

ABSTRACT

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP FOR

HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

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Instructional leadership for high school principals is becoming more important as principals are being held increasingly accountable for student achievement results. Principals are next to teachers in impacting learning in the classroom. The problem for high school principals is that they do not feel prepared to be instructional leaders for their school. There are many tasks a principal must handle throughout the day and these tasks take time away from principals acting as the instructional leader for their school. Principals are also not always supported in their development as an instructional leader. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how high school principals have developed into instructional leaders, the obstacles they encountered during this process and their perceptions of the types of external support they received in instructional leadership.

The participants in the study included six high school principals from four different school districts. The principals had all been on the job for at least one year. Interview and document data were collected and analyzed for common themes. The findings of the study suggested that when principals receive external support in instructional leadership, there are indications that they begin to develop in this area.

District support, mentoring and coaching, team support and reading with purpose were important in the development of the principals. The findings also suggested two obstacles, time and people, for principals as they lead their schools in instruction. Finally, the study's findings indicated the principals who receive support had positive views of that support. Based on the results of the study, recommendations were made for providing a strong system of support for high school principals in the area of instructional leadership.

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HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Scenario

It was 7:00pm and the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meeting was about to begin. As Miss Jones sat down, she started reflecting on the events from the day. As the principal of New Hope High School, she was feeling overwhelmed by everything she took care of during the school day. The school's budget was running low and she had to figure out a plan to make the money last the rest of the year. The Superintendent called while she was looking at the budget because he received a parent complaint about a teacher. The Superintendent said he wanted a resolution to the complaint within 24 hours. Before Miss Jones had a chance to send a quick email to the teacher letting her know that she needed to speak to her, Miss Jones's administrative assistant walked into the office to let Miss Jones know that a parent was in the office wanting to talk. Since Miss Jones had an open door policy, she took the time to speak to this parent. After a 30 minute meeting, the Assistant Principal walked down the hallway to let Miss Jones know there was a fight and a drug bust earlier in the day. During this conversation the bell rang for lunch so Miss Jones needed to get outside to supervise the student lunch period.

After lunch, Miss Jones walked around to pick up some of the trash that was left on campus. Once back in the office, Miss Jones remembered she needed to address the parent complaint the Superintendent called about. Realizing the teacher was on a

conference period, Miss Jones called the teacher's classroom and they agreed to meet right away. The teacher met with Miss Jones for 20 minutes and they came up with a plan to address the parent complaint. Once the teacher left, Miss Jones began working on her school's Common Core professional development plan to implement the new standards. The Common Core was new and Miss Jones had not had much time to help her staff prepare for the new curriculum. Miss Jones did not feel knowledgeable about the changes in the standards herself because she had not been through any training or professional development. Right as Miss Jones started to read through some of her paperwork, her maintenance lead came into the office and let her know the air conditioning stopped working and teachers started to complain. The maintenance crew could not fix the problem right away, so Miss Jones had to call the district office to get some help. After the phone call, Miss Jones sent out a staff email letting them know that the air conditioning was not working and the district office was working on it.

The bell rang again; it was already the end of the school day. Since school is done for the day, Miss Jones decided to listen to her messages on her phone and to return some emails. Another day went by and Miss Jones was not able to begin her Common Core professional development plan and she did not get out into classrooms. She started asking herself how was she supposed to help her school transition to the Common Core when she did not know a lot about the changes that would be taking place with the new standards? Miss Jones did not feel prepared for this change because she did not spend a lot of time in her administrative credential program on instructional leadership. She had not attended any professional development trainings herself as her district office only offered training for lead teachers in the district. The PTA meeting was about to begin, so

Miss Jones had to forget about the Common Core and instructional leadership until the meeting ended.

Background of the Study

Instructional leadership was not new in education. For many years, leaders in schools and at district offices have been expected to lead schools in the area of instruction (Hallinger, 2003). Principals have been asked to lead their staff through the many reforms that influenced instruction. Next to teachers, principals have had the next most significant impact on classroom learning and instruction (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005). Being an instructional leader has not been an easy task for principals as they have had many different roles and responsibilities to address throughout the day. Principals have been expected to handle concerns from parents, answer to the district office, discipline students as needed, and supervise certificated and classified staff members. Somehow, throughout the day, principals have also focused on instruction, lesson delivery in classrooms, and student achievement (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, 2005; Fink & Resnick, 2001; Graczweski, Knudson, Holtzman, 2009;). With all of the roles and job duties principals have been expected to take on, there has been very little time left in the day to focus on instruction.

In the era of school accountability, there was a definite need to have strong instructional leaders in schools (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Principals have been expected to take full responsibility for the learning outcomes of a school and they needed to be prepared for any changes to curriculum and instruction that ultimately impacted their school. In 2001, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was passed by the federal government and principals were held responsible for how students performed on

standardized tests. They were also responsible for making sure the subgroups in their schools achieved at proficient levels. If schools failed to meet the demands of NCLB, sanctions were imposed. One of the possible sanctions was the replacing of the administrators at the school, including the principal.

More recently, schools have begun a new phase in education with the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The standards require the teaching of specific skills for students to perform at higher levels. Principals, once again, have been called upon to lead their schools through this major curriculum shift, which required changes to instructional practices in the classroom. Principals must lead their schools in discovering best teaching practices to ensure all students, especially subgroups, perform at high levels on the new standardized tests. The implementation of the Common Core Standards was quick. The standards were developed in 2010 and schools started full implementation of them this school year (National Governors Association Center, 2010). Principals needed to lead their schools through this change and communicate the changes to families. In order to do this, principals were expected to know how the new standards were different from the previous framework and they needed to be able to explain how students were impacted by the changes.

Another challenge principals have been facing with the transition to the CCSS was the way students were tested. The end of the year assessments were online so principals needed to make sure they had enough technology and that the technology worked. Teachers and students needed training on the technology for the new testing format. Instead of straight multiple-choice questions, the new assessments have essays and short answer response sections. There were performance tasks that required teachers

to teach a topic and then students had to type a response to the lesson (Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, 2012). The final challenge for principals was the lack of curricular materials for teachers and students. Textbooks were not Common Core ready and there was a lack of supplemental materials for schools to use. Principals had to take the lead and support teachers and students through all of these challenges.

An issue facing principals was whether or not they felt prepared or supported for their role as instructional leader, especially with the implementation of the new standards. Principals have a master's degree and administrative credential, but many university programs have not fully prepared principals in the area of instruction. Even though the master programs had high standards for their students, many administrators left these programs not ready to be an instructional leader (Davis, et. al., 2005). Once someone becomes a principal, there may have been some support available to them as they worked through daily problems or concerns, but this support was not always formal.

Problem Statement

Instructional leadership has played a vital role in the overall success of the school (Davis, et al., 2005). Principals needed to be instructional leaders for their schools. They have been extremely important to the learning and achievement for students (Davis, et al., 2005). Principals are held accountable now more than ever for how students perform on standardized testing. The problem for principals has been they often times did not feel prepared for the task of leading their schools in instruction. Principals felt their university credential program did not adequately prepare them to be an instructional leader (Davis, et al., 2005). Once on the job, principals were faced with many tasks; which made it difficult to focus on instruction. Principals were not always supported in

ways so they could get through their daily tasks and lead their schools in instruction. It was important to analyze how principals felt about the preparation and support they have received as credential students and as principals so university preparation programs and school districts could provide the proper training and support to them through the challenges they have faced as instructional leaders.

The task of becoming an instructional leader has been daunting. Consider a high school principal leading a California school with an average school size just under 1,400 students (California Department of Education, 2013), where multiple subjects were taught in depth, students with varied backgrounds and needs were enrolled in the school, and being held accountable for all of the students' learning in all subjects. The need for advanced preparation, professional development, and support has been obvious as principals attempted to become instructional leaders for schools (Boerema, 2011). The problem that was be addressed in this research were the number of obstacles, including a lack of time and support, high school principals faced in becoming instructional leaders for their school.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to explore how high school principals have developed into instructional leaders. The study examined, through interviews, six principals' stories on how they have led their schools in instruction. The researcher sought to understand how high school principals have established a mission, managed instruction and established a positive school climate. The study also explored the obstacles principals have faced as they became instructional leaders, and their perceptions

in regards to the amount and quality of external support they have received as instructional leaders.

Research Questions

The following research questions and sub questions guided this study:

1. How have six high school principals developed into instructional leaders?
2. What obstacles have principals faced in becoming an instructional leader?
3. What were the perceptions the principals had of the support they have received in developing as an instructional leader?

Theoretical Framework

There were many different theories on instructional leadership. For example, Leithwood's theory of instructional leadership was centered on the idea principals should share and critique strategies and tools to help improve student learning (1994). Dufour (2002) offered another theory on instructional leadership, which emphasized focusing on learning and not teaching. The job of a principal was to support teachers and students in order to increase learning and student outcomes (Dufour, 2002). While these theories are strong, they are only partially applicable to a high school setting. At a high school with a possible student population of 2,500, it has become difficult for a principal to offer and critique strategies with teachers. There are many different classes offered on a high school campus, which has made it difficult for a principal to focus on strategies and teaching tools. While Dufour's theory makes sense because it has been important for principals to focus on learning rather than on teaching, principals needed to do more than just support teachers and students. Hallinger and Murphy's (2013) theory of Instructional Leadership, however, fits the high school setting extremely well; which was why it was

selected for this research study. Hallinger and Murphy's (2013) theory of Instructional Leadership can be defined as, "...an influence process through which leaders identify the direction for the school, motivate the staff, and coordinate school and classroom-based strategies aimed at improvements in teaching and learning"(p. 3). This theory of Instructional Leadership included three dimensions: *Defining the School's Mission, Managing the Instructional Program, and Promoting a Positive School Learning Climate* (Hallinger, 2005; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985, 2013). The three dimensions included different leadership functions for the principal (Hallinger, 2005).

The first dimension, Defining a School's Mission, included two main jobs for the principal. The two jobs were to help frame the school's goals and to communicate those goals. The principal's role in this dimension was to make sure the school had established clear goals and a vision for the school (Hallinger, 2005). The goals that were established by the principal had to fit what the school and the students of the school needed and the vision and goals needed to be visible, supported and modeled by the school's leader (Hallinger, 2005).

Managing the Instructional Program was the next dimension of Hallinger and Murphy's theory of Instructional Leadership. In this dimension, the leadership functions for principals were supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum and monitoring student progress (Hallinger, 2005).

The final dimension of Hallinger and Murphy's theory of Instructional Leadership was Promoting a Positive School Learning Climate. The functions in this dimension included protecting instructional time, promoting professional development, being visible, developing high expectations and providing incentives for learning (Hallinger,

2005). In this dimension of instructional leadership, principals were constantly looking for ways to improve teaching and learning and they strove to create a supportive culture at school (Hallinger, 2005).

According to Hallinger and Murphy's theory of Instructional Leadership, principals as instructional leaders impacted the school indirectly because they worked with people, structures, processes and culture (2013). This type of indirect influence on student and school outcomes was called a *mediated-effects* model of leadership. A mediated-effects model of leadership acknowledged principals did not directly impact instruction. Instead they influenced teachers, worked on establishing a vision and goals and they worked to create a positive culture to foster student achievement. When principals did these things, they may have had a positive indirect influence on instruction.

The day-to-day managerial duties, however, may have impacted the amount of time principals were able to spend impacting the instruction of a school. "When we consider the expertise needed to lead learning, the normative pressures that draw principals away from classrooms, and the conflicting demands on a principal's time, it becomes clear that instructional leadership cannot be a solo performance" (Hallinger & Murphy, 2013, p. 11). In order to overcome this barrier, Hallinger and Murphy (2005) suggested principals needed to build leadership capacity within their school in order to carry out a strong instructional leadership model.

Hallinger and Murphy's theory of Instructional Leadership also emphasized how important it was for instructional leaders to create a shared mission that makes sense for the school they were leading. Different schools have had different student populations, parent involvement and needs. Principals needed to ensure all activities aligned with the

school's mission and goals and they had to be ready to make adjustments depending on what the school needs at any given time (Hallinger, 2005).

In today's era of accountability and changing standards, instructional leadership has become extremely important for principals. Hallinger and Murphy's (2013) theory of Instructional Leadership has been important in education, as principals have been held increasingly accountable for student outcomes and performance.

Operational Definitions

The following terms were used throughout this study:

Adequate yearly progress (AYP): The percentage of students that reach proficient levels that were established under the Federal No Child Left Behind Act. By 2014, all students had to reach 100% proficiency in English Language Arts and Math.

Coaching: Individualized training of principals in order to support their growth and development in the position.

Common core state standards: New national standards that are being implemented in many states during the 2013-2014 school year.

High stakes testing: Testing that leads to important decisions that impact students, schools, and districts.

Mentee: A person that is receiving support from a veteran staff member at their district or school site.

Mentor: A veteran administrator that works with principals. This can be done formally or informally.

No child left behind act (2001): Federal legislation that was passed in order to lower the achievement gap between students. The goal of the act is for students to reach 100% proficiency by 2014 in English Language Arts and Math.

Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations of the Study

As a current high school administrator, the researcher assumed other administrators have gone through similar struggles as they worked to manage their school's learning. The researcher had not received a lot of support or direction in instructional leadership early in her administrative career, so it was assumed this lack of support or direction held true for other high school administrators. The researcher's days were filled with many different tasks and became difficult finding time getting into classrooms, leading the change to the CCSS, attending professional development, and providing support to teachers. Often times the researcher in this study was overwhelmed by the duties of a high school administrator, especially in her development as a strong instructional leader. Based on conversations that have taken place with a handful of other administrators, the researcher assumed they were also feeling overwhelmed.

There were a number of delimitations in the study. The researcher chose to interview six high school principals with at least one year of experience on the job. High school principals were selected by the researcher because of the larger student population, staff sizes, and amount of instructional leadership that went along with being in charge of a larger school setting. High school principals also have added challenges that are not found at the middle or elementary school levels. For example, high school principals have a large athletic program and college expectations that require time and attention from the principal. As a high school principal's time is divided between many

different duties, it becomes difficult finding the time to develop as an instructional leader. Beginning principals that have been in the position for less than a year were not selected to be a part of the study because the researcher wanted to gain insight into the amount of continuous support principals received once they have been on the job for a period of time.

Another delimitation of the study was all principals chosen for this study were leaders of schools in Southern California because the researcher had access to them. The results of this study could not be generalized to the entire state. A final delimitation of the study was the small sample size that was selected by the researcher. The researcher had access to six principals and the researcher wanted to get as much information as possible about each interviewee's experiences as instructional leaders.

There were also several limitations outside of the researcher's control in this study. By using interviews, the researcher was dependent upon the interviewees' level of honesty. Sometimes people were not as willing to be open because they were afraid of saying something that could get them in trouble. Another limitation was how much of what an interviewee says was opinion versus fact. When the researcher asked questions that attempted to analyze how people were feeling, it was easy for some to share how they felt instead of what was really going on. A third limitation in the study was the researchers' parents were both principals. The researcher also worked in three of the districts where principals were chosen. One of the districts the researcher works in currently and she works with one of the principals at the same school. This could lead to biases from the researcher based on the experiences she faced when working at the schools or with the principal. This could impact how the researcher approaches the study

and interprets the findings. A final limitation in the study was how well the interviewee could recall details of their experiences.

Significance of the Study

This study was significant for a few reasons. The study added to the literature that existed on instructional leadership for principals at the high school level, it could lead to revisions of administrator preparation, changes in district support of principals and the study could ultimately help principals contribute to the reduction of the achievement gap.

There was limited literature that focused on how principals managed school learning and on how principals developed into instructional leaders. This study focused on how principals developed into instructional leaders, how they developed and communicated a school's vision, managed instruction and established a positive school climate.

Principal preparation and district support are important aspects of developing instructional leaders. This study was also important because preparation programs could begin to shift in focus and spend more time in helping future administrators become stronger instructional leaders. Districts could also make changes by offering more support and guidance to principals in this area.

Finally, closing the achievement gap between different subgroups of students has been an important part of instructional leadership for principals. When the federal government passed the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) schools and principals were held progressively more accountable for student performance levels (United States Department of Education, 2013). The federal government raised the pressure on the state

governments, the states then raised the pressure on the school districts, and the school districts looked to principals to improve learning in their schools (Tucker & Coddling, 2002). This study was important because it could help principals lower the achievement gaps at their schools. This research study analyzed how six high school principals, who believe instructional leadership was important, led their schools in instruction.

Conclusion

As schools have transitioned to a new set of standards and a different accountability system, it was increasingly more important to make sure principals were ready to lead their schools through the change. There were many obstacles that prevented principals from focusing on instruction. Principals needed guidance and support as they developed into instructional leaders for their schools.

The following chapter examined what was currently in the literature about instructional leadership. Different definitions of instructional leadership were introduced and the rest of the chapter discussed preparation and support of administrators in instructional leadership. Chapter 3 discussed the methods used in the study, the participants of the study, the procedures the researcher followed and the data analysis process. Chapter 4 was an in depth analysis of the findings from the research, and the final chapter discussed the implications the research findings could have on the development and support of principals as instructional leaders.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In education, principals have taken on many roles at their school sites. They maintain their school's budgets, handle concerns from parents and the community, supervise teachers and other staff members, take care of any crisis that may arise, and advocate for limited resources (Fink & Resnick, 2001). Since the emergence of accountability in schools, principals have also been expected to take on an active role with regard to student achievement and learning (Graczweski, et al., 2009). In a study on school leadership, (Davis, et al., 2005) suggest:

More than ever, in today's climate of heightened expectations, principals are in the hot seat to improve teaching and learning. They need to be educational visionaries, instructional and curriculum leaders, assessment experts, disciplinarians, community builders, public overseers of legal, contractual, and policy mandates and initiatives. (p. 1)

Since the passage of NCLB in 2001, principals have been under pressure to get their students to proficient academic achievement levels so their schools can avoid sanctions from the government. If all students do not reach the required proficiency levels from year to year, then schools could have faced disciplinary measures. As time went on the corrective measures got more severe, including dismissing the entire

leadership at a school (McNeil, 2011). The pressure of meeting AYP under NCLB redefined the role of the principal as an instructional leader (Gray & Lewis, 2011). Today, principals are faced with leading their schools as they transition to the new CCSS. The new standards are shifting the focus of how teachers teach. Instead of having students memorize and repeat what teachers have taught them, students are being asked to think critically and to take part in their own learning process (National Governors Association Center, 2010). This shift in instructional focus is something principals are being asked to take the lead on for their schools. Principals must also fulfill many other roles such as, keeping a school safe to support learning, creating structures to foster learning, and managing resources to help all groups of students learn (Wested and the Association of California School Administrators, 2004). Out of all the standards, roles, and expectations set for principals, perhaps the most important role is being an instructional leader. The following parts of this chapter will describe what literature exists on the instructional leadership and the role principals play in this area of school leadership.

The following sections will take a look at instructional leadership for principals. Different definitions of instructional leadership found in the literature will be examined, as well as obstacles principals face leading their schools. The different supports available to site administrators in instructional leadership will also be analyzed. These areas of support include: university or principal preparation programs, leadership academies or institutes, mentoring programs, district support on the development of instructional leaders, and coaching of principals. The final section will address administrators' perceptions of support in the area of instructional leadership.

Definition of Instructional Leadership Over Time

Before looking at the amount of support administrators get in the area of instructional leadership or the perceptions administrators have of this support, it is important to first look at what instructional leadership means and why it is important to analyze instructional leadership. There is some debate as to what exactly it means to be an instructional leader in a school (Quinn, 2002). “Researchers agree that the principal must be a strong instructional leader, though they do not always agree on a definition or the characteristics that embody instructional leadership” (Quinn, 2002, p. 447). This ambiguity leads to some of the difficulties principals face when trying to become the instructional leader for their schools. The next part of the literature will analyze the different definitions researchers have provided for instructional leadership.

One of the early definitions of instructional leadership offered by Philip Hallinger was principals need to be an integral part of developing the school’s educational program. According to Hallinger, “High expectations for teachers and students, close supervision of classroom instruction, coordination of the school’s curriculum, and close monitoring of student progress became synonymous with the role definition of instructional leader” (1992, p. 37). Ten years later, Supovitz and Poglinco (2001) stated instructional leadership should guide what all leaders do at a school. Instructional leaders need to create a safe place for teachers to work together on improving instruction, leaders need to make instructional leadership a priority, and schools should be organized around improving instruction (Supovitz & Poglinco, 2001).

In 2002, Richard DuFour stated an instructional leader is one who focuses on learning in the classroom and not teaching. When this happens, the job of the principal is

to support teachers and students to improve learning. Everything in the school is looked at through this lens and principals who are instructional leaders change the culture and workings of a school to promote a focus on learning (DuFour, 2002). Four years later, Knapp, Copland, Plecki, and Portin (2006) added to Dufour's idea of a learning centered definition of instructional leadership by identifying three things principals should participate in:

1. Specific leadership activities in schools and districts that enable educators to focus on, and mobilize efforts toward, the improvement of learning,
2. Related activities that seek to support or guide leadership practice toward greater attention to issues of learning and how to improve it, and
3. The creation of policy environments that affect how, and how well, leaders concentrate effort on learning priorities. (p. 18)

Leithwood and Riehl (2003) define instructional leadership as, "...the work of mobilizing and influencing others to develop shared understandings and intentions and to achieve the school's goals" (p. 14). In their research, Leithwood and Riehl (2003) also emphasized the importance of establishing a clear vision, setting group goals, and creating high performance expectations.

More recently, Michael Fullan (2014) defined instructional leadership in his book, *The Principal: Three Keys to Maximizing Impact*. Fullan states there has been a sense of urgency surrounding the public school system after *A Nation at Risk* was published by The National Commission on Excellence in Education in 1983. This publication pushed for sweeping changes to the educational system. Then in 2001, NCLB was passed to speed up progress by enforcing strict testing guidelines and mandates for students to

become proficient by 2014. In 2009, President Obama introduced the Race to the Top program, which called for new standards and assessments and a focus on improving the lowest performing schools (Fullan, 2014). Fullan believes these measures have led to the wrong changes in public schools. These have caused school leaders and districts to focus on accountability and what individuals can do to change the system instead of on capacity building and collaborative efforts at improving schools (Fullan, 2014). Fullan states principals need to focus on building leadership capacity within their school and they need to help create a collaborative culture where teachers work together to improve learning for all students. Principals should look for leaders on their campuses to create a culture focused on improving results for students (Fullan, 2014). Fullan does not believe principals should be micromanaging instruction that takes place in the classroom (Fullan, 2014). Instead, Fullan believes, "...the principal's role is to lead the school's teachers in a process of learning to improve their teaching, while learning alongside them about what works and what doesn't" (p. 55). Fullan also states districts can play a key role in this process for schools. Districts can create a culture of collaboration between all of the schools in the district.

Hallinger and Murphy (2013) offer the most comprehensive definition of instructional leadership. They stated, "Today we view instructional leadership as an influence process through which leaders identify a direction for the school, motivate staff, and coordinate school and classroom-based strategies aimed at improvements in teaching and learning" (Hallinger & Murphy, 2013, p. 3). This definition puts an emphasis on defining a vision for a school, creating a learning environment where students can perform at high rates, and uses staff development to help teachers prepare for changes

(Hallinger & Murphy, 2013). Hallinger and Murphy went on to state instructional leadership includes three dimensions: *Defining the School's Mission, Managing the Instructional Program and Promoting a Positive School Learning Climate* (Hallinger, 2005; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985, 2013).

Even though a number of definitions for instructional leadership exist, there are some commonalities among them. The definitions all address the importance of establishing a mission or goals for the school that are centered on learning and supporting teachers with the resources they need to be effective classroom teachers (DuFour, 2002, Hallinger & Murphy, 2013, Knapp, et al., 2006; Leithwood, 1994; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Quinn, 2002; Whitaker, 1997). The researcher believes principals are instructional leaders when they establish a strong mission for the school, create a school-wide system of instructional focus and support, establish a positive learning climate and when they work together with teachers to improve learning and outcomes for students. Principals should focus on developing leaders at their sites, work on building relationships to establish trust amongst staff members and establish a system where teachers and leaders of a school work together to improve instruction at the school.

It is important to analyze instructional leadership of principals because actions as leaders can impact student achievement (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). In the book, *School Leadership that Works: From Research to Results*, Marzano, et al., (2005) analyzed 69 studies between 1978-2001; which included almost 3,000 schools. The results from their meta-analysis of the studies identified 21 leadership responsibilities that leaders of schools should possess. When principals display the different responsibilities, schools showed "...a statistically significant relationship with student achievement"

(Marzano, et al., 2005, location 1105). When principals are looking to make major changes in a school, one of the major responsibilities they should display is an understanding of curriculum and instruction (Marzano, et al., 2005).

Whether an innovation represents a small change (first-order) or a large change (second-order), a principal must establish a monitoring system that allows him or her to identify effective versus ineffective practices in curriculum, instruction, and assessment and evaluate the impact on student achievement. To do so, the principal must have and seek out knowledge of best practices in curriculum, instruction, and assessment (Marzano, et al., 2005, location 1303). Principals are faced with many ideas of what it means to be an instructional leader and it is not always an easy task.

Obstacles and Barriers to Instructional Leadership

Being an instructional leader is not an easy task for a principal. Principals are asked to do all of the things mentioned in every definition of instructional leader, plus much more. Principals are often times expected to know the content of what is being taught, strategies to help students learn, they must collaborate with teachers and the community (Lashway, 2003), and they need to manage the daily issues that arise. Often times, administrators are not prepared for these challenges due to the lack of support available to them as leaders (Davis, et al., 2005).

Given Hallinger and Murphy's definition of instructional leadership, there are a lot of things that can get in the way of establishing a mission, managing instruction and creating a positive school climate. Some of the literature on instructional leadership takes a look at what barriers principals have to overcome in order to focus on these dimensions of instructional leadership. Districts should be aware of these barriers and do their best to

control anything that may get in the way of instructional leadership. The first barrier for some principals is they are not experts in the area of instructional leadership (Tucker & Coddling, 2002). With all of the changes in recent years, it has become more difficult for principals to know everything there is to know about instructional leadership (Barth, 1990; Grubb & Flessa, 2006 & Hallinger & Murphy, 2013). Another barrier described in the literature is time. There is not enough time for principals to handle instructional responsibilities and the daily management duties they are expected to partake in (Cuban, 1988; Horng, Klasik, & Loeb, 2010).

Potential Sources of Instructional Leadership

As principals are working to develop into instructional leaders, there are different sources of potential preparation in this area. Principals may be supported before they start their job and they can find support while on the job. These areas of potential support will be explored in the following section.

Principal Preparation Before the Job

Principals must balance management roles with instructional roles and often times they do not feel prepared or supported to take on the instructional piece (Hess & Kelly, 2007; Levine, 2005). Farkas, Johnson, Duffett and Foleno conducted an extensive study in 2001 where 853 superintendents and 909 principals were randomly selected to answer questions about principal preparation programs and graduate school for potential principals. “Most agree that the typical leadership programs are out of touch with the realities of what it takes to run today’s school district” (Farkas, Johnson, Duffett & Foleno, 2001, p. 31). 80 percent of the superintendents and 69 percent of the principals surveyed felt that graduate programs were not adequate in preparing principals for the

jobs and that these programs needed to be changed (Farkas, et al., 2001). 60 percent of the superintendents and sixty-six percent of the principals surveyed felt the programs were not practical, and they focused on the wrong topics (Farkas, et al., 2001).

Superintendents and principals surveyed asked for professional development or training that focused on student learning and educational practices that were effective in schools (Farkas, et al., 2001). Principals did not feel prepared and they felt unsupported in the area of instructional leadership. “Making AYP, the end-product of data analyses and detailed planning, means that principals must have the knowledge and ability to make decisions about curriculum, instruction, and professional development, a unique requirement for administrators who were trained as managers, not as instructional leaders” (Gray & Lewis, 2011, p. 2)

University or principal preparation program University or principal preparation programs are the main source of training and learning for aspiring principals. If principals are to learn how to be instructional leaders, the preparation programs need to focus on this area. What is troubling is principals feel they are not ready for all of the jobs and responsibilities of a principal (Hess & Kelly, 2007). Hess and Kelly analyzed 56 principal preparation programs and 2,424 course weeks to determine what topics were being taught to future principals and whether or not the topics met the changing demands of the principalship. The researchers chose three different university categories: elite schools, schools that train a large number of principal candidates, and typical schools (Hess & Kelly, 2007). From the original 61 schools, 56 qualified for analysis and 31 were eligible for the study based on the criteria the researchers set. 4 syllabi from core principal preparation courses were collected from each school and they were analyzed

and coded. 7 categories were used for coding. Some of the categories included managing for results, managing personnel, and managing classroom instruction (Hess & Kelly, 2007). The results of their study showed that principals did not feel prepared for the job. “All but 4 percent of practicing principals report that on-the-job experiences or guidance from colleagues has been more helpful in preparing them for their current position than their graduate school studies” (Hess & Kelly, 2007, p. 3). The results of this study showed that little or no time was spent on instructional leadership and a limited amount of time was spent on how to use data for accountability (Hess & Kelly, 2007). For example, the researchers found that more time was spent instructing on technical knowledge, 29.6%, instead of on managing classroom instruction, 10.9% (Hess & Kelly, 2007). Technical knowledge included topics like school safety; which is not instructional leadership (Hess & Kelly, 2007). This study was thorough and looked at a large number of schools and course weeks. The findings from the study can be generalized to other preparation programs.

Another study on principal preparation programs done by Levine (2005) determined that most principal preparation programs were extremely weak in preparing principals for the job. In this empirical qualitative study, the researcher conducted a comprehensive study on the quality of leadership preparation programs at the university level (Levine, 2005). All heads of colleges like deans and department chairs were surveyed with a fifty-three percent response rate; 5,469 faculty were sent surveys with a forty percent response rate; 15,460 alumni from education programs were surveyed with a thirty-four percent response rate; and 1,800 principals were surveyed with a forty-one percent response rate (Levine, 2005). In addition to the surveys, 28 case studies were

conducted at schools and education departments nationwide. Both academics and journalists went to the schools or education departments in the study where they spent days researching everything at the school from mission statements to the admission policies of education departments (Levine, 2005). The 28 schools or education departments were selected to represent the nation's diversity, as well. Levine looked at nine different areas for the preparation programs from its purpose to the graduation standards for its students. The results of this study claimed university and principal preparation programs were not doing a good job of meeting the needs of principals and they were not beneficial in preparing principals for their jobs (Levine, 2005).

The two studies mentioned above took a close look at a large sample of university preparation programs. Many people were surveyed, case studies were conducted, and course content was analyzed. The studies showed principals do not receive the amount of support needed to be instructional leaders from their university preparation programs. Researchers, Hale and Moorman (2003), shared the same sentiments about principal preparation programs. They stated principal preparation programs were more about theories and they did not focus on the day-to-day tasks of a principal. It appears university or principal preparation programs are not meeting the needs of principals and they are not very effective (Lashway, 2003; Levine, 2005). If principals are going to become strong instructional leaders, then changes may need to be made to these programs.

In a qualitative study conducted by Marcos, Witmer, Foland, Vouga, and Wise (2011), twelve superintendents and assistant superintendents of California urban school districts were surveyed and interviewed and asked what their perceptions were of

university preparation programs and how well these programs prepared school leaders for the job. Principals of urban schools are faced with different challenges on the job like more students in poverty and more students that are limited in English proficiency. The study centered around the question of how well California's principal preparation programs are preparing principals to lead schools in the urban setting. The results of the study identified some areas of strength and weaknesses for administrators coming out of University preparation programs. The participants in the study felt the university programs were strong in preparing school leaders academically, in addressing the California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, principals acquired strong instructional leadership skills and management skills, and they felt candidates were well versed in policies that impact education. The areas the participants in the study felt needed improvement were preparing leaders for urban schools specifically, having leaders ready to apply the skills they learned in the college program, and they felt leaders lacked on the job experiences before actually becoming a school leader (Marcos, et al, 2011). Many of the people that participated in the study felt strongly that leaders emerging from university preparation programs would benefit from more hands on experiences and coursework that included real scenarios instead of educational theories (Marcos, et al., 2011). Since only twelve district level employees participated in this study, the results cannot be generalized for all University preparation programs. The study, however, can shed some light on what large urban districts need from their new principals as they enter the profession.

The research that exists on preparation programs states in order to have effective principals, preparation programs should be researched-based, provide on-the-job

experiences, and use mentoring or cohort groupings (Davis, et al., 2005; Lovely, 2004). “The content of principal preparation and professional development programs should reflect the current research in school leadership, management, and instructional leadership” (Davis, et al. 2005, p. 9). A research study conducted by Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, and Orr (2007) focused on outstanding principal preparation programs and the common characteristics they shared. The programs emphasized instruction, were selective in choosing candidates for the program and were more practice driven instead of theory driven. In this qualitative case study, 8 principal pre and in-service preparation programs were analyzed to determine what characteristics they had in common and what led to their success in preparing principals for their roles. In the study a variety of people were interviewed including program faculty members, participants, and graduates (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007). The researchers also analyzed program documents, conducted observations of classes, and even observed principals that graduated from the programs at their job (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007). The researchers who conducted this study found that strong university or preparation programs can lead to effective principals who feel prepared in their role as instructional leaders (Darling-Hammond, et. al., 2007). Principals that completed one of the strong preparation programs analyzed in this study were compared to principals that were not in one of the programs. In every category, principals that completed one of the strong programs used strong leadership strategies more often than those principals that were not a part of a program. For example, in the area of curriculum development and instruction, principals from one of the preparation programs scored higher in effective strategies used than the principals that were not in a program. While the programs in this study were

thoroughly researched, only eight programs were studied, so the findings may not be generalized to all principal preparation programs.

Based on the literature, it is clear university or principal preparation programs need to be revamped to focus more on the demands of the job for today. Strong preparation programs that focus on instruction can help principals excel as instructional leaders for their school. Instructional leadership needs to be an integral part of these programs in order to help prepare principals for this role in their schools. One major concern with university programs is aspiring administrators do not get on the job training or experience before taking on the role of principal (Lovely, 2004). Principals need more than just coursework and preparation programs, they need field experience and people to support them throughout their principalship.

Principal Support During the Job

Principals can look to some different sources of support as they attempt to lead their schools in instruction. There are leadership academies or institutes for principals to attend and they can receive support from the inside in the form of mentoring and district level support.

Leadership Academies or Institutes

There are some different leadership academies or institutes that exist for principals or aspiring principals and these programs provide support to principals. One program is the Harvard Principals' Center that was started by Roland Barth in 1981. In this program, principals were brought together to create the professional development program and the main idea behind the program is that principals are learners, not just leaders.

The principals' center attempts to improve the quality of life and learning in schools by encouraging different ways of thinking about common problems; by transforming school problems into opportunities for school improvement; by offering opportunities for shared problem solving and reflection; and by providing a context of mutual support and trust in which personal relationships may be established and developed (Barth, 1986, p. 160).

The Harvard Principals' Center Institutes take place in the summer and the institutes has three programs for school leaders. The programs offered by the institutes are: The Art and Craft of Principalship, Leadership: An Evolving Vision, and the Institute for School Leadership (Peterson, 2002). During the different programs, attendees analyze important issues facing education today. For example, they look at race and gender issues and change in education, creating a vision for schools, transformational learning, and inclusive education (Peterson, 2002). The Harvard Principal's Center Institute's main focus is on current issues leaders face in today's educational world (Peterson, 2002).

Much of the effectiveness of the Harvard Principals' Center Institute is anecdotal. During the first few years of the Harvard Principals' Center, membership grew and principals were eager to share ideas and bring what they learned back to their school sites (Barth, 1986). Some principals from around the country attended the professional development sessions and created centers when they returned back to his or her school sites (Barth, 1986).

Another institute, the Vanderbilt International Principals' Institute, also began in 1981. This is a 10 day intensive institute that includes just over twenty educational

leaders. “The topics addressed include instructional leadership, managing change and improvement, developing an educational vision for the school, and shaping the school culture” (Peterson 2002, p. 221).

Both the Harvard and Vanderbilt Institutes are comprehensive summer programs for school leaders, including principals, and the leaders that have attended have given positive feedback about both academies (Peterson, 2002). Both institutes, however, do not offer training linked to specific state standards or district initiatives (Peterson, 2002).

The California School Leadership Academy (CSLA) is another academy that was established in 1985. This academy has programs for principals, school teams, and other administrators (Peterson, 2002). There are programs available throughout California and the curriculum it uses includes current leadership research and best practices (Peterson, 2002). The CSLA has a specific focus on the principal as an instructional leader in schools. “Programs have a core grounding in curriculum and instruction as well as in moral and ethical leadership issues” (Peterson, 2002, p. 222). There are three programs within the CSLA institute: Foundation 3.0, School Leadership Team, and Ventures. The Foundation 3.0 program is a two to three year program that includes professional development in ten areas. Some of these areas include topics like Shared Vision and Shared Leadership in Service of Powerful Learning and Assessment in Service of Powerful Learning. There are thousands of participants in this program and they are invited back to be speakers. The leaders that attended this program created a strong network and community with one another (Peterson, 2002).

The second program in the CSLA Institute is the School Leadership Team Program. This program was created to build strong leadership teams for schools. There

are more than ten seminars to attend and the teams that participate include principals, teachers, other staff members, and parents. The topics for the seminars are similar to the topics covered in Foundation 3.0. The final program is the Ventures Program and it is for veteran principals. The area of focus is transformational leadership and the principals document how their own schools have transformed during the length of the program (Peterson 2002).

Finally, in Chicago, the Chicago Principals and Administrators Association (CPAA) created a comprehensive principals' academy called CLASS. There are different phases for this academy that begins with new principals and continues for veteran principals and leaders. The program begins with LAUNCH for educators that want to become principals, then it continues with LIFT for first year principals, and ends with the Chicago Academy for School Leaders (CASL) for veteran leaders (Peterson, 2002). Each program within CLASS is centered on Chicago's seven standards for school leaders which include: School leadership, Parent involvement and community partnerships, creating student-centered learning climates, Professional development and human resource management, Instructional leadership: improving teaching and learning, School management and daily operations, and Interpersonal effectiveness (Peterson, 2002). The academy in Chicago is comprehensive and it continues for principals throughout their career as leaders of schools.

The academies for principals are different from college or university programs because the focus of the academies tends to be on current research and trends in education. University or college programs tend to focus on more technical subjects and educational theories (Hale & Moorman, 2003). In academies, the participants are usually

already principals so the topics covered in academies are geared more towards supporting principals while on the job. Some academies also include continuous professional development for principals throughout their careers.

Support From the Inside

With the number of jobs and duties principals take part in everyday; it is difficult for them to find the time to be strong instructional leaders (Clayton, Sanzo, & Myran, 2013). The amount of support principals receive can be extremely important to his or her success as the instructional leader of a school (Clayton, et al., 2013). Administrators go through educational programs in hopes of being prepared to take on the challenges of leading today's schools. "Although these aspiring administrators are certified, they may not be equipped for the shifting role of the principal from manager to effective instructional leader" (Davis, et al., 2005, p. 5). Principals are also not supported to focus on learning while handling the day-to-day tasks at the same time (Levine, 2005). With the rising expectations for principals, it has become extremely important to examine what support is available to site administrators in the area of instructional leadership. The literature discusses some ways principals receive support in becoming instructional leaders.

Mentoring

Mentoring has become another way to support principals. Strong mentoring programs can help school leaders become successful and it can create a positive learning environment for students (Daresh, 2004). Mentors can help principals become effective leaders in all aspects of the job, they can help principals develop skills, and they can help principals overcome any challenges they face (Yirci & Kocabas, 2010). Traditional

mentoring programs pair up a new principal with an experienced principal and the mentoring programs should help new principals with their needs. Pairs should be established at the beginning of the year, trainings should be offered, and the appropriate amount of time needs to be allotted for mentors and mentees to meet (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006). Alsbury and Hackman (2006) conducted a study on mentorships. In the study, they gave a survey to all of the participants and the one area that received negative feedback in written responses was time. Not enough time was given for mentors and mentees to meet (Alsbury & Hackman, 2006) and the participants felt time was valuable to the success of the program. A positive outcome of mentorships is the relationship that can be created between the mentor and the mentee. In the Alsbury and Hackman study, the survey results overwhelmingly showed the mentors and mentees valued having someone listen to them, provide insight into different situations, and provide ongoing support to each other.

In order for mentoring programs to be successful, they need to be formalized and the mentor/mentee need to be given time, the tools, and direction for the partnership (Alsbury & Hackman, 2006; Clayton, et al., 2013;). By establishing a relationship with a veteran principal, new principals can ask questions, learn from, and get guidance from their mentor. Mentoring can foster the development of new leaders in education and it can help sustain leadership for many years (Brown-Ferrigno & Muth, R., 2004). In the findings of their exploratory case study, Brown-Ferrigno and Muth (2004) discovered when principals help identify potential principal candidates they become a mentor who can provide support for a long period of time. Their findings also showed how mentoring helps develop the leadership capabilities in mentees (Brown-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004).

The literature on mentoring also addresses the positives and negatives that can result from mentorships.

Mentorships can benefit the mentor, mentee, and even the district office (Alsbury & Hackman, 2006). For the mentees, it can help them develop into confident and skillful leaders who become strong leaders (Alsbury & Hackman, 2006). Mentors can benefit by knowing they are helping someone transition into the profession, from the recognition they receive from their peers, and by growing as professionals (Alsbury & Hackman, 2006). For the district offices, mentorships can lead to better administrators who are motivated and have high self-esteem (Daresh, 2004). In contrast, if not developed systematically, mentorships can lead to some negative outcomes (Crow & Matthews, 1998). For example, if mentors are not carefully selected, districts can end up reinforcing ineffective leadership (Alsbury & Hackman, 2006). Another negative outcome is the mentor/mentee pairing may be a mismatch and that could lead to many personality problems between the administrators (Hansford & Ehrich, 2006).

Mentorships can be formal or informal. Formal programs require careful planning by either universities or districts (Alsbury & Hackman, 2006). In this type of situation, mentors need to be trained, have the time to fulfill the responsibilities as a mentor, and guidelines or expectations should be established (Crocker & Harris, 2002). In a study conducted by Croker and Harris (2002) sixteen out of twenty mentors stated they wanted clearly defined roles and desired outcomes in order to assist in the mentoring process. Another form of mentorship is peer mentoring; which is more of an informal development of relationships among peers. "Peer mentoring-without superior and subordinate confines-encourages individuals with similar assignments and expectations to

collaborate and explore problems and solutions” (Hansen & Matthews, 2002, p. 31). Some advantages of peer mentoring are the development of trusting relationships, instructional practices can be validated, it becomes easier to take risks, and these relationships encourage one another to be creative (Hansen & Matthews, 2002). Often times peer mentor relationships continue throughout a principal’s career (Hansen & Matthews, 2002).

Mentorships can be invaluable for principals. Principals value mentoring and attribute part of their success to the relationships they developed with their mentor or mentee (Crow & Matthews, 1998). If a mentee is paired with a mentor that has a strong instructional leadership background, they can learn from them and work together to build strong instructional programs at their schools. A problem districts face, however, is they cannot sustain or support mentoring programs. With budget cuts and lack of time, costly one-on-one mentoring programs become difficult to maintain (Crocker & Harris, 2002; Daresh, 2004). As a principal, the relationships you build with others can be the best way to survive on the job. In the study on mentoring programs done by Alsbury and Hackman (2006) participants in the mentoring program felt two important things for principals to be successful were to have someone listen to you and to have someone to connect with regarding issues that may arise.

District Support District support of principals in instructional leadership can be an important resource for principals. Fink and Resnick (2001) wrote about a district in New York that created a district level program to help support principals develop as instructional leaders. In this district, instruction and learning became the focus at every level. “People expect support in solving problems of instructional practice from their

peers and supervisors, and problems in design or implementation of instruction are shared and discussed (even with supervisors) rather than hidden from view” (Fink & Resnick, 2001, p. 4). This district took many steps to provide professional development opportunities, support and study groups, individualized coaching, a buddy system, and mentoring to its principals (Fink & Resnick, 2001). The district created the strong support network principals needed to have to help them be strong instructional leaders for their schools.

The literature also discusses how districts have played more of an active role in creating certification programs for administrators to get their credentials (Davis, et al., 2005). In these programs, districts can help develop principals as instructional leaders. Some districts are providing intensive in-service programs for their principals. In these in-services, topics like instructional strategies and how to support and coach teachers are addressed (Davis, et al., 2005).

Theory of Instructional Leadership

Most of the literature on instructional leadership states how important it is for principals to be instructional leaders, but obstacles can get in the way (Davis, et al., 2005; Fink & Resnick, 2001; Graczweski, et al., 2009). Hallinger’s Theory on Instructional Leadership helps principals maintain a focus on what is important as an instructional leader so they are able to find the time to lead their schools in this area (Hallinger, 2005; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985, 2013). Hallinger and Murphy (2013) state principals must focus on creating and communicating a mission to the stakeholders of their school, manage the instructional program and promote a positive school climate (Hallinger, 2005; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985, 2013). When defining and communicating a mission,

principals need to lead their schools in establishing goals that fits the needs of the school. When managing the instructional program, principals need to spend time in classrooms and looking at student data to monitor progress. As principals create a positive school climate, they need to be visible, take part in the learning process and protect instructional time for teachers (Hallinger, 2005). Principals need to build a strong leadership capacity at their schools so they are able to spend the time necessary on instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2005). Obstacles should not get in the way of leading the instructional program of a school.

What Principals Say They Need

The literature that exists on administrators' perceptions of support is centered on what type of support principals want in general during their principalship. These supports, however, can be carried over into the area of instructional support.

Principals need to be supported in a number of different ways (Boerema, 2011). In a qualitative study conducted by Boerema, 8 principals were asked what type of support they needed in order to be successful principals. The principals that were selected had only been principals for a couple of years and the researcher conducted in-depth interviews for each principal (Boerema, 2011). The principals interviewed stated they wanted people to listen, express concern for how they were doing, they wanted to be encouraged and they wanted affirmation for the job they were doing (Boerema, 2011). Some principals in the study felt like they were receiving these types of supports, while others did not. A few principals in the sample stated they had no one to listen to them and they felt isolated at work after they made the move to become an administrator. From this study, principals also stated they needed a networking system and on the job

support (Boerema, 2011). “Supportive relationships can help new administrators as they develop knowledge, skills, and dispositions that they need to lead successful schools” (Boerema, 2011, p. 564). All of these mechanisms can be used to support principals in instruction and the daily management tasks of running the school. This study did not go into detail on what type of coding, if any, was used. The limited sample was based on the responses of eight new principals and cannot be generalized to all principals.

The literature on principals’ perceptions of support also mentioned that principals felt ongoing evaluation, supervision, and mentoring were all important to their success as principals (Yerks & Guaglianone, 1998). Districts can help support principals by providing immediate feedback. Ferrandino and Tirozzi (2000) also stated the importance of providing principals with continuous support. In their research they discovered principals wanted time to work with other administrators to share ideas and best practices and to have follow up training to implement the ideas and practices.

Summary

Instructional leadership for principals is not new, but in the era of accountability, more emphasis is being placed on how principals can lead schools instructionally. Principals have many different roles and if they are also expected to be strong instructional leaders then there must be support for them. The type of support principals want is consistent in the literature. Principals have asked for network systems to help them grow professionally. They also want structured professional development that is ongoing during their principalship. Principals need their district offices to understand the importance of training needs so they can help lead schools in the area of instruction. Many principals are struggling with all of the responsibilities they have to juggle

everyday, but by creating avenues for them to meet with other principals and share ideas they can work through their struggles and find the time to implement instructional changes.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The literature that exists on university programs or supporting principals does not focus on the perceptions principals have of their preparation or support as instructional leaders. This study used a Qualitative Methodology approach to better understand the participants' experiences as instructional leaders of their high school. A Basic Interpretive Qualitative Study Design was used to understand the perceptions participants had in regards to their development and support as instructional leaders. The following research questions and sub questions guided this study:

1. How have six high school principals developed into instructional leaders?
2. What obstacles do principals face in becoming an instructional leader?
3. What are the perceptions the principals have of the support they have received in developing as instructional leaders?

The following sections in this chapter will discuss the sites, sample, procedures, methods of data collection, the general methodological design and defense of the method selected, the instruments used, how the data was analyzed, how the participants were protected, and the validity, reliability, credibility, trustworthiness, and positionality of the data collected and the researcher.

Sites

The research for this study was conducted in four different school districts, Southview, Northview, Eastview and Westview Districts; pseudonyms were given to each district to maintain confidentiality. All districts were in Southern California. Two districts were located on the coast and the others were inland. Southview District is a high school only district and it has six comprehensive high schools. Northview District is a K-12 school district and it has six comprehensive high schools. Eastview is also a K-12 district with one comprehensive high school and Westview is a K-12 district with three comprehensive high schools and one early college high school. Data were gathered on each district from the California Department of Education's website.

During the 2013-2014 school year the Southview district had 16,431 students enrolled. There were 4,018 freshmen, 4011 sophomores, 4102 juniors and 4300 seniors in the district. Demographically, 40% were White, 26% were Hispanic, 23% were Asian and the rest of the student body were identified by a number of other racial categories. There were 1,311 English Learners in the district; which made up .08% of the total student population. In the 2012-2013 school year the dropout rate for the Southview district was 0.7% (California Department of Education, 2014).

In the Northview District, 53,833 students were enrolled in the entire district during the 2013-2014 school year. 17,273 of these students were enrolled in the two high schools. There were 4,325 freshmen, 4,358 sophomores, 4,403 juniors and 4,187 seniors in the district. Demographically, 59% were White, 25.5% were Hispanic, .6% identified as two or more races, and the rest of the students were identified in other demographic categories. In the Northview District, 5,403 students were English Learners; which made

up 10% of the total student population. The dropout rate during the 2012-2013 school year was 1.6% (California Department of Education, 2014).

Eastview Unified School District had a student enrollment of 3,005. 986 of these were in the high school. The ninth grade class had 237 students enrolled, 265 for 10th grade, 223 for 11th grade and 261 for 12th grade. 80% of the student population in the Eastview district was White, 9% were Hispanic and 4% were Asian. The rest of the student population was in other demographic categories. Eastview had 115 English Learners; which was 3.8% of the student population. The dropout rate during the 2012-2013 school year was 2.8% (California Department of Education, 2014).

The total number of students in the Westview Unified School District was 22,452 during the 2013-2014 school year. 5,732 were in high school with the following breakdown by grade: 1428 in 9th grade, 1436 in 10th grade, 1329 in 11th grade and 1539 in 12th grade. Demographically, the students are mostly Hispanic with 17,748, which was 79% of the student population. 4,349 were African American totaling 19% of the population. The rest of the student body was in other demographic categories. The English Learner population totaled 8,428 students, or 37.5%. The dropout rate was 25.6% (California Department of Education, 2014).

Participants

Six high school principals were used in this study. All principals were assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity. Two principals in this study, Mr. Russell and Mr. Davis were from The Southview District. This was Mr. Russell's fourth year as a high school principal. He started as a teacher then he became an Athletic Director. After doing Athletics, he became a high school assistant principal prior to his becoming a high

school principal. Mr. Davis was also a teacher first. He then became a vice principal and assistant principal at a high school. Mr. Davis became a high school principal six years ago.

Mrs. Jordan and Mr. Smith worked in the Northview school district. Mrs. Jordan was a teacher. During her time in the classroom, she had the opportunity to work as a Secondary Teaching Assistant Principal (STAP). In this capacity, she was a teacher and an administrator. She would teach her classes then spend time in the administration office learning the role of the assistant principal. She did this while she was getting her administrative credential. The next role she had was assistant principal at a high school then she became a principal. Mrs. Jordan spent some time working at the district office, but has since returned to her role as a principal.

Mr. Smith has been a principal in the Northview district for four years. He began his career as a teacher then became a middle school assistant principal. After working at the middle school, he was an assistant principal at a high school. His first job as a principal was at a middle school then he was hired four years ago as the principal of his current school.

Mr. Jones worked in the Eastview school district. He has been a high school principal for ten years. Before becoming a principal, he was an assistant principal and a teacher. Finally, Mr. Rivers has been a principal for two years. He was a teacher then an assistant principal where he oversaw athletics and activities.

Sample

Purposeful sampling was used in this study. In purposeful sampling, the researcher selects participants where the best quality information can be learned

(Merriam, 2002). There are different categories of purposeful sampling. The researcher in this study used criterion and convenience sampling. The criterion for the sample was set by the research questions. The participants needed to be high school principals that had been in the role for at least one year. High school principals were chosen because they are in charge of large, complex organizations with potential to affect teacher instruction and student learning. After completing one year on the job, principals may feel more comfortable and they may have figured out ways to adjust their schedules to fit in more time for instructional leadership. Finally, the researcher selected principals that may emphasize the importance of being an instructional leader at their school.

Convenience sampling was also used for this study. The researcher used high school principals that were available and willing to participate in the study. The researcher also had to use school districts that were willing to allow access to their principals. These districts were located in Southern California because that is where the researcher resides. The researcher also chose these districts because they were located less than 60 miles from where the researcher resides.

Procedures

After the Institutional Review Board's (IRB) approval in the fall of 2014, obtaining permission from the four districts to conduct research, and after successfully defending the research proposal, the researcher began recruiting potential participants for the study. Access to two principals was gained with the help of a gatekeeper. The gatekeeper worked as the Assistant Superintendent of the Southview District. Dr. Jones, a pseudonym, granted permission for the researcher to access principals in his district. The researcher knew the rest of the principals and was able to contact them to help gain

access to their districts for research. For all of the districts, the researcher sent out emails to all principals who were in the position for at least one year. Included in these emails was background information about the researcher, the title of the study, the purpose of the study, and how they met the criteria to be potential participants in the study. The researcher included all of her contact information and asked for interested principals to contact her as soon as possible. Six principals responded via email or phone and the researcher contacted these potential participants immediately.

After initial contact with the potential participants, the researcher sent an information letter about the study and the informed consent form via email. The researcher asked each potential participant for the best way to contact and she contacted each one by email to set up a time, date, and place for the interview to take place. The face-to-face interviews began at the end of October of 2014 and concluded by the beginning of February of 2015.

When the researcher met with each participant, she went over the purpose of the study, informed consent form and requested permission to digitally record the interview. She also explained that she would be taking detailed notes of the interview. The researcher also went into detail on how the participant's identity would remain confidential. A pseudonym was chosen during the meeting; the researcher also explained if they were not comfortable answering a question, they could ask to skip the question. Each participant granted the researcher permission to digitally record the interview. The interviews took place at a location the interviewee selected and they lasted for approximately one hour. At the conclusion of the interview, the researcher asked the participant if she could send them a transcription of the interview in a couple of weeks so

they could check the accuracy of the transcription. Each participant agreed to review the transcription. Finally, the researcher asked if each participant would collect documents that were pertinent to the study. Most of the participants, however, were reluctant to give documents to the researcher. Only two of the participants were willing to share documents.

After each interview, the researcher reviewed all of the recordings and notes from the interviews. Each interview was transcribed by a professional transcription service, reviewed by the researcher, and then emailed to each participant so they could check for accuracy of the transcription.

Data Collection Methods

In a basic interpretive qualitative study, interviews and documents are used to collect data (Merriam, 2002). In this study, semi-structured in-depth interviews and document collection and analysis were used to obtain a deep understanding of how the participants felt about their preparation and support as instructional leaders of their high school.

Semi-Structured In Depth Interviews

Interviews are used in qualitative research studies to get individuals' lived experiences about a phenomenon (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). In a semistructured interview, the researcher prepares a few questions before the interview. During the interview, the researcher can then ask questions as the conversation flows that may not be prepared ahead of time. This allows the participant to talk about what they feel is the most important information related to the topic of the study. The researcher wanted a handful of questions answered, but she also wanted the interview to go in different

directions because the participants could have brought up ideas or thoughts that the researcher did not think of before the interview took place (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Semistructured interviews were conducted in this study because the researcher wanted to allow the interviewees' some freedom in the discussion and the researcher wanted to remain open to the perceptions of the participants.

In-depth interviews with open-ended questions are used to make meaning from the interviewee. Interviewers look for emerging patterns in the transcriptions of the interviews and they look to get descriptive information (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). "The goal of intensive interviews is to gain rich qualitative data on a particular subject from the perspective of selected individuals" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 95).

Document Collection and Analysis

Basic interpretive qualitative studies also use document collection and analysis as a data source (Merriam, 2002). "These can be oral, visual (such as photographs), or cultural artifacts (Merriam, 2002, p. 13). In this study, the researcher asked the participants to collect any professional development materials that could be useful for the study. Documents can provide insights to a phenomenon (Merriam, 2002) and they are evidence the researcher can use to assist in the development of themes that emerge from the study. Most of the participants did not want to provide meeting agendas or notes and none of them had access to assignments or syllabi from their administrative credential programs.

The researcher also collected documents that gave information about each district that was used in the study. Included in these documents were demographic information, achievement scores, and anything else that would give the researcher a deep

understanding of the four districts the principals worked in. This information was found on public websites such as, the California Department of Education.

General Methodological Design and Defense of the Selected Method

In this study, qualitative research was used to understand how principals felt about their preparation in developing as instructional leaders and how they felt about the support in instructional leadership they were receiving on the job. A basic interpretive qualitative research method was selected so the researcher could find and interpret meaning across all of the data collected (Merriam, 2002). By using the basic interpretive qualitative approach, the researcher wanted to understand how the participants in the study interpreted their experiences in developing as an instructional leader (Merriam, 2002). In a basic interpretive qualitative research method, researchers collect data through interviews, observations, or document analysis (Merriam, 2002). In this study, the researcher used both interviews and document analysis to construct meaning from the participants' experiences. In analyzing the data, the researcher discovered patterns across the data that was collected and interpreted the meaning of the data (Merriam, 2002). "The *primary* goal of a basic qualitative study is to uncover and interpret these meanings" (Merriam, 2002, p. 39).

Defense of Selected Method

The qualitative research method was chosen for this study because the researcher explored how principals felt about their experiences in becoming instructional leaders, the obstacles they faced and how they felt about the support they received on the job. The research questions in this study were developed to get a detailed understanding of how high school principals developed into effective instructional leaders at their school.

The research questions were also developed to get a clear understanding of the obstacles principals faced in becoming instructional leaders, the support they receive as instructional leaders and what their perceptions are of the support received. These questions led to an in-depth analysis of how the participants felt about the topic. The researcher wanted to construct meaning from the lived experiences of these high school principals. By using the basic interpretive qualitative approach, the main goal was to construct meaning from the participants' experiences (Merriam, 2002). Someone's perceptions of something cannot be quantified in numbers or statistics. Instead, a researcher must engage in in-depth interviews of the participants and collection of documents to find meaning and themes across the different sets of data.

The literature that exists on instructional leadership for principals focused more on the definition of instructional leadership and how important it is for principals to be instructional leaders. It did not focus on how principals felt about their development as instructional leaders and the amount of support they received in this area. In this basic interpretive qualitative research study, the researcher gave principals a voice on this topic. Open-ended questions were used so the participants could share their views. The researcher also collected documents to look for common patterns between the documents and what the participants had to say during the interviews.

Instruments

An interview protocol was used in this study. The researcher created the protocol because there was not an existing protocol that addressed the research questions of the study. The questions in the protocol were based on the research questions and the theoretical framework. Two professors in the doctoral program at California State

University, Long Beach, reviewed the protocol before the interviews began. The professors provided suggestions to make the questions less direct to allow for a deeper response from the participants. It was also suggested to use fewer structured questions and add probes to the protocol in case the participants were hesitant to talk or if they did not have a lot to say. This researcher also piloted the interview protocol with two current high school principals in the field of education that were not interviewees in the study.

The purpose of the interview protocol is to have some general questions with probes and follow-ups in order to get the lived experiences from the participants (Creswell, 2012 & Patton, 2002). The researcher wanted to gain a deep understanding of how the participants felt about the topic in the study so basic open-ended questions were used with follow up questions and probes to go deeper into a topic or to clarify what the participant said.

The interview protocol consisted of twelve open-ended questions. It began with a general question that asked the participants to talk about their experiences as an educator, the different jobs they have had in the field, and why they decided to become an administrator. This question was designed to get the participants to open up to the researcher and become comfortable talking to the researcher. The participants were then asked to discuss what a typical day was like as a high school principal and what it meant to be an instructional leader. The rest of the interview protocol addressed how the participants became effective instructional leaders and how they went about managing instruction for their schools. The researcher asked how the participants developed and communicated the mission of the school, how they managed instruction, obstacles they faced as they focused on instructional leadership, what support they received in this area

and what perceptions they had of this support. The interview protocol is included in Appendix B.

Data Analysis

In qualitative data analysis, the researcher looks for common themes to emerge across the data. Qualitative researchers use codes; which are short words or phrases that assign attributes to data (Saldaña, 2009). Saldana described two cycles of coding qualitative researchers use. The First Cycle Coding occurs during the beginning phases of data analysis and the Second Cycle Coding occurs later on to help the researcher categorize codes into themes (Saldaña, 2009). The researcher in this study used both First and Second Cycle Coding methods to find major themes from the data that was collected.

The researcher started analyzing the data by reading and listening to the interview transcripts. As she was doing this, she took notes in her research journal. The notes taken during this initial phase were words or small phrases that stood out to her from the interviews. The researcher then briefly went through all of the documents collected and also took notes in her research log. After this, the researcher listened to and read the interview and transcripts again. The second time around, she used different methods from the First Cycle coding to analyze the data. The coding methods selected are described in the following section.

There are a number of different ways to code data using the First Cycle Method. For this study, the researcher used attribute, descriptive, in vivo, emotion and open, or initial, coding. Attribute coding occurs at the beginning of the research process to help manage the data (Saldaña, 2009). The researcher gathered information about the

participants' professional background, the different schools and districts they have worked in and characteristics about each participant. These attributes codes were used to organize the information about each participant. Descriptive coding is essential for researchers to use if they are gathering a variety of data (Saldaña, 2009). For this study, the researcher collected data by interviewing six principals one time each and by collecting different documents from some of the interviewees. Descriptive coding was used to determine topics to let readers know what the study is about (Saldaña, 2009). Another first cycle coding method utilized by the researcher was in vivo coding. With this coding method, researchers uses exact words from the data collected (Saldaña, 2009). In this study, in vivo coding gave a voice to the participants as the researcher used important words or phrases they said during the interviews (Saldaña, 2009). Emotion coding was also used as the researcher to label emotions the participant discussed or that came out of the data collected (Saldaña, 2009). The researcher wanted to identify the perceptions participants had of their development as instructional leaders. Finally, open (initial) coding was used to break down the data into specific parts so the researcher could analyze the data closely and compare the data collected. The researcher used NVivo to assist with the data analysis process.

After using the First Cycle coding methods, the researcher used Pattern coding from the Second Cycle coding methods to begin the process of developing major themes from the data collected (Saldaña, 2009). The researcher listened to the interviews and read the transcripts again. She began to reorganize the coding from the First Cycle to condense the number of codes. The researcher was able to rearrange codes and find patterns within all of the individual data collected and across all of the data collected.

Major themes emerged from the data. The researcher made a concerted effort to keep track of any data that did not fit in with the codes or themes that came out of the data. She kept track of the discrepant data in her research journal. Saldaña's (2009) coding methods are summarized in the table below.

TABLE 1. Definitions of Coding Methods and Selection of Method

First Cycle Coding		
Method	Definition	Why Selected
Attribute	Used at the beginning of coding process to help manage data collected	The researcher wanted to collect information about the participants' job experience
Descriptive	Foundation of data collected; coding of topics to make reader feel as if they were present during the interview	Descriptive coding was used to uncover topics present in the data. Descriptive was also used because a variety of data was collected.
In Vivo	Coding of words actually used by the interviewee or in the documents collected	The researcher used in vivo coding to give the participants a voice in the study.
Emotion	Labeling the emotions experienced by the participant	The researcher wanted to identify emotions and experiences the participants felt as they developed as instructional leaders.
Open (Initial)	Used to break down data into parts so the researcher can compare data collected	Open coding helped the researcher break down the data and compare all of the data collected.
Second Cycle Coding		
Pattern	Coding to develop themes that emerged from the data	Pattern coding helped the researcher find themes that emerged from the data.

Adapted from the Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers, by J. Saldana, 2012. Copyright 2012 by Sage Publications.

Qualitative researchers use different data collection techniques in order to triangulate the data. In this study, the researcher interviewed six different high school principals and gathered a variety of documents to find codes, patterns and eventually themes that could be found in all of the data collected. This was a lengthy process that required reviewing all of the data collected numerous times.

Protection of Subjects

Many steps were taken to protect the participants in this research study. Before recruiting a potential participant, the researcher had to get approval from California State University, Long Beach's Institutional Review Board (IRB). A long and detailed application was filled out and in the application, the researcher had to address how the participants were going to be protected in this study. IRB approval was granted on October 14, 2014 and the IRB approval number was 15-061s.

When the researcher met with the participants for each interview, she went over the informed consent form and asked if the participant had any questions about the form. The researcher also discussed the confidentiality of the study and she let the participants know they could opt out at any time or they did not have to answer a question if they were not comfortable with it. The researcher then requested permission to record the interview and any identifying information was removed from the digital recording before it was sent for professional transcription. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant and to the districts they worked in. The researcher also informed the participants that any document she received would have identifying information covered up before copies were made.

The informed consent forms were kept in a separate location from all other items that pertained to the study. Every other paper item was stored in a locked file cabinet that only the researcher had the key to. These items were kept for 3 years after the study. The audio recordings were kept on a computer with a single-password that only the researcher knew. Identifying information was removed from all audio recordings and from all documents collected.

Trustworthiness, Credibility and Validity

Qualitative researchers use a variety of methods to establish trustworthiness, credibility and validity. In this section, the researcher will describe the steps that were taken to establish trustworthiness, credibility and validity.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

In qualitative research, establishing trustworthiness is important. Lincoln and Guba (1985) established a model for researchers to identify levels of trustworthiness in studies. The trustworthiness model consisted of four aspects researchers can use to ensure their studies are trustworthy. The four aspects are truth-value, applicability, consistency and neutrality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Within each aspect, there are different strategies that are used to establish trustworthiness of a study. In this research study, the researcher used multiple strategies to establish trustworthiness and increase the credibility and validity of the research and its findings.

Truth-value in research is determined by how credible a researcher's findings and interpretations are (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, the researcher used triangulation, member checking and peer debriefing. Triangulation of data involves using multiple data sets to cross check the data and how the researcher interpreted the

data (Krefting, 1990). The researcher in this study used more than one data method and source to triangulate the findings and interpretation of the findings. In-depth semi-structured interviews and document collection and analysis were the two data collection methods used. The researcher also interviewed four high school principals to increase the credibility of the findings.

Another strategy used to increase credibility was member checking. The researcher emailed the transcriptions and themes that emerged from the interviews to each participant. Member checks are extremely important in the overall validation of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). If researchers develop themes and codes from interview participants, it is vital the participant is given the opportunity to confirm what was transcribed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Peer debriefing was also used as a way to increase credibility of the study. The researcher had one person in the field and two university professors in the doctorate program review portions of the transcript and come up with their own themes and codes. The researcher then compared her results with this group.

The second aspect of Lincoln and Guba's trustworthiness model (1985) was applicability. Here a researcher has to ask how transferable, or useful, the findings are in other settings. The researcher gave detailed descriptions of the background of each principal and the district office they worked in. The researcher's job for applicability, or transferability, is to provide the data so others can determine whether or not the findings are transferable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Consistency in research is determined by whether or not the same results would emerge if the study were done again with the same participants or in a different, but

similar, setting (Krefting, 1990). Triangulation was used as a way to determine if the findings were consistent, or dependable. Using different data collection methods or sources allows for one method to override potential issues with other data collection methods (Krefting, 1990). Peer debriefing was another way the researcher increased credibility. Colleagues went over every part of the research process and the implementation of the research (Krefting, 1990).

The final aspect of the Lincoln and Guba Model of Trustworthiness (1985) was Neutrality. The researcher utilized triangulation to ensure neutrality, or confirmability of the data. Using multiple sources of data collection is crucial to support findings in research. The researcher used in-depth semi-structured interviews and she interviewed multiple principals. The information gathered from all of these sources and methods ensured the researcher used information from the lived experiences of the participants to develop codes and themes for the study.

Validity

To achieve validity in a study, qualitative researchers select strategies to establish credibility (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Triangulation, clarifying the researcher's position, member checking and peer debriefing were also used to increase the validity of the study.

To triangulate the findings, the researched used multiple data across sources, the participants and the researcher used two data collection methods, interviews and document collection and analysis. "As a validity procedure, triangulation is a step taken by researchers employing only the researcher's lens, and it is a systematic process of sorting through the data to find common themes or categories by eliminating overlapping areas" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127).

Another strategy the researcher used was to clarify her position in relation to the topic, field, and participants. The researchers biases and views are described below so readers knew where the researcher stood in relation to the topic (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Member checking was used as a validity strategy, as well. The researcher sent the transcripts and themes or codes in an email back to the participants at different times throughout the research process. Having the participants check for accuracy of the transcripts is a way of getting the participants to take part in the validity process (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Finally, the researcher had colleagues peer review the data collected. The researcher gave excerpts of the transcriptions to colleagues and asked them to create their own themes and codes from their section. This allowed the research to compare her results with the results of her peers. This process helps remove the researcher's lens slightly by allowing outsiders to analyze the data.

Positionality

My background and beliefs about education and experiences as a daughter of former administrators and a high school assistant principal have influenced this research study. I have been around the field of education my entire life. Both of my parents were teachers and administrators. They ended their professional careers as elementary school principals. They had a lot of influence on me professionally and personally.

I began my career in the field of education fifteen years ago. I spent the first nine years as a classroom teacher and the past five as a high school assistant principal in two

different districts. During my tenure, I have seen the demands placed on high school administrators increase, especially in the area of instruction.

I started my administrative career in the Southview District, but left after three years to be closer to my home. After one year at the new district, I decided to apply to return to the Southview district because of the support administrators received in all areas, but especially in instruction. In my former district as the assistant principal in charge of curriculum and instruction I began struggling with the many different tasks I needed to complete every day. It was my job to help our staff in the area of curriculum and instruction, including transitioning to the Common Core State Standards, but I found myself doing managerial work for much of the day instead. This district was small so the opportunity for networking was not there. It was at this point in my career when the idea of principal preparation and support, especially in the area of instructional leadership, became interesting to me. I wanted to research what principals' perceptions were of the administrative credentialing program they attended to get their credential and how supported principals felt in their role as instructional leader.

My administrative credential program gave me some great background knowledge, but I did not feel fully prepared to take on the role of an assistant principal. My experiences on the job, the support I received from my district office and my principal and colleagues are the things that helped me develop into a stronger instructional leader.

I believe high school principals have a very difficult job; which makes preparation and support crucial to their success. Not only are principals being held accountable for the academic success of their students, but they are also responsible for budgets,

communication with parents, the community, staff and the district office, evaluations, supervision of students and student activities, athletics, and much more. The job of a high school principal is overwhelming and if they do not feel prepared for the job and if they do not receive some sort of guidance or support, their job can be even more difficult.

Two of the participants in this study are colleagues of mine in the Southview District. I work with one of them at the same school and I am aware of the support he has received as an instructional leader. The other participant was also a former colleague of mine from a previous district we worked in. My professional relationship with both participants could influence the way they answered some questions and it could impact the level of comfort the participants had during the interview process. My knowledge of the support both principals have received could also impact my findings.

I strongly believe that principals need support throughout their career in instructional leadership. I also believe that administrative credential programs need to adjust their focus to include ways to develop aspiring administrators into strong instructional leaders. The state and districts need to spend the time and allocate resources to provide continuous training and support to school leaders.

CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Introduction

In this study, the researcher conducted six semi-structured interviews of each principal and collected any documents the participants were willing to share. Each type of data was coded by using NVivo. The researcher analyzed the data to find relationships and themes amongst the codes. The main theme that emerged from the data was when principals receive support there are indications that they begin to develop as instructional leaders. The two principals from the Southview School District received a lot of support throughout their career and were further along in the process of developing as instructional leaders. During their interviews they both clearly discussed how they had grown as instructional leaders. They took part in reading, expressed lofty ideas of how to move their schools forward in instruction and how they were motivated to grow as instructional leaders. Two other principals, who both worked in different districts, have received some support along the way and were beginning to develop as instructional leaders. The last two principals who worked in the Northview School District have not received much support as instructional leaders. These principals have not had the opportunity to learn through reading and discussing what has been read. During the interviews both of these principals discussed practical and transactional situations rather than ideas they had to lead their schools in instruction. These findings will be elaborated

on in this chapter beginning with a report of the results organized by the districts they work in.

Southview School District

Mr. Russell and Mr. Davis worked in the Southview School District. Both principals felt the different types of support they received in the area of instructional leadership played a key role in their development as instructional leaders. Each principal went into detail about the different types of support they received during their time as principals and how it has impacted them in their role as instructional leader. The specific areas of support that emerged during their interviews and from the documents they were willing to share were district level support, mentoring, coaching, support from administrative teams or colleagues and reading.

District level support. A main source of support for Mr. Russell and Mr. Davis as they developed into instructional leaders was district level support. Throughout both of the interviews, the principals mentioned how much their district has done for them to help them in the area of instructional leadership. Their district held two different types of meetings for principals. One meeting addressed management issues each principal dealt with at their sites and the other meeting focused on instructional leadership. Both principals emphasized the discussions during the instructional principal meetings with the superintendent and assistant superintendent were centered on the idea of each principal finding the rocks for their schools. Finding the rocks was the districts' language to encourage principals to determine the most important strategies or ideas to focus on. Those strategies and ideas had to align with the district and school vision. Mr. Davis expressed the importance of these conversations as follows

I like the process that we have right now. Principal meetings that are professional development, things to think about, areas to focus on, directions the school's going to go, directions our district's going to go, line those up and separate those from the business meetings.

Mr. Russell also felt the discussions during their instructional principal meetings contributed to his growth as an instructional leader.

Yeah, we do every other week we have Principal meetings where we'll talk about instructional practices and a lot of that is from the District office. Like I said there's a lot of communication, a lot of push too to say Principals you should be sending out a Monday morning email blast to talk about the instructional practices or things that you saw and then you need to share it with the other five Principals and so again you create the leadership voice and so we all kinda collaborate on what we're sending out and the constant message, you know, regarding instructions, so that's helpful because you get to see what other people are doing and how they are doing on their campus.

One final thing Southview District has done to help support both Mr. Russell and Mr. Davis was the implementation of Principal Instructional Rounds. All of the high school principals in the district would go to a school and observe in classrooms together where they looked for certain instructional strategies. The principals would get together with some district personnel and discuss what they saw. This process played a very important role for both of these principals. They take back much of what they have learned from the instructional rounds to their school sites.

Mentoring and coaching. Mentoring and coaching were two ways principals have been supported. Mentoring can be formal or informal and mentors work on developing a person professionally. Mentors can work with mentees for a short period of time or they may continue to help mentees for the rest of their career. Coaching tends to work on developing a leader's ability to perform tasks and they tend to be groups from the outside that are hired to work with principals. Mr. Russell and Mr. Davis have had mentors and

coaches and they believed the relationships they built with their mentors or the focus their coaches or coaching program had played a major role in supporting them as they lead their schools instructionally.

Mentoring. Mr. Davis, had two cabinet level district employees as his mentors.

Mr. Davis describes how his mentors have supported him in the following way

So I've had two. They're cabinet level mentors, and they have been alternatively very prescriptive and directive in what they want to see done. Well, I guess directive in what they want to see done, not necessarily prescriptive, and have left it up to us to get to that path. So that has been supportive. So while they've been directive in saying we've got to get to here, this is what this should look like, the path we take is up to us. And so that's where the help has been. So I've learned how to you know, okay...trust myself that they're trusting me to go do that, so it's up to me to go and learn how to ask some questions of them. So that's been my biggest thing, where they have not told me as a principal I want you to do it exactly like this, this, this, this and this... how to lead. They'll ask me questions like well, what do you want it to look like and force me to answer the question, force me to funnel, force me to pick my rocks. Whatever, that process I was talking to you about earlier. They've done that with me on a very personal level. They've been some of the hardest, most critical conversations and difficult conversations I've ever had.

Mr. Davis was grateful for the amount of questioning his mentors used with him. He knew this played a major role in his development in the area of instructional leadership.

Mr. Russell considered his former assistant superintendent and current superintendent as mentors in the area of instruction. In his former district, more time was spent on the managerial roles for administrators like budgeting, master schedule building and other things. In his new district, both of his mentors pushed him to be strong instructionally and they put systems in place for him to excel. His mentors asked him questions, they made him think about what he was doing as a leader and they encouraged him to seek out opportunities to grow.

Coaching. Mr. Russell and Mr. Davis' district hired an outside consulting firm to be coaches for all principals in the district. The firm has been working with both principals for the past three years. With this group, Mr. Russell and Davis have read books on instructional leadership and they started the principal rounds with them. Mr. Russell described the coaching this way

We're actually getting a lot of training now with the company, you know it's been like the last three years and so they've been great and they push you to think and commit to things. Here we've done some things called the Principal rounds, where we've gone as Principals in a classrooms with people outside of the District who are very experienced and then we go in and watch the lesson together and this practice is not to evaluate the teacher, it's to evaluate me in what I see as the instructional leader and how I give feedback.

This coaching model has worked well for these two principals. The documents that were shared came from this consultant group. The documents addressed how the principals could narrow their focus for their schools, what to look for during instructional rounds and how the principals could help the district become stronger by creating networks with other districts. These are some of the items Mr. Davis and Mr. Russell have been working on this year.

Team support. When it comes to running a high school, Mr. Russell and Mr. Davis believed their administrative team has helped them manage instruction at their school sites. During the interviews, these principals stated how fortunate they were to have strong team members who helped drive the school's focus on instruction.

Mr. Russell emphasized how important his administrative team was in keeping the school's focus on instruction. They go out into classrooms during their team meetings and they come back to discuss what they observed. His team worked on

keeping their school's goals aligned with the district goals and strategic plans. Their conversations were centered on good teaching strategies and student engagement.

For Mr. Davis, his team was the biggest reason why he has been able to focus on instruction at his school. He stated, "The biggest amount of support was from the leaders here at school, our APs that...that just could not have gotten done without us being together. It simply...it couldn't have happened". His team was aligned with Mr. Davis' instructional vision and this has helped both the school and Mr. Davis grow in instruction.

Reading. A final area of support for the principals came from the reading they have done throughout their careers. Both principals have done a lot of reading on their own and with their district as a way to learn how to lead a school in the area of instruction.

Mr. Davis was well read; he talked a lot about the different leadership books he read on his own or with his district. One book that stood out to him was *Built to Last* by Jim Collins. This book taught Mr. Davis how to focus on building core values, or a mission, for his school. Everything his school has done revolves around these values and all of these values tie into what happens in the classroom either directly or indirectly. This was a book he read on his own. Mr. Davis also discussed how his district likes to study leadership. A different book has been chosen each year and that book becomes the focus for the district. This year, the book they were reading was centered on how to lead instruction at a school. Each principal reads the book and the district takes topics from the book to guide discussions at meetings throughout the year.

Mr. Russell takes part in the district reading and discussions, as well. He also reads a lot on his own. He stated he has gotten a lot of great ideas on how to move a school forward in instruction from the different selections he has read.

Westview School District

Mr. Rivers was on his second year as principal in the Westview School District. During his time as principal, he received some support in instructional leadership.

District level support. During the interview, Mr. Rivers mentioned his district supported his development as an instructional leader by providing professional development twice a month on different instructional topics. For example his senior director did presentations on reading programs and instructional interventions. The district office also provided coaches for the principals last year; which Mr. Rivers found helpful. Mr. Rivers mentioned many people at his district office were new, so he hoped the support would continue as he grows into his role as an instructional leader.

Mentoring and Coaching. Mr. Rivers had one person he considered to be his mentor throughout his career. This person encouraged Mr. Rivers to go into administration and he has been a strong supporter of him today. Mr. Rivers stated

I have had a mentor. He's still my mentor, and he is a very, very good instructional leader, and I think most of that has come from experience rather than being a transient area expert. So he's been a principal for a while, probably 20+ years. And he hasn't had a ton of experience in the classroom, if you will. So that's what's interesting to me. But he's able to give some very practical advice, and the application is easy. It starts with just having those little conversations, getting to know who they are and who their spouse is, what their kids' names are. And then jumping from that into, "Hey. Tell me why you did that. That was really cool. Good for you." And then you jump from that into, "Hey. I would have loved to have seen this because little Johnny over there...da da da..." And then just kind of build. You constantly build on these informal interactions and then you're able to have more challenging conversations if it calls for it. But he taught me

that...modeled it. I watched him do it, and it's pretty awesome...it's pretty awesome to see.

Mr. Rivers learned a lot from his mentor and he still goes to him when he has questions or needs some guidance.

Mr. Rivers had a coach during his first year as principal. He would choose a topic to focus on with this coach and they would meet every two weeks to discuss the topic. Mr. Rivers and his coach spent a lot of time discussing how Mr. Rivers could grow as the instructional leader of his school. They walked through classrooms together and the coach asked him questions to keep Mr. Rivers focused on instructional strategies being used in the classroom and on student engagement. The coaching ended after one year, but Mr. Rivers felt it was beneficial to him during that time.

Team Support. One area of support Mr. Rivers relied on comes from his administrative team. He firmly believed his team has made him a better instructional leader. He and his administrative team sat down together all the time to discuss ways they could impact instruction at school. As a team, they developed a walk through protocol they all used when they went out into classrooms. This protocol was discussed when they got together for their administrative team meetings. The administrative team was helpful by keeping the discussions centered on student learning and engagement. Mr. Rivers has turned to his team often since he started his principalship.

Reading. Reading has been an important source of learning for Mr. Rivers. He has read many books on leadership and instructional practices. Reading has not been something his district has pushed him to do; it is something he felt was important to do on his own. Mr. Rivers has chosen books on his own, like *The Principals* by Michael

Fullan. From this book he learned he needed to be alongside with his teachers in the learning process. He wanted his staff to know it was okay to make mistakes along the way and they could work together through those mistakes to become stronger instructional leaders for the students on their campus. Mr. Rivers stated how he shared stories of times he struggled as a teacher in the classroom in hopes of connecting with his staff on a different level. He felt it was important to let teachers know he went through the same things they went through.

Mr. Rivers has received support during his first two years, mostly from his mentor, administrative team and individual reading. His district office also supported Mr. Rivers' growth as an instructional leader as they offered some support in the form of professional development or workshops.

Eastview School District

Mr. Jones has been a principal for many years and has worked in different school districts. His current district, Eastview, and people from his two former districts have impacted his development as an instructional leader.

District level support. During the interview, Mr. Jones discussed the different ways his first district supported him in his growth as an instructional leader. His first district used instructional practices and strategies during their administrative training program. He also had conversations with district level personnel where they would ask him questions about instructional practices and they would challenge him as the instructional leader in his school. Meetings focused on instructional strategies and practices. Mr. Jones stated he believed a lot of what he does today in instruction is because of the support he received from his former district.

The next district Mr. Jones worked in as a principal provided a lot in terms of professional development, coaching and reading. He attended many different workshops on instructional leadership during his time at the district. The district provided coaches for a couple of years and the coaches focused on instructional leadership with the principals. Mr. Jones also read different books and articles and these items became the topic of conversation for many meetings.

In his current district, Mr. Jones stated his district supports him by supporting the decisions he has made in the area of instruction. Mr. Jones has not worked in the Eastview School District long, but he brought with him many years of experience as a high school principal.

Mentoring and coaching. Mr. Jones' former superintendent, Mr. Johnson, was his mentor. He recalled many conversations and meetings where he met with Mr. Johnson and they discussed instructional strategies. Mr. Johnson had a white board in his office and all of their brainstorming went up on the board. Mr. Jones mentioned Mr. Johnson was mission driven and emphasized all instructional leadership strategies began and ended with a school's mission. Mr. Jones has followed this idea at his schools. Mr. Jones also considered books to be a form of mentoring. He has read many books throughout his career and he firmly believed this has helped him along the way.

As mentioned before, Mr. Jones had a coach in his former school district. He stated the coaching he received was beneficial because it created a networking system within his own district where all principals were able to work together to read books or articles on leading instruction, observe lessons and come together to discuss what they

read or observed. Each of the principals in this district worked together with their colleagues and district offices to develop their instructional leadership.

Team support. During the interview, Mr. Jones was not afraid to admit how much he learned from the assistant principals that worked with him. He learned how to implement instructional rounds at his former district because of an assistant principal and he learned how to focus on what really matters at a school: instruction. Mr. Jones put his school's mission statement at the center of everything he did and his team bought into that strategy. He knew he could not manage instruction on his own; he needed a strong support system to help him carry out his mission to ensure all students learned to their highest potential.

Reading. Mr. Jones read a lot and he mentioned books have become his mentor for instructional leadership over the years. He has read many books, some as a group in his former district, but most on his own. He has learned how to manage instruction and build relationships and a positive culture from his readings. Mr. Jones felt the books he read has made him a stronger instructional leader at all of the schools he has worked in.

Northview School District

The last two principals from the study, Mr. Smith and Mrs. Jordan, have not received a lot of support in instruction during their careers as principals. Both of these principals worked in the Northview School District. Since they have been principals, their district has dealt with many issues and obstacles, so the principals did not get much in terms of instructional leadership support. The support they have received has either come from mentors or some professional development sessions they have attended.

District level support. Mr. Smith and Mrs. Jordan both believed, while their district provided some professional development in instructional leadership, they could benefit from more district support in this area. Mr. Smith expressed his district's leadership was improving on creating a united and unified approach to instruction. He also stated, "Under the Superintendent's leadership there is a lot of effort to clarify best instruction and have a consistent message". One last thing Mr. Smith's district has done to provide extra support in instructional leadership for their high school principals is fund a Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA) position. The person in this position is a former English teacher in the district and her main focus has been to support the principal in instructional leadership. This helped Mr. Smith because she was able to support him in the operational side of instructional leadership.

Mrs. Jordan stated her district helped support her by providing professional development on specific strategies to help them when they went into teachers' classrooms. For example, they did trainings on English Learner strategies and Professional Learning Communities. M. Smith stated, "Our district basically did a grassroots up training on those strategies and those improved instructional practices in every classroom".

Mentoring and coaching. Mrs. Jordan had two female administrators as her mentors. They spent a lot of time discussing what to look for when observing in classrooms. She developed a strong relationship with both of these people and they would always challenge her to become a better instructional leader. Mr. Smith did not have anyone he considered to be his mentor. He stated he turned to his colleagues for guidance or support as needed. Mr. Smith said he could call on them at any time and

they support each other by sharing instructional strategies. Mr. Smith felt like he has not really turned to anyone else during his career to get support as he developed into an instructional leader.

Early in Mrs. Jordan's career, the Northview School District hired coaches. Mrs. Jordan stated the coach helped her with many different aspects of the principal job, including leading instruction. Her coach stopped by weekly during her first year as principal and then every couple of weeks in the year after that. Mrs. Jordan stated her coach helped her focus on the right things when it came to instruction. Mr. Smith has not had a coach during his career.

Reading. Mrs. Jordan has read some books on leadership and instructional practices. Mrs. Jordan's district had her reading books by DuFour and Marzano early on in her principalship. She took some important instructional strategies from these authors and more. For example, she learned the importance of building a strong Professional Learning Community at her school from reading DuFour. The idea that strong teacher teams could lead to strong instruction and an increase in learning in the classroom came from these authors. From Marzano, she took the backwards design model and used that when she led her school in instruction. Mrs. Jordan did this reading on her own. Her district did not use reading as a way to address instructional leadership for principals. Mr. Smith did not mention reading during the interview.

Discussion of the Research Questions

The rest of the chapter will address the themes that emerged according to each research question.

Research Question 1 Findings

1. How have six high school principals developed into instructional leaders?

The six high school principals interviewed in this study expressed how receiving support, building relationships, maintaining a few areas of focus and building leadership capacity in the school all contributed to their growth and development as instructional leaders.

Receiving support. As detailed in the previous section, the principals in the study received support from their district offices, mentors, coaches, administrative teams or colleagues and from reading. The principals who received the most support in the area of instructional leadership have started to develop as instructional leaders for their schools. The two principals from the Southview School district, Mr. Russell and Mr. Davis, have received the most in terms of support during their tenure as principals. They have received professional development and guidance from their district office and mentors. Mr. Davis mentioned how his district spends time studying leadership and how this has helped him lead his school instructionally. One example he talked about was when dealing with the change to the Common Core Standards at his school site. Mr. Davis stated

If we stick on the most essential things to know...we're going to go deep, have critical thinking, you know check for understanding, those things...and use the best teaching methods to teach those and collaborate, then well, we're going to teach all the standards that the Common Core requires. We'll be fine on that because that's the most important things to know, and it really won't matter what tests they take.

Mr. Davis attributed this type of leadership to the lessons he learned from his mentors and district office.

Another example of support the district has provided for Mr. Davis and Mr. Russell was by bringing in coaches to help all principals in the district lead their schools instructionally. The consultant group that has been brought in as coaches have helped Mr. Russell and Mr. Davis learn how to lead administrative and department chair meetings. The consultant group has focused on having the principals be listeners and learners during these meetings. Mr. Davis stated his school has changed how department coordinator meetings are run. The meetings used to be all about business, but now only twenty percent of the meetings are business. The rest of the meetings are centered on professional development and instruction. The department coordinators then run their department meetings the same way. Mr. Russell mentioned he has been as much of a participant in staff development trainings as his teachers.

Finally, Mr. Davis and Mr. Russell have read a lot in their district. The readings became themes for principal meetings for the entire year. There has been an expectation in the district for Mr. Russell and Mr. Davis to use what they have read and learned at their sites and then report back on how things went.

The two principals from the Northview School District have not had a lot of guidance or support in terms of instructional leadership. Mrs. Jordan and Mr. Smith both mentioned they would like more support from their district offices in this area. Mrs. Jordan has learned from her mentors and the books she has read on her own, but Mr. Smith has not had that much support at all. During the interview, he talked a lot about having a teacher on special assignment lead the school in instructional leadership, not how he was going to lead the school.

Building relationships. Five of the participants in this study expressed how important it was for them to build relationships with their staffs before they were able to develop as instructional leaders. In order for each principal to establish and communicate a mission, manage instruction and establish a positive school climate, each principal knew they needed to gain the trust and confidence of their staffs.

Mr. Davis and Mr. Russell seemed to carry out relationship building more extensively than the other principals in the study. Mr. Davis spent a great deal of time building relationships and establishing trust with his staff. When he started at his school six years ago, he came into a situation where there was not a positive vibe between the principal and the staff. He was brought to his school to build relationships. For the first couple of years, he and his administrative team did just that. Staff members were not included in decision-making at the school and there was no follow through. Mr. Davis was intentional about following through on everything he said he would do and he made sure to invite as many people into decision making that needed to be brought in. After breaking through with the staff, Mr. Davis was able to move on to establishing a strong mission for the school by taking the entire staff through the process of creating core values every staff member believed in. It started out as a whole group activity then the process went up and back through email chains and meetings. After a semester of work, the staff created core values that helped guide the school in every decision that is made. These values, or mission, are in some way tied to instruction. This was not an easy task to accomplish at a high school and it could not have been done if Mr. Davis did not spend the time he did making sure every staff member was valued and included in all aspects of the school. Once he was able to build relationships and trust with his staff, Mr. Davis

was able to implement the things he was learning from his district and he was able to grow as an instructional leader.

Mr. Russell also believed in building relationships and establishing trust when he was hired as principal at his school. The first thing he did was learn everyone's name from the website and yearbooks. He also learned a little something about each person by doing some research ahead of time. To him, positive relationships with his staff, was a key part of his development as an instructional leader. Without the trust of his staff, he would not have been able to open his teachers' doors to district-wide Principal Instructional Rounds. Mr. Russell stated, "Well the biggest part I think is the Principal is building trust with your staff and that means being in their classrooms, able to talk about what you see and my first few years I did a really good job at doing that". He believed in being visible and having conversations about what he observed in classrooms.

Principal Jones also believed being in classrooms helps a principal establish relationships on their campuses. "Well, guiding people. Value people. Go out; watch what they do. Provide them some positive feedback about what they do. Listen. Find out who they are. People just want to be valued and know that they've been heard". He suggested once you do this, it is easier to become an instructional leader because people see you in their classrooms and this gives a principal more authority in instruction.

Mrs. Jordan has been at a few different school sites in the same district and one outside the district. At each school, she spent time getting to know her staff and making sure they trusted her and her role as an instructional leader. One way she accomplished this was by allowing herself to share some of the mistakes she made along the way as a teacher. "The best thing is if you have that level of trust with someone and you build a

rapport with them and you are open about your own challenges when you were a teacher, people are much more willing to listen to you”.

The principal in the Westview District is new at his school. He is in his second year as principal. Mr. Rivers has spent a lot of time trying to gain the trust of his staff. He mentioned there was a major turnover in principals at his school. Since 1998 twelve different people have been the principal at his school so he has a lot of work to do to develop the trust his staff needs to move forward instructionally. He has been open about his struggles as a teacher and he shares those struggles in weekly memos that go out to the staff. He also focuses on being professional. He felt his school lacked a sense of professionalism over the years. It has been a difficult road already for Mr. Rivers, but he knew he needed to continue to develop those relationships in order to lead his school instructionally in the future.

Focus on what matters. Some of the principals in the study shared how important it was to stay focused on a few important things as the instructional leader. Often times in education people get caught up in the next big strategy or program for students and that causes leaders to lose sight of what really matters; which is instruction in the classroom.

Mr. Davis went into more detail than principals from the other districts about how important it was for him to stay focused on a few key things.

And we call them our rocks. Those things that are super important. The big things. And so we've had training that really...I mean, I'll try to keep it simple. It's to help us funnel all the things that you can do in education...there's just tons of them. The list can go on and on, and you can just never get anywhere. And we have decided...you know our district has helped us to decide what are the most important ones. And everything we've done, from a district level down to the principals...like aligning our Single school plan plans to our strategic plan to our action plans to our funding plans. They all start to repeat what we're supporting and what we're spending money on.

For Mr. Davis, the rocks were best first instruction strategies like cloze reading and establishing core values that guided all instructional decisions for the school. At his school, he wanted teachers to do a few things really well. When this occurs school-wide, then all students benefitted from it.

For Mr. Russell, he and his staff established a strong vision and for the school. They selected four areas of focus for instruction; which were writing across the curriculum, literacy, cross-curricular collaboration and the use of technology. These instructional focal points were in all of the school documents and they were the topics of conversation at all of the staff meetings.

A third participant in the study, Mr. Jones, placed a lot of emphasis on his school's mission statement. He wanted all students to learn to their maximum potential. Every decision that was made for the school was linked back to the mission. He communicated the mission clearly, it was up in his office and there were posters all over the school with the mission statement. Finally, Mr. Jones expressed how important it was for him to deliberately communicate instructional strategies. He shared what he observed in classrooms in a weekly memo and he started all of his administrative meetings off by discussing positive teaching and learning that was occurring on campus. By focusing on the mission of the school, Mr. Jones believed his campus was strong instructionally.

Capacity building. With all of the demands placed on a principal running a high school, it becomes difficult for them to manage instruction all on their own. The six principals in this study all felt that in order to be a strong instructional leader a principal needs to build instructional leadership capacity within the school community.

At his school, Mr. Russell knew he had to find strong teacher leaders on campus to help with instructional changes when implementing new strategies. Mr. Russell, perhaps more than any principal in the study, found his best teacher leaders and led through them.

You find out who your best Biology teachers are. They lead that group. They have common assessments. Now you talk about what so-and-so taught, what worked, what didn't, you know, if you can do those things, you're going to have a healthy organization and that's really where you are as an instructional leader. It doesn't mean you're everywhere all the time but you are leading through people and people are doing things, having conversations that lead to improved results. Mr. Davis strongly believed his administrative team and other teacher leaders

needed to help support his school in the area of instruction. Teachers organized professional development activities for staff collaboration days and he sent out emails about different instructional strategies teachers utilized in classrooms. Mr. Davis had time carved out for his administrative team to observe in classrooms during their weekly meetings. After getting into some classrooms, the team discussed what they saw and they formulated follow up questions to ask the teachers they observed.

At his previous school, Mr. Jones worked with his assistant principals to help build instructional leadership capacity for the school. One of his former assistant principals helped the school begin the process of instructional rounds. This was a non-evaluative way of getting teachers into other teachers' classrooms in order to observe a specific teaching strategy. After teachers observed each other, they would hold a debriefing meeting to discuss what they saw during the observation. Mr. Jones also mentioned how important it was for him to use teacher leaders to drive instruction at his school site. He mentioned the following about tapping into strong teacher leaders

I'm finding lately that it's really the groups of teachers feeding off each other's energy that gets the biggest shift in culture and amount of energy towards instructional practices. So while it's important for us to do those thorough observations and the thorough conversations after that, that's not sufficient to bring about a real instructional culture.

Mr. Smith used his TOSA as a way to develop leadership capacity in instruction. He worked with her one on one and then she led teacher meetings with other staff members. This has worked well this past school year. Mrs. Jordan, in the same district, does not have a TOSA, but she used her administrative team and teacher leaders to share ideas or present information on instruction.

All six principals, some more than others, have been developing into instructional leaders since they started the position. The principals that were interviewed felt the support they received, the relationships they built with staff members, keeping a limited area of focus and building leadership capacity at their schools helped them as instructional leaders along the way. The next part of this chapter will focus on the obstacles these six principals have faced as they led their schools in instruction.

Research Question 2 Findings:

What obstacles do principals face in becoming an instructional leader?

The principals that participated in this research study have faced some obstacles as they have attempted to lead their schools in instruction. The following two themes emerged from the data to answer this research question: time and people. With all of the tasks that fill a principal's day, it is often times difficult to keep the focus on instruction. There are many days these principals ran out of time to get into classrooms or to send an email highlighting instructional strategies. The other obstacle can be the people on a staff

that do not want to change, jump on board or be a part of what the school is trying to accomplish.

Time. The biggest obstacle for all of the principals in this study was time. These high school principals were responsible for so many different things on their campuses and at their district offices, being an instructional leader took a back seat at times Mrs. Jordan faced the frustration of not getting into classrooms on a daily basis. She expressed how she wanted to work with new teachers to help them develop as teachers and leaders on campus, but too many things got in the way. She stated

It seemed like no matter how I tried, I was always encumbered by the administration and the management part of the joint and the instructional leadership part was the thing that you could get away with not doing unfortunately. You could not get away with not doing reports and not filing single school plan and not making your safety plan was in. You had to return to parent phone calls and you had to attend district meetings and trainings and so the one thing that you could in the short term was not do, was the thing that you should probably do most.

Mr. Davis shared this sentiment during his interview. Over the past few years, he has been asked to be on more committees at the district office and he has gotten involved in more community groups and events and each of these took time away from him being on campus leading instruction. Mr. Davis knew he needed to get back on campus and get back into classrooms, but it has been more difficult to do this year. He has relied on his administrative team to get into classes and to keep the focus on instruction.

When Mr. Russell gets to his campus every morning, he never knows what to expect from the day. He has over 20,000 emails as a third year principal, he has over 2,000 students and over 100 staff members. He got distracted easily by answering emails or returning phone calls. He needed to make more of a conscious effort to get out of his

office and get into classrooms. Mr. Russell was also on more committees at the district office this year so that is took extra time away from his school.

Mr. Rivers, Mr. Jones and Mr. Smith agreed that time was a big obstacle for them. They got too caught up in the management of the day. Even when they marked time off on their calendars to get into classrooms, they got sidetracked and did not always make it into classrooms. Mr. Jones stated, “Now there are some days, like Monday this week, when I had 5 meetings back to back that I didn't plan and I had to go to and that's it. That's my day”.

People. Another big obstacle for principals as they become instructional leaders at their high schools is people. On every campus, there are some who are ready to jump on board and move the school in the right direction. Then there are those who do not want to be a part of anything and they would rather stay in their classrooms with the doors closed. The six principals in this study have faced people on their campuses who do not want to move the school forward instructionally and those people have gotten in the way of some positive changes that were being made at the school sites.

Mr. Smith has faced a lot of push back from his staff members over the past couple of years

I think is when you are dealing with growth mindset folks versus stagnant mindset... how do you... growth mindset people are easy, right. They are naturally open-minded looking for new solutions. They come at the world with the understanding that there very likely is a better way to do something and would love to hear about it. So those folks are easy to engage in conversation and so forth. Those that have a closed mindset and feel that they have kind of found that mark and are not necessarily open to that, that is the bigger challenge.

He wanted to get his teachers to buy-in to what they were doing but quite a few of them were not of the growth mindset. Mr. Smith did not want his teachers to be compliant on

instructional strategies. He wanted his staff members to have an open mindset and embrace what was happening instructionally, but this did not always happen.

Lack of teacher buy in was an obstacle Mr. Jones faced, as well. He stated, “I think, you know, your obstacles are going to be who far can you take people who aren't invested in that at all? And they have various chips on their shoulders and probably for good reason. They're not as fun to work with because there's more push back”. Mr. Jones tried to be empathetic with teachers and he tried to put himself in their shoes but that was not always successful.

When Principal Davis led his staff on the journey to develop core values, not everyone was on board, but he did not waste time worrying about them. He knew he had to work with the group that wanted to be a part of the process. This process tested Mr. Davis' ability to lead a school down a path that could lead to major instructional shifts. For those teachers that did not want to get on board, Mr. Davis mentioned many of them found their way to a different school site on their own.

Mrs. Jordan, Mr. Rivers and Mr. Russell also had examples of how people became obstacles in their development as an instructional leader. Mrs. Jordan gave an example of how she was in a teacher's classroom for a subject she did not teach and the teacher told her she could not be her instructional leader because she did not know the content. The teacher overlooked the fact that good teaching strategies cross into all curricular areas. For Mr. Rivers, he was battling the naysayer group who thought he would not be there long as their principal. They have had so many principals in the last few years, it was difficult for them to go along with what any leader wanted to do for instruction. Finally, Mr. Russell had teachers that did not want to follow along with his

leadership because they were in the profession longer than he was; which meant they knew more than Mr. Russell did. Instead of giving into this group, Mr. Russell mentioned he knew he needed to establish himself as an instructional leader and he realized he needed to lead with the help of strong teacher leaders.

Even though all principals have faced obstacles as they have developed into instructional leaders, they have tried to overcome these obstacles. One thing that all principals mentioned was they carved time out of their day to be in classrooms. Some put it on their calendars and they did not let anything interfere with that time. Another strategy Mrs. Jordan used was she would only sign documents at one time during the day. She found herself getting interrupted fifty times a day just to sign one piece of paper. All items that needed to be signed were put aside and she did them all at once. Mr. Smith made sure he put time on his calendar to be in classrooms.

To overcome the obstacle of naysayers, the principals have worked with teacher leaders on staff because they know teachers listen to teachers more often than they listen to administrators. They reached out to strong instructional leaders on campus to help them through the process. Another way all six principals have tried to overcome the obstacle of people not buying into their instructional leadership was by being visible in classrooms. The principals understood how important it was to be in classrooms so teachers could see they cared about what was going on instructionally. Mr. Davis and Mr. Russell seemed to be more adept at overcoming these obstacles as they were quick to come up with answers on what they have done to lead in spite of these barriers. For example, neither principal focused on the naysayers. They knew not everyone would be

on board with what they were trying to do so they worked with the staff members that could help make things happen on campus.

Research Question 3 Findings

What are the perceptions the principals have of the support they have received in developing as an instructional leader?

The principals in the study were asked how they felt about the support they received in the area of instructional leadership. With the demands of the job, it is important to understand what is beneficial for principals and what is not beneficial in terms of support.

District Support. The principals that received the most in terms of district support felt positively about the support. Mr. Russell and Mr. Davis, from the Southview District, have had guidance in the area of instruction by their district office for a few years. From mentors to coaches and guided reading along the way, these two principals felt supported as they developed into instructional leaders. “I’m grateful that our district likes to study leadership and puts a premium on the leadership more than the management” (Mr. Davis). Mr. Davis appreciated the strong district leadership he has worked under because they pushed him to become a stronger instructional leader. He was given valuable feedback and asked questions along the way. This has forced Mr. Davis to grow and to look to his district for guidance and support, but not for all of the answers.

Mr. Russell has experienced the same positive support from his district office. He was grateful they have pushed him to become a better instructional leader by providing coaching and by encouraging all principals in the district to focus on instructional

leadership. Mr. Russell came from a district where all of the high schools competed with each other to have the highest test scores or the best football team. In the Southview district, there was still some level of competition, but the district office created a strong sense of togetherness where all principals worked as at team to grow instructionally. “Because you really do have a team approach and so you have support from a lot of different places. And so that’s been really good” (Mr. Russell).

Mr. Jones was also positive about the amount of support he received from his district office. He stated it helped him dramatically when his district provided some training on instructional leadership. For Mrs. Jordan and Mr. Smith, they would have liked to have more district support in their development as instructional leaders. They did not feel as though their districts spent enough time helping them grow in this area. They did appreciate the support they received, but they wanted more.

Mentoring. All of the principals in the study kept referring back to mentors they had who made a difference for them in their development as instructional leaders. Whether it was a former administrator, a colleague, or a district office employee, they all had someone they could point to as having a positive impact on their careers. For five of the principals, they had a specific mentor they could talk about during the interview. For one, it was his colleagues.

Mr. Russell and Mr. Davis considered their assistant superintendent and superintendent as positive influences in their educational leadership career. They both described how they talked to both of these people almost daily and they always asked them questions about instructional leadership and how they could better themselves in this area. Mr. Davis discussed a time when his mentor was a bit harsh towards him when

he presented something to other district level employees. His mentor was asking him difficult questions about his presentation because Mr. Davis had to go before the board to do the same presentation. It was a difficult situation for Mr. Davis to be in at the time, but his presentation ended up better because of it and Mr. Davis appreciated what his mentor did for him.

Mrs. Jordan was also grateful for one of her mentors. Her mentor would also ask her difficult questions about what she was doing as an instructional leader. The questions were sometimes tough to answer, but it only made Mrs. Jordan a better leader in the end. For Mr. Rivers, he perceived his mentor's support positively in the area of instructional leadership. His mentor was a principal for many years and he knew exactly what to look for in a lesson or during an observation. Mr. Rivers learned, "You constantly build on these informal interactions and then you're able to have more challenging conversations if it calls for it. But he taught me that...modeled it. I watched him do it, and it's pretty awesome...it's pretty awesome to see".

Coaching. For the principals that have received coaching from a hired coach or consulting company, they have perceived this support positively. In the Southview District, they have used the same consulting company for the past few years. The company has used books and other readings to help guide in the development of the principals in the district. Mr. Davis and Mr. Russell have been recipients of this effort and they both agree they would not be where they are today without the support of the firm their district uses. Mr. Russell specifically addressed how the consulting company helped him hone in on how he observed teachers in a classroom through the Principal Instructional Round process.

Mr. Jones also had some support from a coaching firm during his career. “The firm has really pushed some very organized professional development for leadership, for leadership that was primarily instructional leadership. That helped dramatically” (Mr. Jones). Mrs. Jordan and Mr. Rivers both had an individual coach hired by their district office to offer support in instructional leaders, but it only lasted for two years for Mrs. Jordan and one year for Mr. Rivers. They both appreciated having a coach to turn to for guidance and they both wanted to keep seeing their coach.

Team Support. During the interviews, four of the principals expressed how their administrative teams supported them and helped them become stronger instructional leaders at their schools.

Mr. Davis stated his entire administrative team was wired like he was when it came to instruction. During administrative meetings, the team discussed instruction and they started going into classrooms during their meetings so they could discuss instructional strategies. Mr. Rivers and his team worked closely on instruction and he knew working collaboratively with them would only make him a better instructional leader. He mentioned during the interview how his administrative team brought their experiences to the school and how they have all contributed something to improve instruction, like their new walk through form.

Mr. Russell relied on his team to be in classrooms and to be knowledgeable about what was going on in classrooms. His team supported him in his development as an instructional leader.

Reading. The principals that have read books with their district offices have appreciated the fact their district values learning for leaders. Mr. Davis and Mr. Russell

worked in a district where they read together. The superintendent bought books for all administrators in the district. The desire to keep learning was positive for both Mr. Davis and Mr. Russell. “One from the district leadership that they...they’re well read. They’re reading the same things they were encouraging us to read” (Mr. Davis).

Mr. Jones has read some books with his district leadership at another school, but he currently reads a lot on his own. He felt reading was a mentor and he took a lot of what he read and implemented it as his site. Mr. Rivers, Mrs. Jordan, and Mr. Jones did not read with their districts. Instead they read on their own. Some of what they have read has influenced them as leaders. For example, Mrs. Jordan took some information from the DuFour book so she could get Professional Learning Communities started at her school.

Summary

Overall the research findings indicate when principals receive some support in the area instruction, they begin develop into instructional leaders. The two principals from the Southview School District have received a lot of support as instructional leaders. Their district office spends a lot of time on instructional leadership building for their principals. Principal meetings are centered on instruction, the principals read books and discuss the implications the readings have on their schools and they take part in principal instructional rounds.

Mr. Davis and Mr. Russell appear to have developed as instructional leaders because they were extremely confident in their answers throughout the interview. They were able to clearly express what steps they have taken in moving their schools forward in instruction. For example, Mr. Davis worked with his staff create Core Values that

have become the center of everything they do at the school. These values are centered on student learning and success. Mr. Davis has also spent a lot of time building the leadership capacity of the school. He looked to teacher leaders to help in the professional development of the other staff members. Finally the staff at Mr. Davis' school selected a few important teaching strategies to focus on and these strategies have been the focus for a few years.

Another indication of growth as an instructional leader was Mr. Russell who spent a lot of time in finding teacher leaders to help move ideas forward. His staff chose a few teaching strategies to focus on and he works with his staff at moving the school forward in instruction. His mentors have worked with him at finding the key things he should focus on as principal.

The principals in the Northview School District have not received a lot of support in instructional leadership. Both of the principals from this district could not elaborate on what they have done to help their school move forward in instruction. During the interview, Mr. Smith focused on the negative teachers that got in the way of instructional changes or ideas at his school. He could not get passed this obstacle. He also kept referring to the TOSA who works with his school hoping she could help implement all of the instructional goals of the school. Mrs. Jordan had some support from mentors, but a lot of their conversations were centered on the management tasks of the principalship.

District support, mentoring, coaching, team support and reading have had a positive impact on the development of principals as instructional leaders. The principals perceived the support they got positively and the principals who did not receive as much support wished they could have more. As the role of the principal continues to expand

and with the start of the new Common Core State Standards, it will become increasingly more important to offer principals some guidance in their development as instructional leaders.

CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS,
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER
STUDY

Introduction

The problem examined in this study was with all of the daily tasks high school principals are faced with; principals are not prepared to take on the role of being an instructional leader at their schools. With all of the jobs, roles and responsibilities principals must manage it is important they get the professional development and support necessary as they attempt to develop into instructional leaders (Boerema, 2011).

The main purpose of this research study was to explore how principals perceive how they have developed into instructional leaders. The researcher interviewed six principals and attempted to collect documents. This study also explores the obstacles principals have faced as they have led their schools in instruction and principals' perceptions of the different supports they have received in this process. Principals' voices on what they need to become successful instructional leaders and have been absent in the literature. There has also been a gap in the perceptions principals have of the support they have received in the area of instructional leadership.

The study addressed the following research questions:

1. How have six high school principals developed into instructional leaders?

2. What obstacles do high school principals face in becoming instructional leaders?

3. What are the perceptions the principals have of the support they have received in developing as an instructional leader?

The researcher gathered data from different sources to get a clear understanding of how high school principals manage instruction at their schools and how they have been supported along the way. The data were also used to help the researcher understand how principals felt about the amount of and type of support they have received in instructional leadership.

Conclusions and Interpretations

Several conclusions emerged from the research. The main theme that emerged from the data was when principals receive support there are indications that they begin to develop as instructional leaders and they perceived the support positively. The literature on instructional leadership supports these findings. How the results for the research questions relate to the literature will be addressed in the following sections.

Research Question Number 1

1. How have six high school principals developed into instructional leaders?

The principals interviewed in this study have either had support throughout their tenure as principal or they stated they would like more support as they develop into instructional leaders. The literature that does exist on principals' perceptions of what they need to become strong leaders in the area of instruction is consistent with the findings from the research. In the literature, principals have stated they need a person to listen to them, like a mentor (Boerema, 2011). Most of the principals in this study had a

mentor that helped guide them. For four of the principals, their mentor spent a lot of time on instructional leadership. They all attribute their continued development as an instructional leader to the support and guidance they received from a mentor.

The literature also states it is important to provide principals with ongoing and continuous support from their district offices. One of the studies from the literature highlighted a district from New York who provided ongoing support to their principals in instructional leadership. In this district, professional development was provided, along with individual coaching (Fink & Resnick, 2001). The district also created support systems and study groups for their principals, as they became instructional leaders. The findings for the principals in Southview District were consistent with this literature. The two principals in this district had a strong support system from their district offices where they received intensive professional development in instructional leadership, they had strong mentors that were district level employees and they work as a group with the other principals from the district with an outside company on instructional leadership. The principals in the other districts have not had this type of systematic support from their district offices as much as the principals from the Southview District.

The literature on principal development as instructional leaders also focuses on principal preparation programs. The literature states university programs or principal preparation programs could be a potential source of support for principals in instructional leadership. In a study conducted by Hess and Kelly (2007), principals stated they felt better prepared for the principalship because of on the job experiences or guidance from others. Graduate programs did not help principals face the challenges of their job, including being an instructional leader (Hess & Kelly, 2007). Levine (2005) conducted a

comprehensive study on university preparation programs for principals. The results from this study concluded that preparation programs were not strong in preparing principals for the role of instructional leader. The findings from this research were consistent with this study. Principals did not even mention their graduate programs in their interviews. However, new forms of principal preparation carried out in partnership with school districts may have greater impact (Gates, Hamilton, Matorell, Burkhauser, Heaton, Pierson & Gu, 2014).

Research Question Number 2

2. What obstacles do high school principals face in becoming instructional leaders?

The second research question in this study addressed the obstacles principals faced in becoming an instructional leader. All of the principals in the study felt time was a major obstacle for them and this is consistent in the literature. Many studies addressed how many different roles or tasks principals must take care of during a day. Often times, instructional leadership gets pushed aside. Time is a major barrier for principals because principals are held accountable for all of the daily management tasks, as well as, instructional leadership (Hornig, Klasik & Loeb, 2010).

Most of the principals in the study felt some people on their staff were obstacles to their instructional leadership. Much of the literature that exists in the area addresses how teachers can be resistant to change. Rogers (2003) identified different phases of adoption new ideas or change. The phases range from innovators; people who take part in leading change to laggards; people who do not want to be a part of the change (Rogers, 2003). The principals from the Southview School District did not seem to get bogged

down by negative staff members. They had the ability to look past them and work with the innovators on their staffs. The principals from the Northview School District talked about the “naysayers” throughout the interview.

The literature also states a lack of support as an obstacle to instructional leadership. Some of the principals in the study felt they did not get a lot of support from mentors or their district offices. Meetings usually covered management topics and they did not receive a lot of professional development in instructional leadership.

Research Question Number 3

3. What are the perceptions the principals have of the support they have received in developing as an instructional leaders?

The final research question examined what perceptions principals have of the support they have received as instructional leaders. There is a gap in the literature with regards to principals’ perceptions in this area. The literature emphasized the fact that principals want on the job support and they want supportive relationships to help them develop as instructional leaders (Boerema, 2011). The findings in this study are consistent with the literature. The principals interviewed either want support or they feel positively about the support they are receiving in instructional leadership.

Implications

This section of the research study will address the implications of the study. The results of the study will be compared to Hallinger and Murphy’s theory of Instructional Leadership.

Connections to theoretical framework

As principals develop into instructional leaders it is important for them to stay focused on that role. In the theory of Instructional Leadership, Hallinger and Murphy (2013) stated the best way to stay focused is to *define a mission, manage the instructional program and promote a positive school climate.*

Defining a school's mission involves establishing clear goals that are visible, communicated and modeled by the principal of a school (Hallinger & Murphy, 2013). Before most of the principals in this study addressed the mission of their schools, they built relationships with their staff. Mr. Davis, for example, took a couple of years to get to his know staff and to assure them he was going to help lead the school in a more positive direction. Once he established strong relationships, he was able to get the entire staff to work on developing core values for the school. He went through a very detailed process of having teachers and classified staff members discuss what was really important for the students of their school. After many months of work, the staff created core values that became the basis for everything they do at the school. These values have been communicated, they have been on meeting agendas and when prospective employees were interviewed, questions were asked that were centered on the core values.

Mr. Jones also spent some time establishing relationships with his staff before beginning the process of looking at the school's mission statement. Once he was able to connect with the staff, they began analyzing their current mission statement to see if changes need to be made. Mr. Jones is a big believer in having a strong mission statement, but he knew he needed to get people to believe in him before starting the process of possible changing the school's mission statement.

Another result from the research study that is connected to establishing a clear mission or vision was maintaining a few areas to focus on with regards to instruction. The principals who have been supported during their tenure as principal have been encouraged to find a few small areas to focus on. Mr. Jones was mission driven and that was his focus at all the schools he worked at. Mr. Russell has worked with his administrative team to make sure they make decisions around their school's mission and vision. They have created instructional focal points that are central to what they do and they are communicated to everyone at the high school. Mr. Davis, as stated previously, has the five core values that are the basis of every decision that is made.

The last key finding that can be connected to the defining and communicating of a school's mission was building leadership capacity within the school. A mission cannot be created or communicated by one person. All six of the principals at some point during the interviewed talked about how they reached out to their administrative teams or other key leaders on campus to help develop and communicate the mission or vision of their school. Mr. Smith, for example, relied a lot on his teacher on special assignment to help carry out instructional messages for the school. He used a teacher leader because he felt the staff would listen to her more than to an administrator. Mr. Davis and Mr. Russell have also used other leaders on campus to help in establishing and communicating the mission of their schools.

The next dimension of Hallinger and Murphy's theory of instructional leadership (2013) was managing the instructional program. Managing the instructional program of a school is extremely important as it has an impact on student success. The results that emerged from the study in regards to managing the instructional program were more

about the obstacles principals faced in this area. Two obstacles that got in the way of managing instruction were time and people.

Hallinger and Murphy (2013) believed to manage instruction, principals needed to supervise and evaluate instruction, coordinate the curriculum and monitor student progress. All six principals in this study discussed how they did not have enough time to properly manage instruction. Mrs. Jordan stated she wanted to spend more time in classrooms, but that was always the first area taken off her calendar if something else came up during the day. She also really wanted to work with new teachers more closely because she knew how important it was to decide whether or not a teacher was going to become tenured or not.

During the interview with Mr. Davis, he mentioned how he was a part of more committees this year than ever before. While he enjoys being a part of different aspects of the district, he has not had as much time on campus in classrooms supervising and evaluating instruction.

Even though all of the principals understood how important it was to be in classrooms evaluating instruction, all of the principals gave being in classrooms up more often than not. Only two of the principals, Mr. Davis and Mr. Russell, talked about monitoring student progress. They did this by looking at data given to them by their district office. The data they analyzed was college and career readiness data. District, administrative and staff meetings have been spent analyzing this data at both high schools.

The second obstacle that got in the way of some of the principals' ability to manage instruction were the people they worked with. For example, Mrs. Jordan was

often times told by teachers that she could not evaluate or supervise them because she did not have the background knowledge for their content area. Mr. Smith constantly talked about how he ran up against the stagnant teachers who did not want to hear what he had to say about instructional topics.

Promoting a positive school learning climate, according to Hallinger and Murphy, involved protecting instructional time, promoting professional development, being visible, developing high expectations, providing incentives for learning and constantly looking for ways to improve teaching and learning. The key part from this dimension that came out in every interview was how the principals looked for ways to improve teaching and learning and how the support they received helped them in this area.

Mr. Davis and Mr. Russell appreciated the support they received from their mentors, coaches, teams and even the readings they did as a district. This support helped them work on ways to make the teaching and learning process better for students. Southview District was intentional with their training of principals in the area of instruction; which helped Mr. Davis and Russell focus on a few important strategies to continuously work on at their sites. By only selecting a few strategies, these two principals believe their students will be better served because they will become really good at what is important. Some of the strategies both high schools focus on are cloze reading, reading and writing and utilizing technology. Both of these principals participate in instructional rounds and professional development to learn new ways to improve teaching and learning.

This study has implications for education. Often times, principals are not included in district professional development plans or administrative credential programs

do not focus on the instructional aspect of the job. If districts and colleges begin to pay attention to the impact principals have on instruction, building positive learning climates and defining a school's mission, they can help principals be better prepared for taking on the role of instructional leader.

Recommendations for Practice

There are several recommendations for practice from findings of this research study. First, district offices should be providing a more systematic way of supporting principals in their development as instructional leaders. "District offices can play a critical role in the development of principals as instructional leaders" (Manasee, 1985; Togneri & Anderson, 2003; Tucker & Coddling, 2002; Rorrer, Skrla, & Scheurich, 2008; Robinson, 2013). In the Southview School District, the principals have had intensive professional development and training from district level employees and from a consulting company. The principals from this district are more confident in their ability to lead their schools in instruction, even with the changes coming due to the Common Core State Standards. Districts need to create a strong professional development program for their principals. Workshops at the district and off-site is one way this can be accomplished. Having principals working together to collaborate on strategies is something that is missing in some districts. Getting principals to read current literature on trends and then collaborating on what they have read is also important for principals. Bringing in consulting groups can be one way to accomplish this task.

Districts also need to develop strong mentoring programs for their principals. High school principals can become isolated in their work and they can become overwhelmed, so it is important to help principals develop a relationship with a veteran

they can reach out to, learn from and even be challenged by. High school principals are expected to have all of the answers, even though they may not have them. By providing a mentor, principals can have someone to turn to if they need it.

Another recommendation for the educational setting has to do with how principals are taught in the university programs. Currently, principals do not connect their success as an instructional leader with their administrative credential program. To them, their schooling was more theory based. University programs need to spend more time with on the job training and experiences in instructional leadership.

The next recommendation for practice is to give a voice to principals with regards to the types of support they need as instructional leaders. We have many support programs and avenues for teachers to voice their needs, but we tend to not give this opportunity to principals. Principals are important to the instructional practices of a school site so it is important to ask them what they need to continue to develop as an instructional leader.

Coaching is another recommendation for practice. Coaches can be brought in by districts to provide support for principals in the area of instructional leadership. Coaches can be on the school sites with principals and they can put theory into practice. The coaching should be tied to any professional development that is being done within the district so principals have the opportunity to use what they have learned in training.

Recommendations For Further Study

Recommendations for further study in instructional leadership for principals should include doing a case study on a district that supports their principals well, expanding the research to districts outside of the state, expanding the number of

principals that are interviewed for the research, how principals overcome teacher resistance and doing a narrative study on principals where they are asked what they need to become instructional leaders.

Two of the principals in this study work in a district that provides a lot of support in the area of instructional leadership. A researcher could use this district, or find another one, and examine what the district does well in supporting their principals. The research could increase the number of principals to interview in the study. By doing this, researchers could get a clear understanding of how to help support principals in the area of instruction.

Often times leaders of schools get trapped by teacher resistance. Another study could be done to explore how. A researcher could analyze principals' perceptions of teacher resistance and how principals are able to continue moving schools forward despite the resistance they face.

Principals need to have a voice in the types of support they need as they become instructional leaders. Principals' voices are largely absent from the literature. It is important to ask principals what they need in terms of support, what is working for them and what is not working.

Conclusion

This study helped bring high school principals' voices to the research on instructional leadership. There has been a gap in the literature with regards to how principals feel about the amount of support they receive as they develop into instructional leaders. In the era of high stakes accountability, principals face a difficult job of running their schools and being instructional leaders (Tucker & Coddling, 2002). It is important to

look at instructional leadership because instructional leadership plays an important role in the overall success of the school, next to classroom instruction (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005; Robinson, 2013).

The principals in the Southview School District who have developed into instructional leaders received support from their districts, mentors, coaches, team members and reading. These leaders are big thinkers who talked about the big picture for their schools. They spent time on developing a mission, values or vision for their schools. They manage instruction by learning alongside with teachers and by ensuring they get the time to work together and collaborate. Finally, these leaders have created a positive school climate by establishing relationships with their staff members and being visible on campus. The principals in the Southview School District have also been provided with opportunities to think, react and reflect on their leadership practices. The Southview School District has given their principals permission to be lead learners and to work together on leadership practices. This is not common in districts, yet it makes sense to provide these opportunities for principals. The traditional role of the school principal has been to manage rather than focus on instruction. With the advent of accountability, many elementary school principals have taken on the task of instructional leadership. However, elementary schools are relatively small with an accessible curriculum. The task at the secondary level is more complex. High schools are large organizations with many departments each with its own area of expertise. Given this complexity, it would seem that the high school principal would need to be a traditional manager, and indeed, most high school principals act as managers. However, this study breaks new ground to

show that it is possible to develop high school instructional leaders if there is support from the district.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

APPENDIX A

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Study: Instructional Leadership for High School Principals

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Courtney Robinson, a doctoral student from the Department of Educational Leadership at California State University, Long Beach. The results of this study will contribute to her dissertation. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a current high school principal that has been working in this capacity for at least two years.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

There are two primary purposes of this study. The first purpose is to explore the perceptions high school principals have of the amount and quality of preparation received in developing as instructional leaders. The second purpose is to explore the perceptions high school principals have in regards to the amount and quality of external support they are currently receiving as instructional leaders.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will participate in the following:

1. Agree to meet with the researcher for approximately ninety minutes. The interview will be conducted at a mutually agreed upon place that is convenient and safe for you.
2. Reserve the time and date for the interview with the researcher.
3. Agree or not to have the interview taped. The researcher will be taking notes during the interview.
4. Agree or not to gather and mail documents to help the researcher for her to use in the study. The researcher will ask you for any notes taken during your credential program, agendas and notes from meetings with your district office, and agendas and notes from meetings with your mentor or coach. The researcher will make sure there is no identifying information on the documents when they are copied. The documents will be mailed back along with a copy of what the researcher photocopied for the study. The documents and any email collected during the study will be kept confidential.
5. Agree or not to review the interview transcripts for accuracy

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are a few potential risks associated with this research:

1. It is possible that during the course of interview, you may experience some level of discomfort when answering the interview questions.
2. If your comments or documents are linked to you, especially comments or notes that are critical of the institutions that you have worked at, this may have adverse implications for their reputations and/or their relationships with colleagues and supervisor (s) at your institutions.
3. There is also a potential for breach of confidentiality where the recorded interview files are heard by someone else besides the researcher.

To protect against or minimize these risks:

1. You have the right to decline to respond to any questions and you may stop your participation in the study at any time.
2. The interview will take place at a quiet and private location to ensure your confidentiality and comfort. You will be given a pseudonym from the moment the study begins and instructed to use those during the interviews. There will only be one document linking the name to the pseudonym and it will exist on the researcher's private computer. Any documents collected will have all identifying information covered when photocopied.
3. The transcriptionist will sign a confidentiality agreement prior to releasing the files to be transcribed. The audio files will be kept in a password protected home computer that is protected with anti-virus software. All document copies will be kept in a locked file cabinet and only the researcher will have access to the cabinet. The files will be kept for three years after the research is completed. Thereafter, the files will be destroyed.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

You may benefit from the opportunity to explore and reflect on your experiences as you develop as an instructional leader. This can provide you with a forum to discuss successes and/or frustrations. The interviews will be more of a conversation and this may provide some level of validation of your experiences and perceptions.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

At the conclusion of the ninety-minute interview, you will receive a \$15 gift card for one of the following of your choosing: Starbucks, Target, or iTunes. Participants will make their choice within the interview confirmation email. If you withdraw or the researcher withdraws you from the research, you will still keep your gift card.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law.

All data will be handled confidentially. If results of this study are published or presented, individual names and other personally identifiable information will not be used. Records will be retained for three years after the study is over. The audio recordings from the interviews will be transcribed by a transcription professional. A confidentiality agreement between the researcher and professional will be completed. You have the right to review the recordings. The original files and final transcripts will be kept for three years after the completion of the study. Thereafter, the files and documents will be destroyed.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. Participation or non-participation will not affect your reputation or employment status. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which in the opinion of the researcher warrant doing so. If you withdraw or the researcher withdraws you from the research, you will still keep your gift card.

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Courtney Robinson (Principal Investigator): Cell Number (949) 433-2461 email: cbrobinson8@yahoo.com or Dr. Charles Slater (Faculty Sponsor): Work Number (562) 985-5701 email: charles.slater@csulb.edu.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact the Office of University Research, CSU Long Beach, 1250 Bellflower Blvd., Long Beach, CA 90840; Telephone: (562) 985-5314 or email to ORSP-Compliance@csulb.edu.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I understand the procedures and conditions of my participation described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Subject

Signature of Subject

Date

Please sign below if you are willing to have this interview recorded on audiotape. You may still participate in this study if you are not willing to have the interview recorded.

I am willing to have this interview recorded on audiotape.

Signature of Subject

Date

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Title of the Study: Instructional Leadership for High School Principals

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me. I am conducting a study on High School Principals' perceptions of the training and support they have received in the area of instructional leadership. The purpose of this interview is to gain an understanding of your perceptions on how well prepared you are and how supported you feel as an instructional leader at your school. The interview will consist of open-ended questions and sub-questions. With your permission, the interview will be recorded and your identity will be kept confidential. Please ask for clarification if any question is unclear. If any of the questions make you feel uncomfortable answering, please let me know. During the interview I will be taking notes and perhaps asking follow-up questions. Later on, you will have the opportunity to review the transcripts of the interview to make sure they have been transcribed accurately. Again, all notes and recordings will remain confidential. Do I have your permission to record the interview? Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interview Questions

1. Briefly explain why you went into administration and specifically why did you choose to become a high school principal?
 - a. Probe-What types of administrative experience have you had?
2. Describe a typical day at work as a high school principal?
 - a. If you could spend more time on other things, what would you rather do?
 - b. How would you adjust your schedule to allow for these things?
3. What does it mean to you to be an instructional leader?
4. How do you go about developing and communicate a school's mission?
 - a. Can you give any examples of how you did this?
 - b. Describe what preparation you had to help you accomplish this?
 - c. What obstacles did you face in accomplishing this?
 - d. What support did you receive? What were your perceptions of this support?
5. How do you go about managing instruction at your school?
 - a. Describe in detail examples of this.
 - b. Describe what preparation you had to help you accomplish this?
 - c. What obstacles did you face in this area of leadership?
 - d. What support did you receive in this area and what were your perceptions of this support?
6. How do you go about creating a positive school climate?
 - a. Describe how you accomplished this?
 - b. Describe the preparation you had to help you accomplish this?
 - c. What obstacles did you face in this area?

- d. What support did you receive in this area and what were your perceptions of this support?
7. Describe the types of support you have been given in the area of instructional leadership.
 - a. If you have had a mentor (formal or informal), what topics do you discuss?
 - i. Probe-focus, how does this tie into instructional leadership, benefit
 - b. If you have not had a mentor, do you think this would have benefitted you? Why or why not?
 - c. If you have had a coach, what topics did you discuss?
 - d. If you have not had a coach, do you think this would have benefitted you? Why or why not?
 - e. Describe any professional development or training in the area of instructional leadership.
 - i. Probe-beneficial, best/worst session, used from sessions, District office involvement
8. Describe any pressures or challenges you face in becoming an instructional leader.
 - a. How do you overcome these pressures or challenges?
 - b. Describe any support you receive to overcome these pressures or challenges.
9. How do you know when you are doing something well as principal? How do you know when you are not doing something well?
10. Tell me about the best interaction you have had with your district office. How about one that was problematic?
 - a. Probe-Does this occur often? How did it make you feel?
11. If you were a supervisor of principals, describe what you would consider to be a quality support system to help principals become strong instructional leaders?
 - a. Describe what an ideal professional development plan would be for principals in instructional leadership?
12. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Closure

Thank you so much for your time. Is it okay if I contact you in a few weeks to send you the transcription of the interview so you can check for accuracy?

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