Mean
High Growth	2.00
Low Growth	3.08
Maintained	2.84
Low Decline	2.33
High Decline	1.75

Appendix Q: Table Representing Tools Used to Determine Phase II Districts

Table 28*Determining Which Districts to Utilize for Phase II*

		Quality T&L	Board Priority	Mentor New	Mentor All	Mentor = Ach't	Mentors Trained	Trust	Health	Totals	
	<i>N</i>	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	4+	2-
XXX District	3	4.0	3.0	4.0	3.7	3.7	3.3	3.3	4.0	3	
XXX District	3	2.3	2.7	2.7	2.7	3.0	4.0	3.0	1.3	1	1
XXX District	4	2.5	4.3	4.8	4.3	3.8	3.8	4.3	3.3	3	
District A	3	3.7	4.0	5.0	4.7	5.0	4.7	4.0	4.0	6	
District B	3	4.7	4.0	4.0	3.7	4.0	3.3	4.0	3.7	5	
XXX District	3	3.3	4.0	1.3	2.3	2.7	2.7	3.0	1.7	1	2
XXX District	3	3.7	4.3	5.0	4.3	4.0	4.3	3.7	3.0	5	
XXX District	3	3.3	2.3	3.3	2.7	2.7	2.7	3.3	1.3		1
XXX District	4	4.0	4.3	4.5	3.8	4.0	4.4	4.3	3.5	6	
District C	4	2.8	3.3	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.0	2.3	1.5		3

Note: The District selected as District A had six beliefs and behaviors rated 4.0 or above. The District selected as District B had five beliefs and behaviors rated 4.0 or above. The District selected as District C had three beliefs and behaviors rated 2.0 or less.

Appendix R: Table Representing Phase II District Student Achievement Data

Table 29*Phase II District Student Achievement Data*

District Student Achievement Data	
District A	
ELA Color	Green
ELA Change	7.7 Increase
Math Color	Green
Math Change	7.2 Increase
District B	
ELA Color	Green
ELA Change	10.0 Increase
Math Color	Green
Math Change	8.2 Increase
District C	
ELA Color	Orange
ELA Change	Maintained

Math Color Yellow

Math Change 3.2 Increase

Appendix S: Table Representing Common Likert Statement Responses

Table 30*Common Likert Statement Responses*

Common Likert Statement Responses						
	Quality Teaching & Learning	Training Principals is High Priority	Program to Train All Principals	Programs to Mentor New Principals	Mentoring = Increased Achievement	Mentors Are Trained
District A						
Superintendent	3	5	3	5	5	4
Director	4	5	5	5	5	5
Principal	3.5	4.5	5	5	5	5
Principal	3	5	4	4	3	4
District B						
Superintendent	4	4	4	5	4	3
Director	4	4	4	3	3	3
Principal	4	3	2	3	4	4
District C						
Superintendent	3	5	5	5	4	4

Director	3	3	3	4	4	5
Principal	3	4	2	3	4	4

Appendix T: Table Representing Phase II Superintendent Likert Statement Responses

Table 31*Phase II Superintendent Likert Statement Responses*

Superintendent Likert Statement Responses			
	District A	District B	District C
	Superintendent	Superintendent	Superintendent
Quality Teaching & Learning	3	4	3
Training Principals is Highest Priority	5	4	5
Training Principals is A Board Priority	3	4	4
Principal = Student Achievement	5	5	5
Principal Roles Understood by All	4	5	4
Program to Train Principals	3	4	5
Program to Mentor New Principals	5	5	5

Program to Mentor All Principals	4	4	4
Mentoring = Increased Achievement	5	4	4
Mentors Are Trained	4	3	4
Efforts to Build Trust with Principals	3	4	5
Efforts for Principal Mental Health	3	5	3

Appendix U: Table Representing Phase II Director Likert Statement Responses

Table 32*Phase II Director Likert Statement Responses*

Director Likert Statement Responses			
	District A	District B	District C
	Director	Director	Director
Quality Teaching & Learning	4	4	3
Training Principals is Highest Priority	5	4	2
Program to Train Principals	5	4	3
Program to Mentor New Principals	5	3	4
Program to Mentor All Principals	5	2	3
Mentoring = Increased Achievement	5	3	4
Mentors Are Trained	5	3	5

Appendix V: Table Representing Phase II Principal Likert Statement Responses

Table 33*Phase II Principal Likert Statement Responses*

Principal Likert Statement Responses				
	District A	District A	District B	District C
	Principal 1	Principal 2	Principal	Principal
Quality Teaching & Learning	3.5	3	4	3
Training Principals is Highest Priority	4.5	5	3	4
Program to Train Principals	5	4	2	2
Program to Mentor New Principals	5	4	3	3
Mentoring = Increased Achievement	5	3	4	4
Mentors Are Trained	5	4	4	4

Appendix W: Figure Representing District A Likert Responses

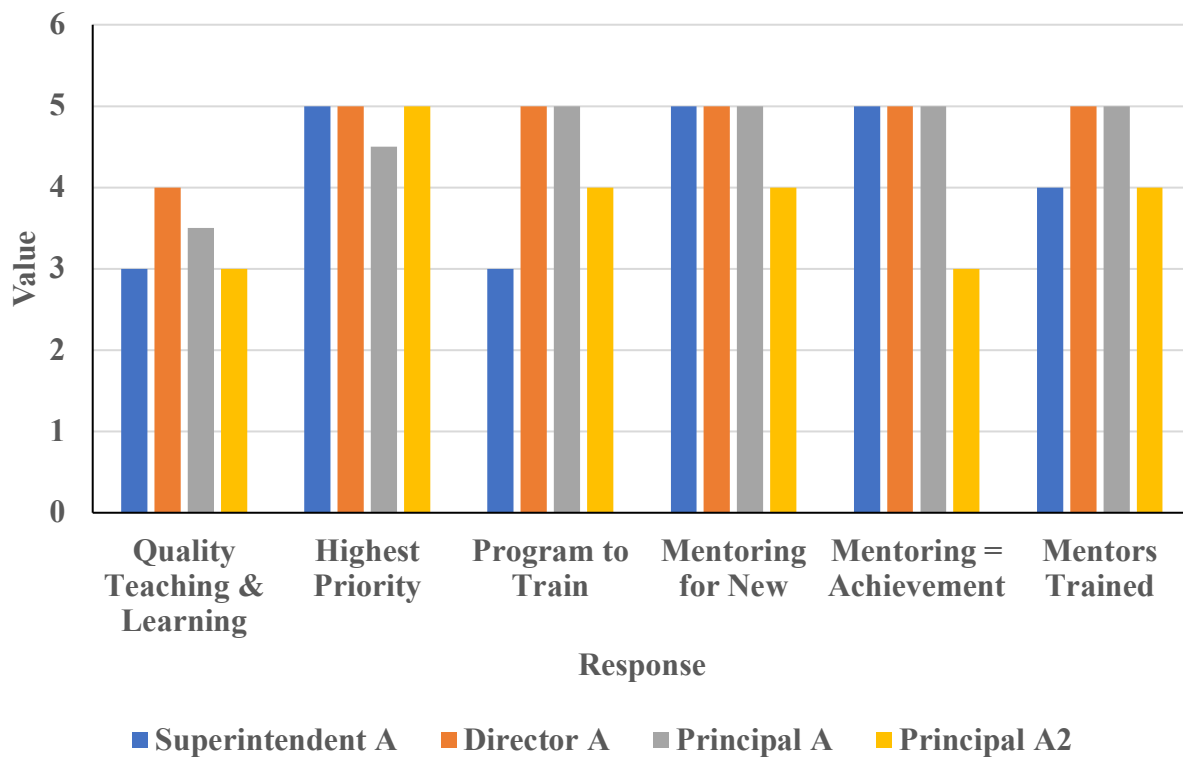
Figure 29*District A Likert Responses*

Figure 29. Bar graph representing Likert Statement responses from District A Phase II participants ($N = 4$).

Appendix X: Figure Representing District B Likert Responses

Figure 30

District B Likert Responses

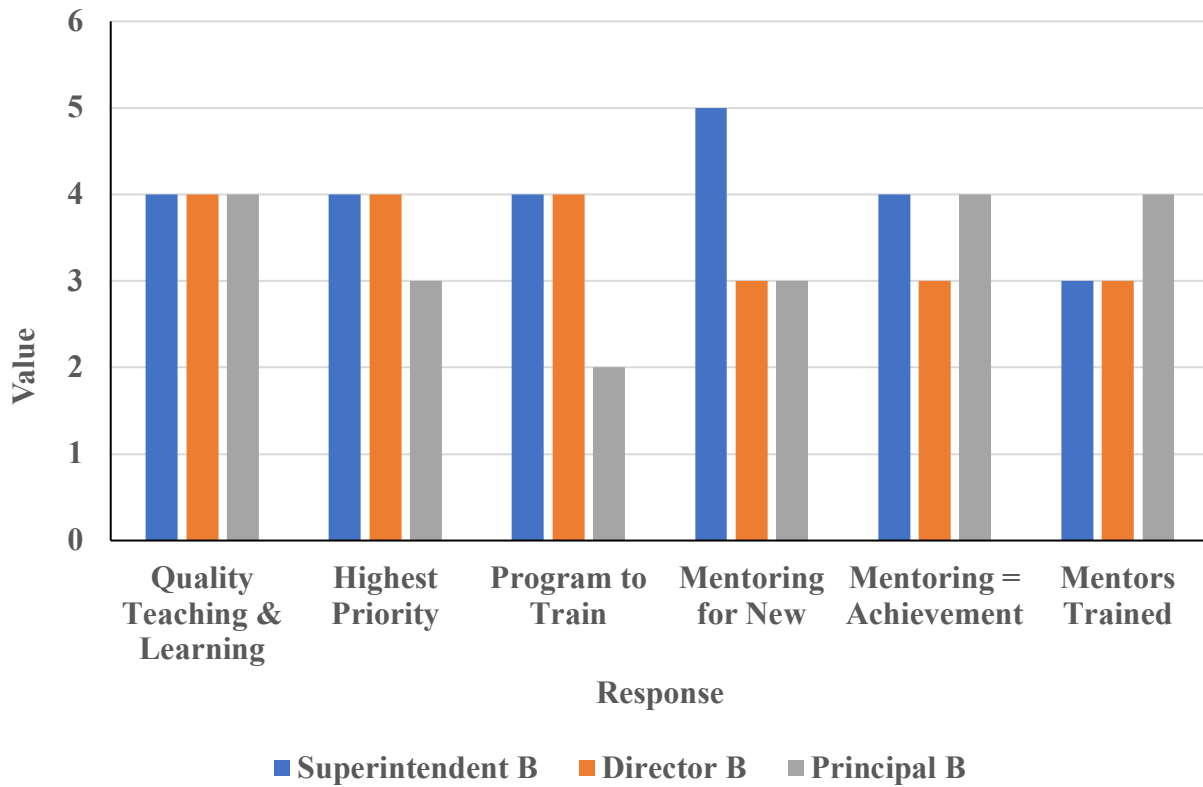


Figure30. Bar graph representing Likert Statement responses from District B Phase II participants ($N = 3$).

Appendix Y: Figure Representing District C Likert Responses

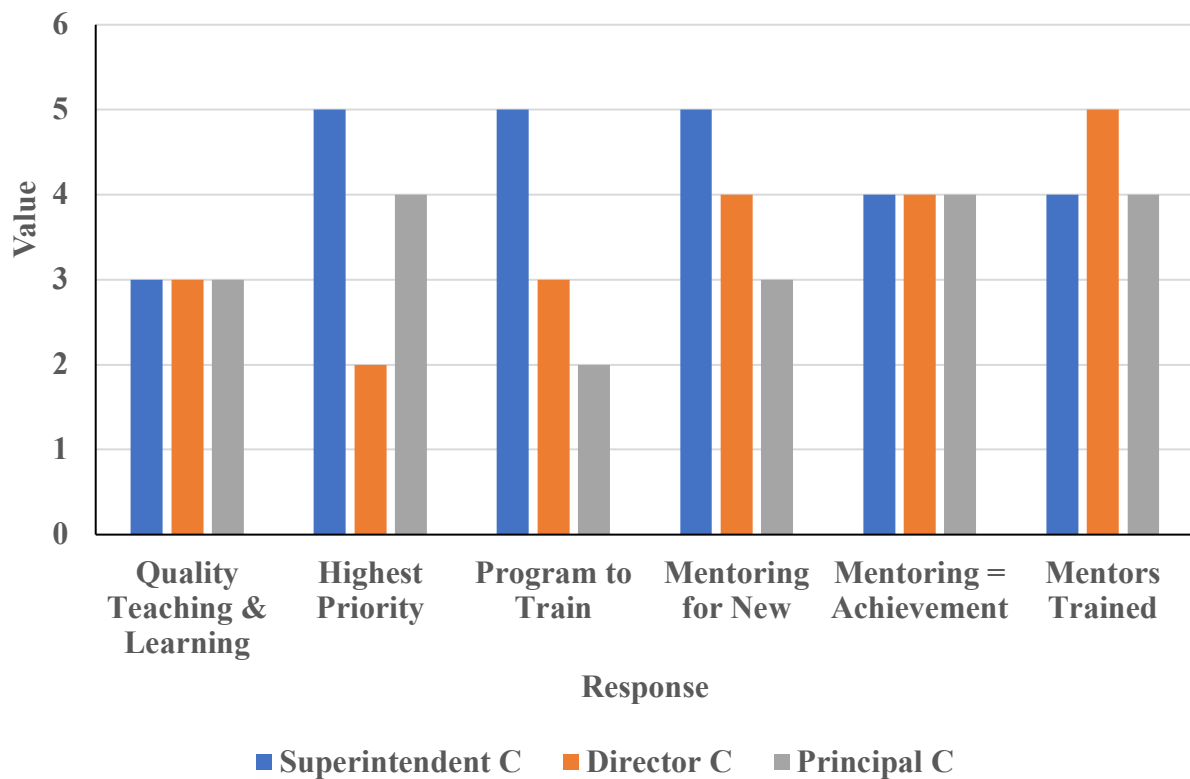
Figure 31*District C Likert Responses*

Figure 31. Bar graph representing Likert Statement responses from District C Phase II participants ($N = 3$).

Appendix Z: Figure Representing All Phase II Responses on Quality Teaching & Learning

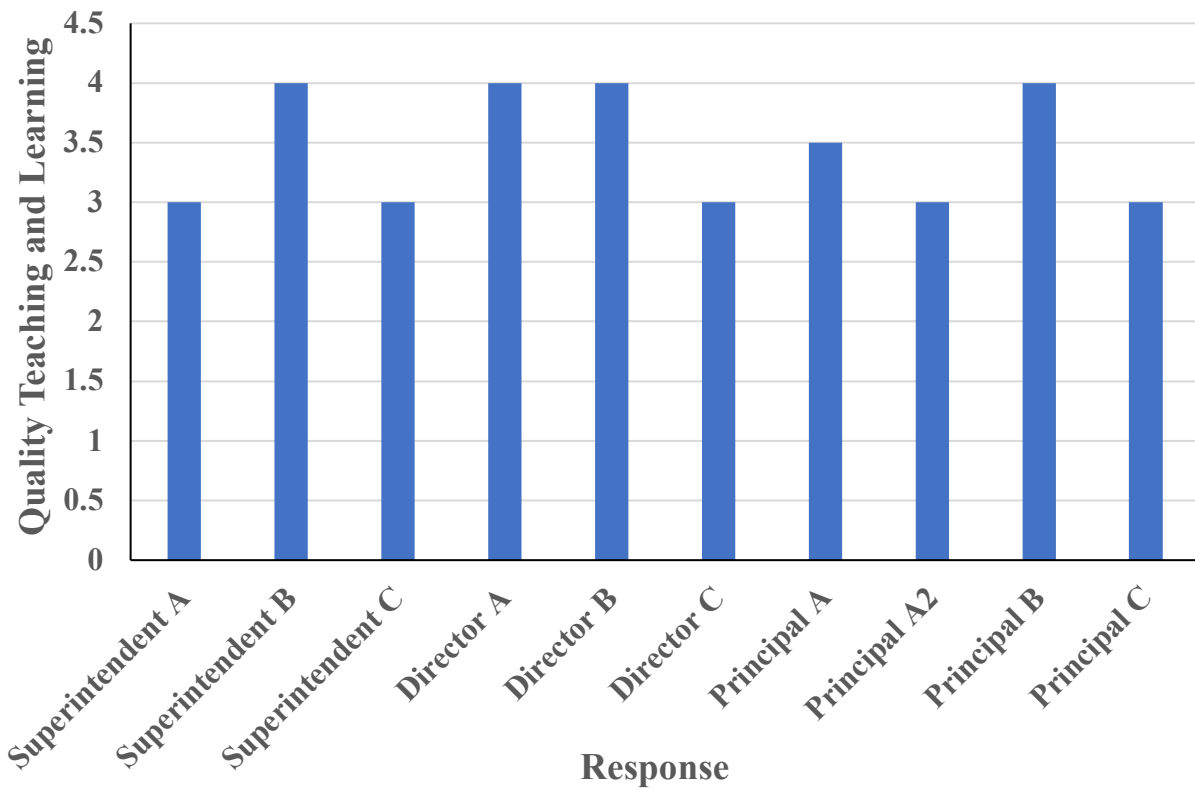
Figure 32*All Phase II Responses on Quality Teaching & Learning*

Figure 32. Bar graph representing responses to Likert Statement 1 from all Phase II districts ($N = 10$).

Appendix AA: Figure Representing All Phase II Responses on Training Principals is Highest

Priority

Figure 33

All Phase II Responses on Training Principals is Highest Priority

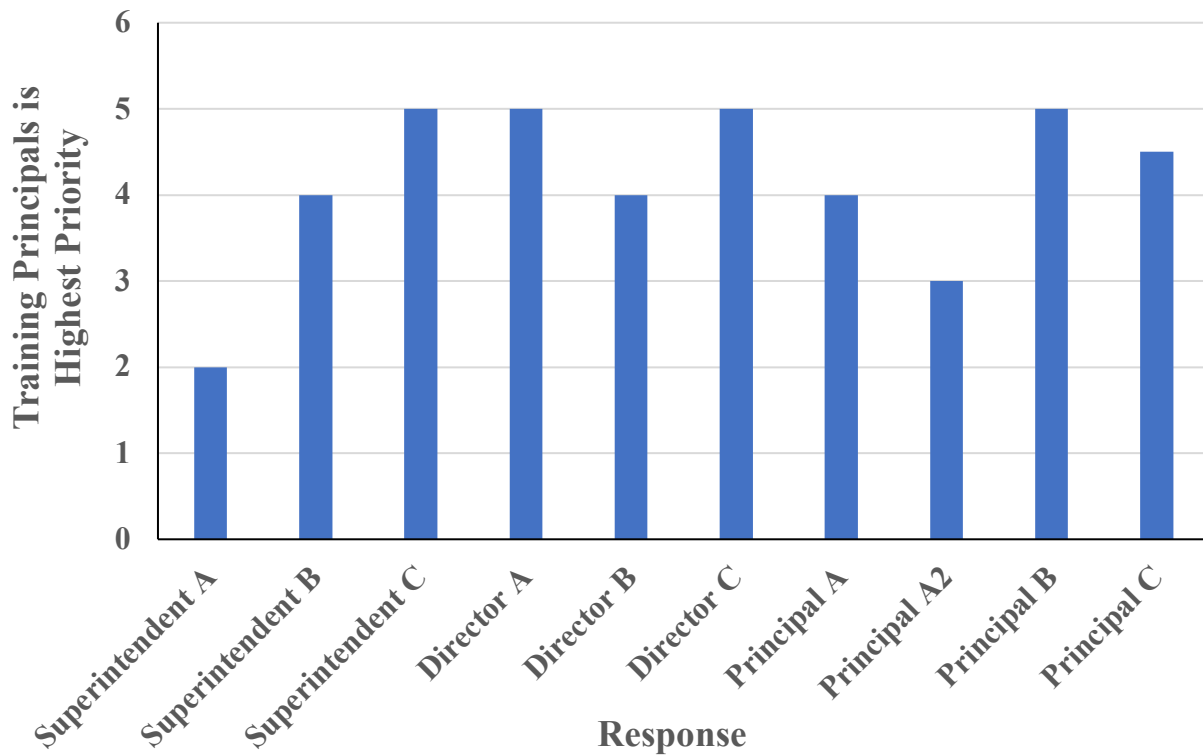


Figure 33. Bar graph representing responses to Likert Statement 2 from all Phase II districts (N = 10).

Appendix BB: Figure Representing All Phase II Responses on Program to Train Principals

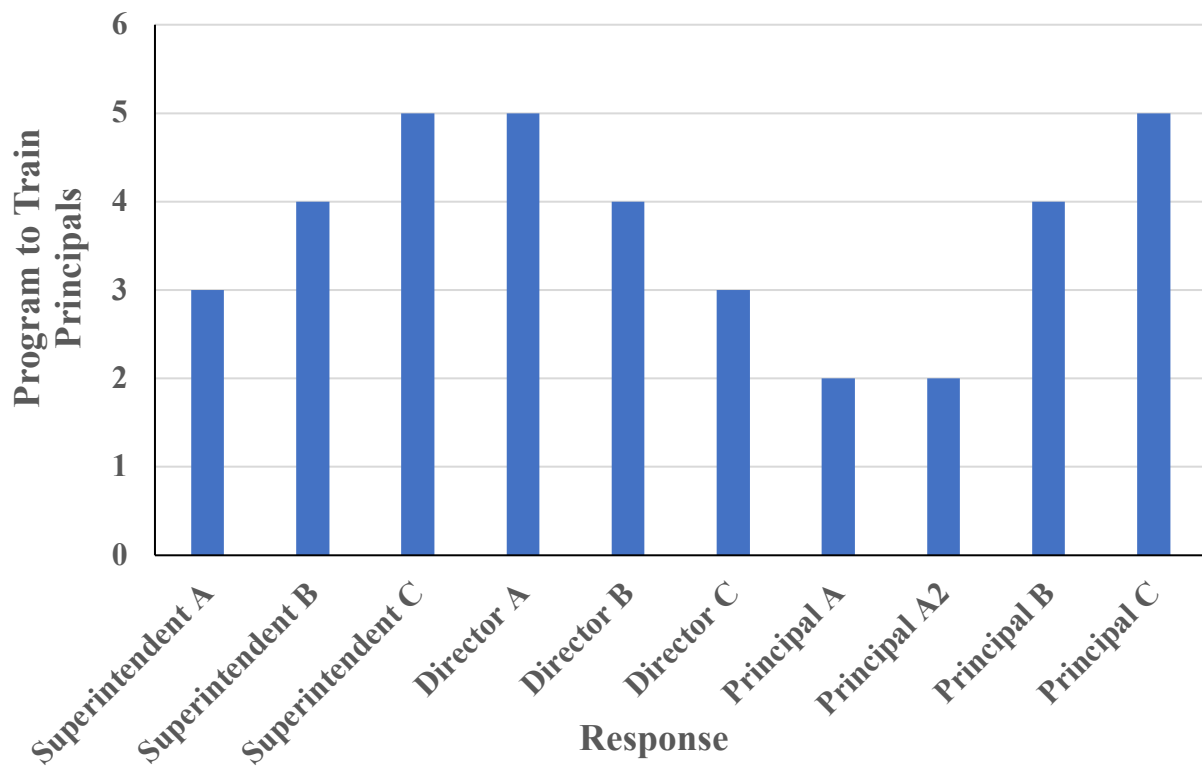
Figure 34*All Phase II Responses on Program to Train Principals*

Figure 34. Bar graph representing responses to Likert Statement 3 from all Phase II districts ($N = 10$).

Appendix CC: Figure Representing All Phase II Responses on Program to Mentor New Principals

Figure 35

All Phase II Responses on Program to Mentor New Principals

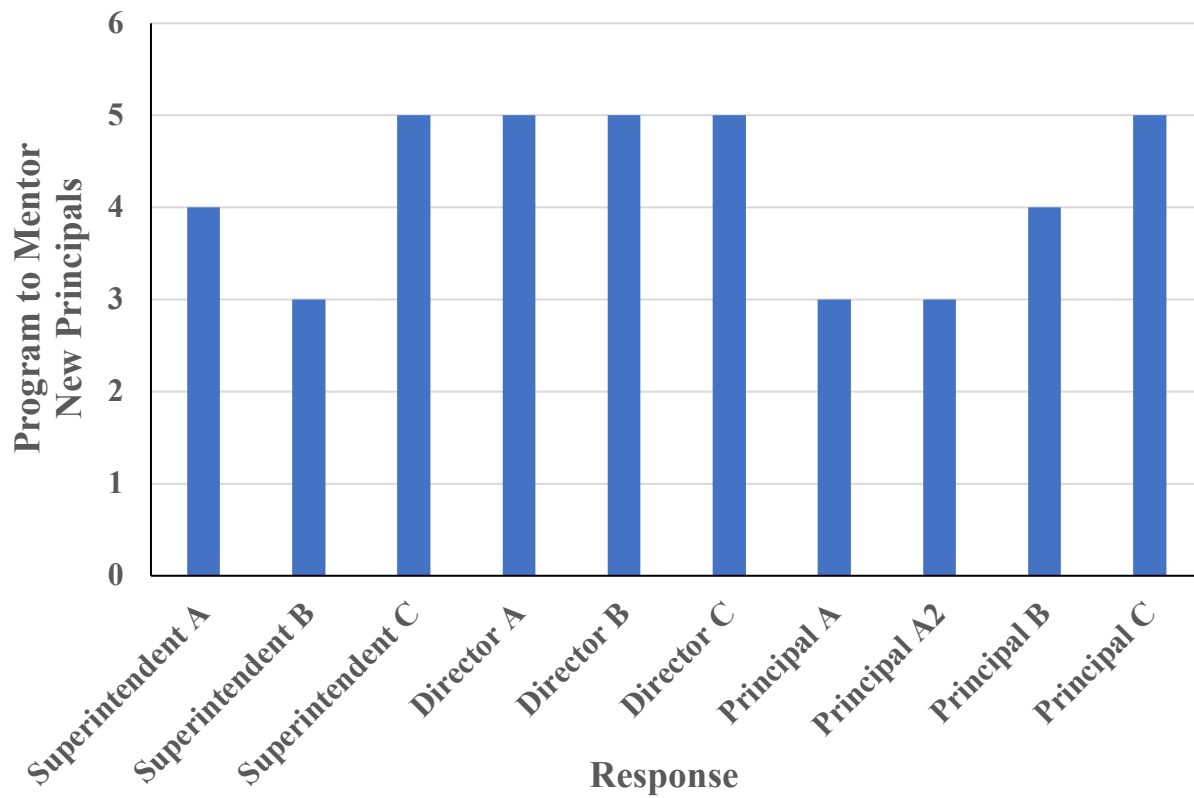


Figure 35. Bar graph representing responses to Likert Statement 4 from all Phase II districts ($N = 10$).

Appendix DD: Figure Representing All Phase II Responses on Mentoring = Increased
Achievement

Figure 36

All Phase II Responses on Mentoring = Increased Achievement

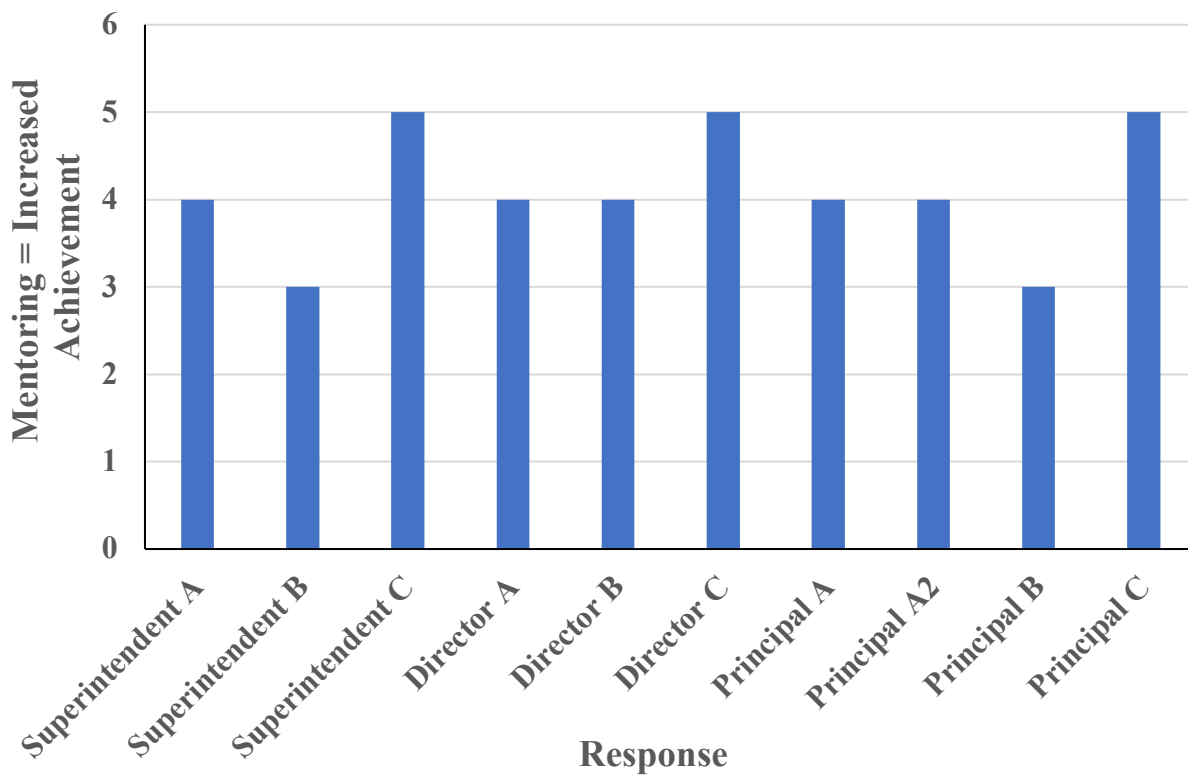


Figure 36. Bar graph representing responses to Likert Statement 5 from all Phase II districts (N = 10).

Appendix EE: Figure Representing All Phase II Responses on Mentors Are Trained

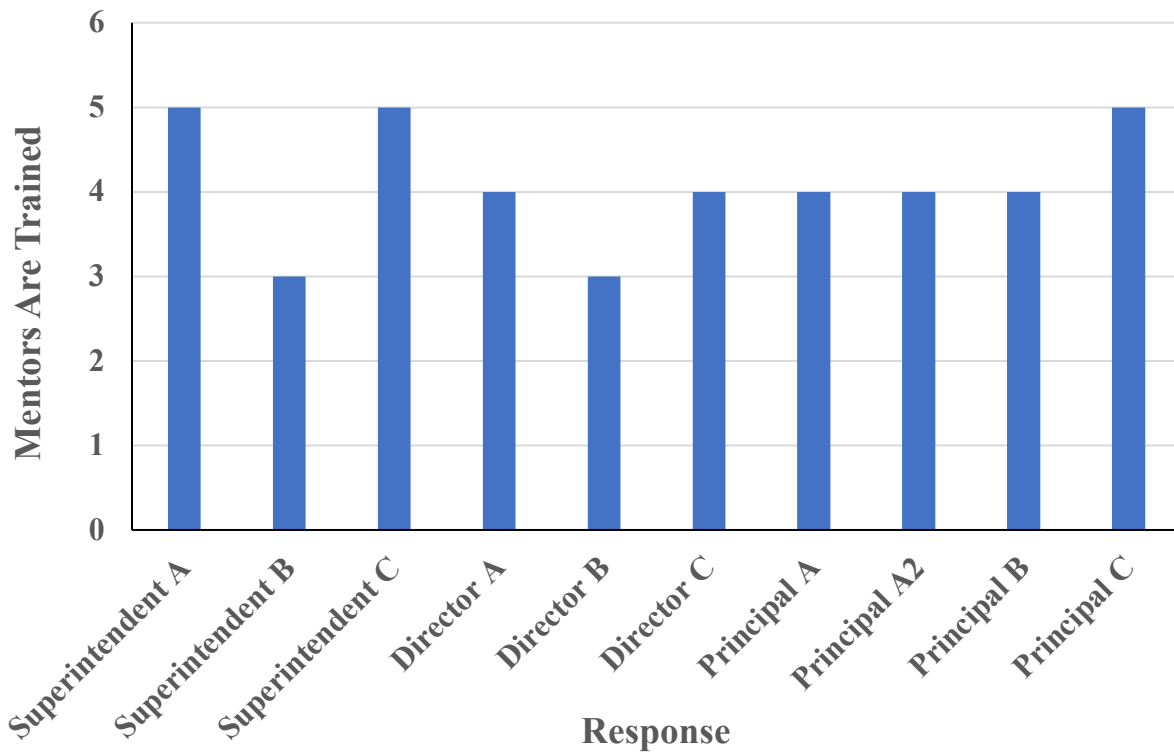
Figure 37*All Phase II Responses on Mentors Are Trained*

Figure 37. Bar graph representing responses to Likert Statement 6 from all Phase II districts ($N = 10$).