

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADER PRACTICES: ARE THEY RELATED  
TO STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT?

by

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DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of  
The University of Houston-Clear Lake  
In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements  
For the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Educational Leadership

THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON-CLEAR LAKE

MAY, 2020

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this dissertation to the two most influential people in my life: My mother, Wilhemina Rice, posthumously, who only had an eighth grade education but taught me the importance of working hard and Walter Yates, Sr., posthumously who taught me education would give me the potential to have power to progress and gave me an example of what it looked like.

## **Acknowledgements**

There are so many individuals I could credit for their support while I persisted towards the completion of this tedious endeavor. As such, I will requisite my acknowledgements by saying thank you to everyone who prayed, encouraged, and supported me along the way.

I would begin my acknowledgments by saying thank you to Wilma Smith, posthumously, who I encountered my eighth grade year of middle school, for helping me realize I was as intelligent as the other students who attended school with me. She gave me the predilection for the discovery of new words—she turned the light on to the path to this doctorate. Mrs. Jean Stafford, Madison High School, thank you for taking the time to make sure I understood the English language and could put it in to print. When you knew I was going off to college, you made sure I was ready! These were individuals who prepared me in my formative years for the road most recently traveled. I would not have persisted without that foundation.

After moving on to college, there were individuals who assisted in my continued growth as an individual seeking guidance as well as knowledge. Thanks to Dr. Loren Stone and Dr. Oney Fitzpatrick, posthumously, for your support and guidance as I matriculated Lamar University towards my bachelors degree. Your encouragement made the difference in the completion of my degree.

To my mother in education, Cathy Chavis, you taught me how to be a professional educator. More important, you helped me discover things I never thought I was capable of doing. You were the one who made me to be able to stand in front of a room full of people and not be afraid. You taught me how to be a true leader, which compelled me to want to be the best I could be, thus, the acquisition of this degree.

To my dissertation chair and committee, thank you for continuing to believe in me. Dr. Divoll, thank you for not letting me quit when I wanted to. Dr. Peters, you were so encouraging throughout the process. Thank you for your texts, emails, and phone calls you made pushing me to finish. Thank you Dr. Simieou for allowing your friend to stand on his own.

Ron Jackson, it is amazing that we have spent twenty-five years of our lives in school with each other. Lamar with our undergrad, Prairie View for our masters, and now University of Houston Clearlake for our doctorate. You have truly been a partner and an inspiration and support in every step of our schooling. Thank you!

Finally, I would like to thank my beautiful wife and daughter, Nikisha and Journee. Late nights at school, days at Sertino's and weekends at Lamar Library were not easy for you all, and yet you never complained. Your encouragement and support made the difference in my persistence with the process. Nikisha, thanks for not allowing me to quit, even when it seemed to be the inevitable. You were my drive and my discipline when it came down to crunch time. Thank you and I love you.

ABSTRACT

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADER PRACTICES: ARE THEY RELATED  
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The purpose of this sequential mixed method study was to examine the relationship between the four core leadership principles and student achievement in schools in a small area in Texas. This study included a review of data collected from the School Leadership Survey from a purposeful sample of school principals from schools serviced in the Region V Service Center area. A purposeful sample of principals from elementary, middle, and high schools were also interviewed in an attempt to provide a more in-depth understanding of the potential influence of classroom principal behaviors on student achievement. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequencies, percentage, and Pearson's product-moment correlations ( $r$ ), while an inductive coding process was used to analyze the collected qualitative data. Quantitative analysis demonstrated that there was not a significant mean difference between the four core leadership principles and student achievement except with managing the instructional program. The qualitative

analysis supported evidence from current research related to the topic that a positive relationship does exist between the two.

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In 2001, Congress, in an attempt to close the achievement gap among minorities and White learners, through accountability, enacted a law with far-reaching standards to ensure all students would excel; no child would be left behind (*No Child Left Behind Act*, 2002) (NCLB). As a result, many public schools did not meet the law's standards. The onset of school improvement as big business saturated the educational infrastructure in America, enabling for-profit entities to secure funding to design and plan programming to increase student achievement at low-performing institutions. To ensure schools would have access to funds to support the school improvement process, the NCLB Act mandated state agencies allocate funding from their federal allotments to support those schools engaged in the school improvement process.

In 2009, the Obama administration reformed the act to ensure; (a) all students would be ready for college; (b) great teachers and leaders are in every school; (c) there is equity and opportunity for all students; (d) the bar is raised and excellence is rewarded; and (e) continuous improvement is promoted. Each component contributes to the overall performance for all students (Blue Print for Reform, 2009). On December 10, 2015, the *Elementary and Secondary Act* (ESEA) (1965) was reauthorized and President Obama signed the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) 2015. The quest to establish top performing schools continues.

### **Leadership in Schools**

To improve low-performing schools by raising student achievement, leadership within these schools is paramount. Leaders must exhibit leadership skills and behaviors that support increased student achievement. The role of principals has been redefined and their leadership, although indirect, has a significant effect on student achievement

(Leithwood, 2012). There are specific behaviors aligned with student achievement that principals must exhibit. Those behaviors have been supported by transformational, instructional, and core leadership principles (Klar & Brewer, 2013).

Transformational leadership imposes the will of the leader to interact with its followers in a certain way to get them to respond to the needs of the learning environment (Hallinger, 2003). Instructional leadership has been defined as the leader's responsibility to establish a school's vision and mission, manage the instructional program, and promote a positive environment (Leithwood, 2012). These behaviors have been the foundation for Liethwood's (2004) core leadership principles—setting direction, developing people, managing the instructional program, and redesigning the organization.

Schools do not move forward without the leader establishing a clear vision and mission (Zmuda, Kuklis, & Kline, 2004). The vision should articulate a picture of what the school environment will look like when a belief system is established around core beliefs and are put into practice. Leaders must ensure the vision is shared and represents the core beliefs articulated by stakeholders through some type of collaborative activity—Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), surveys, decision making committees, etc. For example, if student achievement will improve in a learning environment, the leader must establish core beliefs regarding the students who are supported. Consequently, these beliefs about practices used to deliver instruction and the abilities to carry out the process will be aligned. Once core beliefs have been established, the leader can establish a vision that is shared and establish activities and professional development to support the vision (Zmuda et. al., 2004).

Establishing a vision is only a small part of how leaders set the direction for their organizations. The vision, as defined previously, is the end goal and what all stakeholders want their organization to look like in the future. The vision can only come

to realization if there is an aligned mission. The mission provides a practical commitment and denotes actions that must occur to bring the vision to fruition (Rozycki, 2004). The following exemplifies the connection between educational vision and mission: If the South Town Middle School's vision was to produce students who would be well prepared to perform at the high school level, then the mission would be developed based on targets and actions. Therefore, "South Town's mission would be to develop independent and creative thinkers by delivering engaging instruction that garners a higher level of thought." A vision and mission has been a minimal requirement to shared responsibility for the learning environment. A leader must develop goals that direct the specific behaviors of everyone. Leaders identifying specific short- and long-term goals, effectively facilitate stakeholder engagement in development of the goals, clarification and review. Effective leaders refer the goals, and build consensus among staff for school priorities that support the goals (Leithwood, 2017). Additionally, the leader consistently communicates the vision, mission and goals for the learning environment. The leader regularly engages stakeholders with multiple media. They periodically send newsletters to inform everyone about the state of the school and progress towards goal attainment. Leaders create opportunities for stakeholders to collaborate through campus meetings and community activities.

Strong organizations thrive when all stakeholders are engaged in capacity building with leaders who ensure all stakeholders have the capacity to respond to their roles (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). Effective leaders have the ability to manage their people. It begins with teachers, but also includes parents, community members, and students, as well. Effective leaders figure out ways to continually engage teachers in the process of learning through professional development. They engage teachers intellectually around ideas, concepts, and issues that affect their learning environment.

Leaders also connect parents and community members to the school providing them information and tools that help support the learning environment. It is those behaviors exhibited by the leader, as a role model, that make the difference in how the school moves forward (Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

Everyone in the learning environment plays an important role in the success of the campus. It is important each stakeholder has the capacity to carry out their function (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). Therefore, it is important the leader engages capacity building by regularly planning staff development opportunities for staff. This includes the development of professional learning communities (PLC) where teachers can collaborate, support each other, and engage in thought around educational issues (Dufour, 2007). The collaboration of staff in this setting may help close the gaps that exist among staff based on their differences. Likewise, parents and community members come to the learning environment with a myriad of differences. The leader must have the ability to communicate and provide guidance to engage these stakeholders regularly. Connecting the parents and community to the school entails the leader's ability to create democratic structures around the school, which makes them inclusive rather than outsiders or visitors (Gordon & Louis, 2009). Every school has some type of site-based management committee. Most committees include parents and community members who engage in the democratic process (Texas Education Agency, 2010). Effective leaders facilitate the use of committees and ensure improved community involvement in the school improvement process and the presence of improved communication and information flow (Texas Education Agency, 2010). The engagement and collaboration of all stakeholders become paramount, and the leader must be the orchestrator, when the organization requires restructuring and plans are made for continuous improvement. Leaders must manage their people, specifically during the restructuring and planning for improvement.

Ultimately, it is the behaviors of the campus leader that determine the educational outcomes in the learning environment.

### **Student Achievement for Texas Schools**

In Texas, student achievement is determined by how well students perform on the state's standardized test (TEA, 2016). The State of Texas assessment program, State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR), requires students to perform on basic skills in mathematics, reading, writing, science, and social studies. Students at grades five, eight, and twelve have the opportunity to test multiple times. Students at those grade levels are not permitted to transition under the Student Success Initiative. The STAAR program has been used to assess students for the last five years. Table 1.1 shows how students have performed for the last two years.

Table 1.1

*Texas Academic Performance 2016 and 2017*

	Year	State (%)	African American (%)	Hispanic (%)	White (%)	Special Ed (%)	Econ Disadv. (%)
STAAR percent at meets							
Grade Level							
Writing	2017	38	26	32	48	19	28
	2016	41	28	34	53	8	30
Reading	2017	48	35	41	62	22	36
	2016	46	32	37	60	10	34
Mathematics	2017	48	33	43	60	25	38
	2016	43	26	37	50	11	32
Science	2017	52	37	44	66	25	40
	2016	47	32	40	61	11	35
Social Studies	2017	51	40	44	64	25	39
	2016	47	36	40	60	12	36
STAAR percent at masters							
Grade Level							
All Subjects	2017	20	11	15	29	7	13
	2016	18	9	13	26	6	11
Reading	2017	19	11	14	28	6	12
	2016	17	10	12	26	5	10
Mathematics	2017	23	12	18	31	8	16
	2016	19	9	14	27	7	12
Writing	2017	12	6	8	17	5	6
	2016	15	8	10	21	6	9
Science	2017	19	10	13	30	7	11
	2016	16	8	11	25	5	9
Social Studies	2017	27	17	20	40	8	17
	2016	22	13	16	33	6	13

## **Research Problem**

There is a need for leaders to raise student achievement, as identified in standardized tests (ESSA, 2015). In the state of Texas, educators feel the pressure to raise student performance across the curriculum (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2016). To improve schools, it is imperative school leaders understand their roles in the school setting and how their behaviors influence student achievement. The research clearly defines the role of the principals and suggests it is their behaviors that indirectly impact student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Leadership, then, is paramount in the rise of student achievement, and leadership in schools is second only to the instruction that is provided in the classroom (Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004).

Over twenty years ago, there was an influx of new leaders entering the hallways of America's schools. This was a result of long serving principals' retirements (Daresh & Playko, 1997). Today, there is still an influx of new principals; however, not due to retirements but as a result of a decrease in student achievement within the schools the principals serve, thus increasing the importance of the leadership role ( Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, 2005). As such, the demands on leadership have changed in schools. Leaders today must be transformational and instructional. They must be able to set goals, shape the vision and guide curriculum and instruction in their schools, establish relationships and build capacity in their staff, and make key connections within the community (Mendels & Mitgang, 2013). Unfortunately, the pool of principals continues to shrink, and the position is becoming more complex and demanding. As a result, many educators are reluctant to pursue leadership positions due to the demands and the increased pressure from upper administration to achieve results

(Mendels & Mitgang, 2013). Also, principals who assume leadership roles or who are currently seeking appointment for a leadership role are often not prepared and do not receive the support needed to improve student achievement while attending to other intricacies of the position (Davis et al., 2005).

It is imperative leaders become visionaries who command the ability to lead instructionally, develop people, redesign the organization, and improve the instructional program. Being that schools around the country, especially schools with low-socioeconomic status, are continuing to perform below standard, it is evident principals are not responding well to the demands of the job, and this could be the result of poor preparation for those principals assuming the positions (NAEP, 2015; TEA, 2016). Preparation programs often fail to provide adequate training to propel graduates into the roles with the needed tools to persist in the positions. As a result, many graduates are “certified” but not “qualified” to effectively lead their schools (Davis et al., 2005). Consequently, there is a need to define those behaviors and practices that exist among leaders that are at the helm of high-performing schools. This would provide a model of what activities should be employed to affect the continuous improvement model, thus impacting student achievement in America’s schools.

### **Significance of the Study**

The need for students to experience success in learning is important. According to Marzano (2005), success is facilitated by a school’s leadership behaviors. It is the practices leaders encompass that contribute to the culture and climate, and these practices are important in the process of continuous improvement. The leader of a school could complete a simple task, such as modifying the schedule, and make a profound impact on changing the environment. Unfortunately, the demands of the leader have changed. It is no longer feasible for the leader to simply manage the learning environment. Leaders

must become educational visionaries, instructional curriculum leaders, assessment experts, disciplinarians, and meet policy mandates and initiatives (Davis, Darling Hammond, Lapointe, & Meyerson, 2005). Leaders of schools play an important role in the school improvement process, and their abilities to persist in the position for multiple years can profoundly impact the school environment, thus, the role of the principal is critical to student achievement. Schools with the shortest levels of tenure normally exist in schools that perform below standard (Fuller & Young, 2009). When principals enter a school setting, they have the responsibility of executing a plan for continuous improvement. This includes the establishment of a vision and mission to move the school forward, and it is cemented in the development of consistent reform. When there is no sustained effort, the plan is derailed, and principal turnover is rapid (Fuller & Young, 2009).

In Texas, schools continue to fight to improve their schools, and leadership remains in the spotlight of school reform. Research is needed to define and refine those skills and behaviors that contribute to effective leadership. Existing research shows all successful schools require effective leaders who exhibit skills that meet the demands of their learning environment (Marzano, 2005). As such, the following research must consider all dynamics of the learning environment, especially as it relates to demographics. Student populations vary, and, as a result, may require different leadership abilities and qualities to sustain the environment and support student achievement. For example, schools with large populations of Hispanic students require varied activities and behaviors from the leaders to meet the students' needs.

It is beyond ensuring this population of students has the basic resources English-speaking students need, considering schools have limited resources to support the language acquisition for these students. Being that the Hispanic population of students is

increasing every day, understanding those leadership practices and behaviors become paramount. The socio-economically disadvantaged subgroup is one of the largest sub populations attending schools in Texas. As a result, the need to manifest the skill set and those behaviors that support this diverse population of students is important. Resources become a major factor with those students, and there is a need for the leaders to manage the instructional program. This means they understand their responsibility to provide the necessary resources to support their students. Fullen (2011) suggested this moral imperative is only the beginning step for school site administrators attempting to lead schools that with disadvantaged students to meet the educational needs of the students.

Being that principal turnover is associated with multiple aspects of the principalship (mainly student characteristics and school performance) and is associated with high teacher turnover, further research is needed to ascertain those behaviors and activities performed by principals that support the entire learning environment. Additionally, considering principal turnover is high in many schools across Texas, there is a need for school districts to become engaged in trainings to address principals' needs. This research can clarify and define what school leaders should know and do to impact student achievement in the schools they serve. A mixed methods research design was used for the current study. Using this method allowed leaders to respond to a questionnaire to accumulate quantitative data. It also used interviews to acquire qualitative data sometimes missed in the use of quantitative data alone. The qualitative data taken from the interviews were used to support the responses from the questionnaires. This provided strong evidence of those behaviors that are effective in the leadership in schools, especially those that contribute to improved student achievement.

### **Research Purpose and Questions**

The purpose of this study was to determine whether leadership behaviors have a relationship with student achievement in elementary and secondary schools. The study addressed the following research questions:

1. Is there a relationship between leaders setting the direction and student achievement?
2. Is there a relationship between leaders defining the culture/climate and student achievement?
3. Is there a relationship between leaders managing the instructional program and student achievement?
4. Is there a relationship between leaders managing the instructional program and student achievement?
5. Is there a relationship between leaders redesigning the organization and student achievement?
6. What types of leadership behaviors, if any, impact student achievement?

### **Theoretical Constructs**

*Developing People:* For this study, the leader's ability to provide intellectual stimulation, while modeling desirable professional practices and values, and offering individualized support to staff (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006).

*Instructional Leadership:* Pertains to a leader's ability to be intensely involved in curricular and instructional issues that directly affect student achievement (Cotton, 2003).

*Leadership Behaviors:* For the sake of this study, are those behaviors that leaders utilize as means to accomplish specific goals in their environment (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006).

*Redesigning the Organization:* For this study, leadership's ability to encourage all stakeholders in the decision making process when it involves improvement of school and improved academic performance (Liethwood & Jantzi, 2006).

*Setting Direction:* For this study, the leadership's ability to develop a school vision and establish priorities, while holding high performance expectations (Liethwood, & Jantzi, 2006).

*State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR):* Instrument used to assess student achievement in reading, writing, science social studies, and mathematics in the state of Texas (Texas Education Agency, 2013b).

*Student Achievement:* For this study, the measure of how students perform on the State of Texas Assessments of Academics Readiness test.

### **Conclusion**

The role of the leaders in schools is critical. There is an indirect relationship between leaders' behaviors and student achievement (Liethwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010). Furthermore, it is the principal's ability to set the vision, empower teachers, and create an environment where teachers can have working conditions that directly impact student achievement. The next chapter will review the research that supports the importance of the role of the principal by looking at leadership styles and behaviors known to contribute to student achievement.

## CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to present an overview of how leadership behaviors shape learning environments, thus, contributing to high student achievement. The chapter will also focus on specific styles of leadership that influence behaviors that support student achievement. For the purpose of this research study, the specific leadership styles will be transformational and instructional which lead into the core principles of leadership. To facilitate the understanding of leadership behaviors, the remainder of the chapter will focus on the core principles of leadership as defined by Liethwood (2005). The four developed core principles are setting the direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program. Each principle encompasses specific behaviors that support environmental dynamics that contribute indirectly to student achievement (Liethwood, 2005).

### **Leadership in Schools**

Decades of research have highlighted the importance of the principal and their role as a leader (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). The research aims to determine how a principal's leadership could have a significant effect, if indirect, on student achievement. As such, certain behaviors principals possess contribute to how well students perform academically. Liethwood (2007) extended this thought by developing four core principles central to school leadership: Setting the direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing people. The core principals are developed based on significant bodies of research on transformational and instructional leadership (Liethwood, Louis, Anderson, & Walhlstrom, 2004). In their study on successful leadership in high-needs schools, Klar and Brewer (2013) extend Liethwood's research to show principals operate around practices that support the entire

learning environment. However, contexts and the principal's ability to employ the practice in those contexts are important to the overall success of the learning environment. The study was conducted using a mixed methods design using principals from high-need schools where the poverty index was at least 80%, and they experienced an increase in student achievement since their arrival to the position. A multi-linear regression to develop a model for predicting standardized scores on a states test was employed. This was used to identify schools that could be used in the study. Following this procedure, a three-step regression analysis was conducted using the scores as a dependent variable. This was used to select schools to complete the qualitative portion of the study where principals were interviewed and surveys were employed. The study concluded principals were responsive to those activities established in the core set of leadership practices as they attempted a comprehensive reform effort. Additionally, Klar and Brewer's study supported the notion that principals indirectly influence student achievement.

Current Research continues to show that principals' actions influence academic outcomes for students. Xu and Liu (2016) conducted a study to show distinctly how principals' actions influenced the academic performance of students, by looking at specifically at ACT scores. Qualitative in its design, the study purposefully sampled high school principals from Colorado school districts that had varied demographics, such as economic status, ethnicity, and special student populations. Questionnaires were distributed among 48 principals and included six questions that identified specific actions taking to improve composite ACT high school scores. Of the 48 distributed, 34 principals responded noting they had enacted a variety of programs specifically designed to assist students in improving ACT scores. The researchers concluded principals often look beyond the classroom instruction to support student achievement. There were three

main themes the researchers garnered in the study. First, training was important in the development of the programs. Secondly, staff members needed to engage in staff development to adequately support student learning, and finally, communication. All involved should be made aware of logistics for programming. This happens through communication (Xu & Liu, 2016). Later, you will see how this aligns with the four core leadership practices.

There is an indirect relationship between leadership behaviors and student achievement. Leithwood (2009) has established the core leadership principles that support those activities that guide certain principal behaviors. In the next sections, transformational leadership and instructional leadership will be discussed to offer a better understanding of how they support leadership practices and align with the four core leadership practices.

### **Transformational Leadership**

In the leadership subordinate relationship, something is always exchanged. Normally, it is exchanged to affect some type of outcome; it is transactional. Bass (1985) explains it this way, in his study on transactional leadership: Organizations improve as a result of leadership in an exchange process. It is an exchange in which followers' needs are met if their performance measures up. Accordingly, subordinates are more apt to agree to accomplish specific goals and demands when they are rewarded for their services. Also, transactional leadership can be passive when employees are granted space to carry out their functions but can intervene when performance measures are not met (Darty-Baah, 2015). This leadership style was seen as the prominent style of leadership in the business sector and was the foundation for transformational leadership, which is understood to be an extension of the transactional leadership style (Bass, 1985). According to Bass (1985), leaders must take on dual roles: They must be transactional

and transformational. He posits this: Transformational leaders exert influence on their followers by communicating an idealistic vision and set goals for the future. These leaders become conscious of the unique needs and abilities of subordinates and provide support. Although true, transformational leaders still expect their employees to perform to measurable outcomes. The difference between the two styles is transformational leaders help subordinates realize their weaknesses and improve instead of comparing them to others through a rewards system (Hamstra, Van Yperen, Wise, & Sassenberg, 2013).

Hamstra et al (2013), strengthens the understanding of how transactional and transformational leadership affect outcomes similarly. The study used convenient sampling to survey 448 people in their places of employment. The participants were asked questions about their job characteristics. There were 120 leaders from diverse organizations in the Netherlands. After surveys were completed, transactional and transformational leadership were assessed using the Dutch version of the multifactor leadership questionnaire. Achievement goals were assessed using the approach goal subscales of the achievement goal questionnaire and were adapted to job context. The study concluded, in part, that leadership effectiveness hinged on the leaders' ability to dynamically and adaptively exist as transformational and transactional leaders. This suggests leaders must assign tasks to subordinates, and they must expect them to complete the tasks. When task are completed they will be acknowledged and rewarded for their efforts. When they are not successful, consequently, leaders must respond adversely. At the same time, leaders must understand the needs of their subordinates and must be strategic in manifesting opportunities for them to grow professionally.

Research on transformational leadership suggests this leadership style is effective in school leadership (Day, Gu & Sammons, 2016). Although in this case, gender impacts

the success of the leaders who take on this style of leadership (Wolfram & Gratton, 2014). In their study of gender roles, as it relates to transformational leadership, they found although females display more transformational leadership than men, females do not fully benefit from their actions in terms of positive outcomes. Wolfram and Gratton (2014) hypothesized female managers, using contingent reward and transformational leadership, must possess masculine attributes, and females must exhibit both feminine and masculine attributes to be effective leaders. Seemingly, it would be much different for males. However, it is suggested that they, too, must have both feminine and masculine attributes, especially when considering utilizing contingent rewards, which increases work group performance.

This research showed when leaders are operating under the transformational leadership style, they must change roles as it relates to gender attributes. Overall, leaders must possess both masculine and feminine attributes to function as an effective transformational leader. Additionally, success of the school environment rests on the leader's ability to move from transformative and transactional and adjust to dynamics that make up the context of the learning environment.

### **Instructional Leadership**

No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001) placed stringent demands on leaders in schools. Leaders are under extreme pressure to raise student achievement in the schools they lead. As such, instructional leadership continues to be at forefront for researchers and practitioners alike (Hallinger, 2011). Instructional leadership is a concept that emerged from the research by Hallinger (2003), that suggested effective leaders focus their attention and behavior on three main areas: defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school environment. Although the role of the principal continues to change, the literature strongly suggests and asserts the

most important role of the principal is that of instructional leader (Zoll, 2015). Hallinger and Heck (1996) concluded, in their research, principals influence internal processes indirectly by: creating policies and norms, setting high academic expectations, developing mission and vision, protecting learning time, and organizing instruction. Each of these is considered an indirect action that affects the actions of teachers, ultimately affecting student achievement (Dufour & Marzano, 2011). Early research explained instructional leadership in similar ways using different concepts. Glickman (1985) defined five primary tasks of instructional leaders: direct assistance to teachers, group development, staff development, curriculum development, and action research. This supports the traditional thought on instructional leadership that teaching and learning are highly emphasized. In contrast, there is an alternative thought suggesting instructional leadership emphasize organizational management for instructional improvement rather than day-to-day teaching and learning (Horng & Loeb, 2010).

### **Core Leadership Practices**

Current thought suggests effective leadership requires leaders to embrace varied responsibilities, and leaders must be empowered with a mindset to carry out their responsibilities. To support this notion, Leithwood, Harris, and Strauss (2010), from their multi-year study, concluded there are four common leadership practices used by successful leaders in almost all contexts. Similar to Leithwood's transformational model these four practices include: setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program (Leithwood et al. 2010; Leithwood, 2012).

## **Setting Direction**

It is important for leaders to establish a vision specific to the needs of the learning environment. Also, from the vision, there is a need to align priorities, goals and expectations to the organization (Leithwood, 2012; Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005). Consequently, setting direction is the leader's ability to develop a shared vision that fosters the acceptance of group goals while creating high performance expectations while communicating direction (Leithwood, et al., 2010). They also posit a clear vision is established when leaders engage others in the organizational design and the establishment of organizational goals. This process allows stakeholders an opportunity to participate in the vision's development and to negotiate constructs that may otherwise be useless.

In a study completed by Klar and Brewer (2013), in which they interviewed principals of several schools that had moved from a low performing school to a high performing school, principals identify behaviors and practices they believed supported their turnaround success. One of the principals noted building momentum entailed setting a direction that connected with stakeholders. The principal realized success could not be manifested by his acts alone. Any change in the learning environment is established by embarking on a shared vision. Teachers and other staff were also interviewed and supported the concept that the principal was a communicator of the vision and was a great motivator or facilitator, and his expectations were high. It was suggested that as a result of the clear vision and the establishment of high expectations for teachers, it translated to high expectations for students in all areas.

The researchers concluded all the principals built a shared vision, created high performance expectations, and communicated the direction of the school. Similarly, in a grounded analysis conducted by Wahlstrom (2012), principals in high performing schools established a vision for student achievement and teacher growth. However, the vision

was meaningful to the teachers and others in the schools setting, and the meaningfulness was accomplished by developing specific goals aligned with the needs of the campus encompassed in the vision.

Culture and climate are two terms that have been used interchangeably to describe organizational structure (Aasebo, Midtstunstad & Willbergh, 2017; Gover, Halinski & Duxbury, 2015; Hoy, 1990; and Macneil Prater & Busch, 2009). Both describe the humanistic side of the organization and the activities they employ (Hoy, 1990). Culture in the school setting can be defined as systems, ceremonies, and myths that establish beliefs and values of an organization (Hoy, 1990). Recent studies show culture and climate in schools are established through behaviors from leaders (Raguz & Zekan, 2016). Raguz and Zekan (2016) in their study on organizational culture and leadership style concluded when leaders who do not have the ability to establish a shared vision and implement practices that support change, the organization will struggle with the adaptation process, affecting the organizational culture. A similar perspective regarding the role of the leader and the culture exists in the research by Gover, Halinski, and Duxbury (2015) on organizational culture change. The study was conducted in a hospital setting where employees were evaluated on how they perceived change in the organizational culture. The outcomes were consistent among participants in that they spoke about social or management styles and that leadership made the difference in the success of the organizational change. Ultimately, in the schools setting, there is a strong relationship between the role of the principal and culture and climate (Hit & Tucker, 2016).

The way students, school personnel, and parents experience the life of the school from a social, emotional, civil, and ethical view determines the “climate” of the school (Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-D’Allesandro, 2013). The organizational climate

influences attitudes, values and perceptions of activities in the organization's environment (Shneider & Reichers, 1983). Leaders of organizations are responsible for establishing the climate in their environments (Johnson, Pas, Loh, Debnam, & Bradshaw, 2017). They are considered keepers of the gate and determine priorities and processes of the school environment that affect everyone (Hoy, 1990). School climate matters, and Thapa et al. (2013) conclude a sustained positive school climate is associated with positive child development, effective risk prevention, student learning and achievement, and teacher retention. The aforementioned are items facilitated by behaviors of school leaders (Leithwood, 2012).

### **Developing People**

When leaders understand the importance of developing people, they provide a foundation for building capacity in their organization (Leithwood, et al., 2010). These effective leaders understand the importance of people as they attempt to move the vision forward. They understand all stakeholders in the school context can have a substantial impact on student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2010; Marzano et al., 2005) As such, it is also important principals recruit, hire, and retain the right personnel to support the vision, goals, and objectives.

Teachers can make a difference in student achievement with their instruction; it is more important than leadership on a campus ((Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Sun and Leithwood (2015), in their study on student learning mediated by teacher emotion, concluded when leaders focused on improving teacher emotions or dispositions, the effect on teaching and learning was direct and contributed to high student achievement. Further, the teachers fostered a sense of security with those practices teachers interpreted as indicators of vulnerability, understanding, benevolence, competence, consistency, and reliability (Sun & Leithwood, 2015).

Klar and Brewer (2013) conducted a study that engaged principals' thoughts about developing people. It was noted at one school that the principal gave teachers the opportunity to grow through experiences. Teachers were encouraged to try new and innovative things. This fostered an environment of trust among the administration and staff. The principal also believed data and research should be used to inform practice and guide student achievement.

Another principal in the study experienced success in developing people because he modeled values and practices that inspired teachers. The principal believed in staff development as well. To assist teachers with the immediate concerns in reading, he provided a three-day training to support the teachers' growth in that area. The principal used professional learning opportunities like peer observations and book studies to stimulate teachers' intellectual capacity. Finally, one principal provided leadership opportunities at the school, and she modeled positive behavior by attending professional development workshops herself.

### **Managing the Instructional Program**

Principal behaviors have an indirect impact on student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood, et al., 2010; Marzano et. al, 2010). Earlier research suggests, as a result of the impact, principal's roles will continue to be scrutinized, and the pressure for them to perform will be significant (Hallinger & Murphy, 1989). Although the case remains, principals are not entering into the roles with the capacity to be effective instructional leaders. It is assumed principals, once teachers, have the capacity to lead curriculum and to support instruction. Since instructional leadership is directly related to the processes of instruction where teachers and learners and the curriculum interact, instructional leaders must deal with evaluation, staff development, and in-service training, and they will govern content of instruction, that is, the curriculum, the

instructional leader oversees material selection, unit construction and monitor scope, and sequence (Weber, 1989).

### **Student Achievement for Texas**

In Texas, student achievement is determined by how well students perform on the state's standardized test (TEA, 2016). The State of Texas assessment program began in 1979 when the 66<sup>th</sup> legislature enacted a law requiring basic skills in mathematics, reading, and writing for grades 3, 5, and 9. Shortly after, in 1980, the state would develop its first minimal skills test, Texas Assessment of Basics Skills (TABS), and students would be assessed in mathematics, reading, and writing. In 1984, a new law would be passed increasing the number of grades during which students would be assessed, and it would enact a standard for all graduating seniors. Those students intending to receive a diploma must demonstrate mastery on a new exit level test— the Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills (TEAMS). The TEAMS test was introduced in 1986 and would be administered until 1989.

In 1990, the focus would shift from “minimum skills” to “mastering academic skills”, and the number of grade levels tested was reduced. To date, the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) is the longest-lived testing program in the state of Texas. Several changes were made to the program leading up to its total transformation in 2003. In 2003, the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) was introduced to schools across Texas. This test was designed to be more comprehensive and would measure more of the state mandated curriculum—The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), and more grade levels were tested. Most importantly, the Student Success Initiative (SSI) was enacted as component of the No Child Left Behind legislature, which required students to perform at mastery level to be

promoted in some grades. In 2012, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) introduced a new test—the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR).

The goal for STAAR was to move Texas among the top 10 states for graduating college and career-ready students, by the 2019-2020 school year. Considering this goal, TEA, in conjunction with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and other educators, would develop the STAAR to be a more rigorous assessment (TEA, 2013). The performance expectations would give feedback that would track a students' progression towards college readiness, and it would be a comprehensive system with curriculum and performance standards aligned and linked from high school back to elementary and middle school (TEA, 2013). Initially, the academic performance standards represented the degree to which students were learning the content and were scored at three different levels based on cut scores—advanced, satisfactory, and unsatisfactory (TEA, 2013). However, in 2016, the standards changed, and students were evaluated at new levels—Approaches Grade Level, Masters Grade Level, and Masters Grade Level.

### **Summary of Findings**

Research on leadership of schools suggests leadership is important in the success of schools and principals operate around practices that support the entire learning environment (Klar & Brewer, 2013; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Walstrom, 2004). Research of Xu and Liu (2016) built on the research and the findings that show principal behaviors influence academic achievement. Similarly, Day, Gu, and Sammons (2016) conclude principals' behavior influence student achievement and the transformational leadership style is most effective in successful schools. Although in one case, research by Hamstra, Van Ypen, Wise, and Sessenberg (2013) showed it is not transformational leadership alone that provides effective leadership in schools. They found the

combination of both transformational and transactional leadership produces effective schools. This notion indicates principals must know how to empower their staff while holding them accountable, as well. Principals must know when to employ each style of leadership for the benefit of the learning environment.

Research by Zoll (2016) found the most important role of the principal is that of an instructional leader and is the foundation of the instructional leadership style. The concept was based on early research by Hallinger and Heck (1996) that conclude principals influence internal processes indirectly by creating policy, setting academic expectations, developing a mission and vision, protecting learning time, and organizing instruction. On the contrary, Horng and Loeb (2010) conclude instructional leadership is not about managing day-to-day operations but rather emphasizing the management of the instructional program. Consequently, the research by Leithwood, Harris and Straus (2010) concluded based on the transformational leadership style and instructional leadership style there are four common principles that effective leaders use in effective schools regardless of the context—setting direction, developing people, managing the instructional program, and redesigning the organization. The researchers concluded from the study on transformational leadership, instructional leadership and the four core leadership principles that leadership in schools impact student achievement indirectly (Cotton, 2003; Liethwood et al, 2010; Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Leadership in schools continues to be an interesting phenomenon as schools attempt to improve. Lippman (1965) gave a first look at leadership behaviors in his studies on principal effectiveness. Lippman observed verbal and non-verbal behaviors and concluded in his observation a difference exists between a leader and manager. Administrators, or managers, assumed a position and were only interested in keeping

things as normal. However, a leader was interested in making any changes needed to move the organization forward, and they established structures, goals, and a vision to move the organization forward. This type of leadership understood change had to constantly take place for schools to be successful.

Sometime after Lipton's work, Burns (1978) interjected a new leadership model to the world of administration. He suggested the role of the administrator could not be overtaken by the will to enforce power. Under this style of leadership, in later research referred to as transactional leadership, the organization cannot move forward. On the other hand, those leaders who surrendered their power and allowed their followers to persist in a collaborative setting through development of common goals saw their followers become more submissive to the decision-making process; thus, improved performance in their schools.

During the 1980s, many researchers would attempt to codify and establish leadership paradigms. Bass (1985), although the concept was delineated and described early on by Burns (1978), brought transformational leadership to the forefront. This type of leadership encourages leaders to be future oriented and inspire followers' commitment and ability to contribute creatively to an organization. Yukl (1989) suggested transactional leadership is just the opposite. In this model, leaders exchange rewards for compliance. In essence, the leader must motivate his or her followers by appealing to their self-interest. However, this type of leadership does not stimulate commitment or self-interest because the rewards are contingent upon compliance. Kotter (2001) moved beyond just looking at leadership itself and suggested leadership coupled with change needed be considered for effective leadership to take place. He believed leaders prepared organizations for change; to struggle through it or cope with it. When change must transpire, leadership is critical in navigating the process. This is true for the transactional

leader who wants to maintain status quo and the transformational leader who wants to move forward.

Bass and Avolio (2004) refined various leadership paradigms and developed the Full Range of Leadership Theory. The theory recognizes three styles of leadership: transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. They posited effective leaders do not exhibit behaviors solely from one style. Leaders would, depending on the setting and situation, employ either one of the leadership styles. Basically, an effective leader must understand the characteristics of each of the leadership styles to facilitate various situations. For example, the transformational leader must set challenging expectations and motivate others to do more than they intended through inclusion and collaboration. On the other hand, the transactional may have to motivate staff based on their self interest and rewards based on compliance. Finally, the leaders may have to pick and choose when they engage situations. This notion is based on the assumption leaders have adequately prepared staff to carry out their duties and know how to respond to certain situations. Ultimately, one style would be employed more often than the other, yet the need to access them each is paramount as leaders lead effectively.

Liethwood (2007) would extend the research on transformational and transactional leadership styles and suggest beyond the styles of leadership, there are specific activities a leader in a school should employ. First, the leaders must be able to set a vision and goals for the school. This aligns with the transformational style of leadership; it is forward thinking. The leader is not concerned with the status of the school but thinks in terms of moving the school forward and accomplishes this by including all stakeholders in the process. The leader must redesign the organization. Second, the leader encourages staff to engage in the professional development process. The leaders regularly offer feedback and assistance and stimulate staff members' intellect. The leader

must develop his or her people. Third, in the school setting, the leader must be able to provide resources for teachers that assist with teaching and learning and monitor instruction with fidelity.

This current study explored the relationship between the behaviors exhibited by principals and student achievement as measured by the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) test. Liethwood's research on leadership behaviors has demonstrated an indirect relationship exists between student achievement and principal behaviors. As such, he designed the Core Principals of Leadership that guide principals' behaviors that lead to effective leadership contributing to high student achievement. Consequently, the Core Principals of Leadership were used as the theoretical framework for this current study based on the functional premise, which posits leaders achieve results by setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program (Leithwood, 2010; Leithwood et al., 2012).

Within this framework, Leithwood argued leaders transition from being managers of the school environment to developing a concerted effort to align resources and energies with the goal of increasing student achievement. The framework also challenges principals to respond to the practices that lead to high student achievement regardless of the school's context. This theoretical framework will service as a foundation for understanding those principal behaviors that impact academic achievement at schools in the sample population.

### **Conclusion**

The review of literature served to provide background knowledge on leadership studies that impacted Liethwood's research, and subsequently, the development of the Core Principles of Leadership. The Core Principles of Leadership will serve as the theoretical framework for this present study. The research on leadership is varied;

however, there is a basic understanding that leadership does indirectly impact student achievement. The next chapter will focus on the methodology used in the study.

### CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to determine whether leadership behaviors have a relationship with student achievement in elementary and secondary schools. A purposeful sample of K-12 principals employed in Texas districts in Region 5 was solicited to provide responses to the *School Leadership Survey* and participate in interviews. The quantitative data collected from the *School Leadership Survey* was analyzed using frequencies, percentages, and the Pearson's product-moment correlation (r) data were obtained from participants from districts served by the Region 5 Service Center. An inductive coding process was used to identify emergent themes from participant interviews. Data from the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness for each campus where principals were employed was used to measure student achievement. This chapter presents an overview of the research problem, operational definitions of the theoretical constructs, the purpose of the research and the corresponding research questions, the research design, the population and sampling of the participants, instrumentation, how the data were collected and analyzed, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study.

#### **Overview of the Research Problem**

In 2001, the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* of 1965 was reauthorized by President George W. Bush to ensure all students would excel; no child would be left behind. States would have the autonomy to create proficiency standards, along with assessments that would measure student performance for those standards. In doing so, data would be collected on student achievement across the nation. The data showed student achievement was dismal, and, in turn, some students were left behind (NAEP, 2015). Consequently, the need for schools to improve became paramount (ESSA, 2015).

If schools are going to improve, they will improve with strong leadership from principals who have been entrusted to lead the nation's schools (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). There has been much research conducted regarding the influence leadership has on student achievement (Bass, 1985; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Liethwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006; Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010). The research concludes certain behaviors and practices in which principals engage indirectly impact student achievement. Hallinger (2013) extended the thought noting principals indirectly impact student achievement. However, it is also the context in which the principal operates that also contributes to student achievement. Understanding how behaviors, such as setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program can provide stakeholders in the educational environment with information to undergird the sometimes insurmountable task of developing effective principals, which in turn will lead to higher student achievement (Shatzer, Calderella, Hallam, & Brown, 2013).

### **Operationalization of Theoretical Constructs**

The study consisted of two primary constructs: (a) leadership behaviors and (b) student achievement. Leadership behaviors were broken into four constructs: (a) redesigning the organization, (b) setting direction, (c) developing people, and (d) improving the instructional program (Liethwood & Jantzi, 2006). Redesigning the organization was defined as the leadership's ability to encourage and engage all stakeholders in the decision-making process when it involves improvement of the school and improved academic performance. Setting direction was defined as the leadership's ability to develop a school vision and establish goals and priorities while holding high performance expectations. Developing people was defined as the leader's ability to provide intellectual stimulation while modeling desirable professional practices and

values offering individualized support to staff. Managing the instructional program has been defined as the leadership's ability to provide or secure resources to improve teaching and learning, engage discussion around educational issues, and regularly observe classroom activities. Each of the aforementioned constructs was measured using the *School Leadership Survey*. Student achievement was defined as the mean school score for elementary reading and mathematics STAAR scores and secondary end of course (EOC Exams) for secondary English and Algebra I.

### **Research Purpose, Questions and Hypothesis**

The purpose of this study was to determine whether leadership behaviors have a relationship with student achievement in elementary and secondary schools. The study addressed the following research questions:

R1: Is there a relationship between leaders setting the direction and student achievement?

Ha: There is a relationship between leaders setting the direction and student achievement?

R2: Is there a relationship between leaders developing people and student achievement?

Ha: There is a relationship between leaders developing people and student achievement?

R3: Is there a relationship between managing the instructional program and student achievement?

Ha: There is a relationship between managing the instructional program and student achievement?

R4: Is there a relationship between redesigning the organization and student achievement?

Ha: There is a relationship between redesigning the organization and student achievement?

R5: What types of leadership behaviors, if any, are related to student achievement?

### **Research Design**

A sequential mixed-method design was used for this study (QUAN→qual). Two phases were employed: First, a quantitative phase, and then a second, qualitative phase. This design allowed the researcher to collect data at different data points and enrich the collected data in ways that cannot be garnered using either quantitative or qualitative alone. A purposeful sample of elementary and secondary principals employed in school districts in southeastern Texas were solicited to respond to the *School Leadership Survey* and participate in semi-structured interviews. Also, archival data were used from the *State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness* (STAAR) and End of Course (EOC) examinations to determine student achievement in the schools where participating principals were employed. Percentages, frequencies, and Pearson's research method were used to analyze the quantitative data, while an inductive thematic coding process was used to analyze the qualitative.

### **Population and Sample**

The population for this study included principals from school districts served by the Region 5 Service Center in Texas. The 32 participating districts serve over 81,700 students. There were 131 schools (60 elementary schools, 38 middle schools, and 33 high schools). Thirty-one of the districts within the region had only one high school, 26 with one middle school, and 20 with one elementary. One district had three high schools,

six middle schools, and 11 elementary schools. Three school districts had only one principal who served all three levels— elementary, middle, and high school. There were two districts with principals who served at intermediate campuses. Table 3.1 depicts the student population of the schools in the region and shows race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status of students for the previous 2015-2016 academic school year (TEA, 2016).

Table 3.1

*Region 5 ESC Student Demographic Data*

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1. Race/Ethnicity		
African American	21,530	26.4
Hispanic	16,032	19.6
White	40,017	49.0
American Indian	462	0.6
Asian	1,878	2.3
Pacific Islander	57	0.1
Two or More Races	1,723	2.1
2. Socioeconomic Status		
Economically Disadvantaged	46,925	57.4
At-Risk	34,179	41.8
English Language Learners	6,516	8.0
3. Gender		
Male	68	52
Female	63	48

At the time of this study, the region had 131 principals serving in 32 districts in the southeast Texas region. Of the 131 principals, 46% provided leadership at elementary schools, 29% provided leadership at middle schools, and 25% provided leadership at high schools. Out of the 131 principals that serve in southeastern Texas, 48% were female, and 63% of the 48% serve at the elementary school level. For males, 52% served as principals, and the majority of those principals served at the secondary level. Table 3.2 gives an overview of the demographics for principals serving within the southeast Texas region. It breaks down the principal characteristics by level for which they served, gender, race/ethnicity, and years of experience. A purposeful sample of elementary and secondary school principals from Region 5 was solicited to participate in the study.

Table 3.2

*Region 5 ESC Principal Demographic Data*

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Total Principals	131	100
Total Elementary School	60	46.0
Total Middle School	38	29.0
Total High School	33	25.0
Male	68	52.0
Female	63	48.0
African American	39	30.0
Hispanic	13	10.0
White	71	54.0
Two or More Races	8	6.0
1-5 Years of Experience	63	48.0
6-10 Years of Experience	29	22.0
11-19 Years of Experience	31	
20+ years of experience	8	6.0

**Participant Selection**

All district in Region 5 were used to provide participants for the interviews. The three districts were the largest districts in the region and should provide a proportionate number of principals to represent the population. Participants were selected based on years of experience, race, ethnicity, and gender. A proportionate number was selected based on the campus level they serve. Emails were sent out soliciting their participation in the interviews. Once the participants were selected, seven face-to-face interviews were scheduled and completed in the spring of 2019.

## **Instrumentation**

### **School Leadership Survey**

*The School Leadership Survey* (SLS) was developed in 2010 by Kenneth Leithwood to measure the self-reported behaviors of school leadership. The SLS measures four dimensions of leader behavior: (a) setting the direction, (b) developing people, (c) redesigning the organization, and (d) managing the instructional program. It was reviewed and revised by a panel that included five principals, two assistant principals, a district director, two district coordinators, and a professor of psychology. Additionally, the panel had the opportunity to comment on the clarity of the questions and terms, the length of time it took to complete the survey, the ease of completion, and the opportunity to provide additional considerations. The panel's comments were fully considered, revisions were made to clarify questions and remove unclear questions.

The instrument originally contained 80 items but was eventually reduced. Although the core leadership principle behaviors do not reflect all the behaviors and duties in the principal role, they are the critical practices that have a significant influence on the learning organization (Leithwood & Janzi, 2005; Leithwood, Harris, & Straus 2010; Leithwood et al., 2004; Ontario Leadership Framework, 2012). The participants responded to 32 items about their behaviors using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (hardly ever) to 4 (almost always), and five demographic questions related to the participants' age, gender, race, ethnicity, and experience.

The setting direction dimension was broken down into a 7-item scale with the total possible composite score ranging from 7-28. The developing people dimension was broken down into five items with the total possible composite score ranging from 5-20. The managing the instructional program scale contained 9 items with the total possible composite score ranging from 9-36. Finally, the redesigning the organization scale

contained 7 items with the total points possible composite score ranging from 7-28.

There were four questions that asked about the participant's age, ethnicity, gender, and years of teaching. There was one question asking for an opinion on factors important to student achievement. Cronbach's alphas were calculated to measure internal consistency/reliability: (a) transformational leadership (.98), (b) setting direction (.72), (c) developing people (.66), and (d) managing the instructional program (.94).

### **State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness**

The state of Texas, in 2012 created the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR). The test was created by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the Texas Higher Coordinating Board (THECB). The STAAR was developed to assess students' academic readiness in grades 3-5 for elementary, 6-7 for middle schools, and end of course English I, II, Algebra, and US History for high school students. At the elementary school and middle school levels, students in fifth and eighth grade take a multiple choice test up to three times a year depending on which trial they are successful. Other grade levels in elementary and middle school test once during the May testing period. Each student responds to 1 to 40 questions aligned to the standards for each subject area.

An evaluation was completed on the validity and reliability for the STAAR. The evaluation sought to provide empirical evidence for the validity of STAAR scores and evidence for projected reliability of the STAAR. The developers of the STAAR test used reliability coefficients based on one test administration known as internal consistency measures. Two types of internal consistency were used to estimate the reliability of the STAAR, Kuder-Richardson 20, used for tests with only multiple-choice items and the Stratified Alpha, used for tests containing a mixture of multiple choice and constructed-response items. The Stratified Alpha interrater reliability was used to estimate

component reliability for written compositions. Two trained evaluators observed the same student performance and then independently provided ratings of that performance. The correlation between the two sets of ratings was considered to be a measure of the reliability of test scores. Test scores for the STAAR are typically reliable; however, each score does contain a component of measurement error. The measurement error is the part of the score that is not associated with the characteristic of interest. The characteristic has nothing to do with the development of the construct being measured and they affect scores in a consistent manner. The classic standard measurement (SEM) reflects the amount of random variance in a score resulting from factors other than what the assessment is designed to measure. Based on the reliability test performed on the STAAR, the noted the test is highly reliable (TEA, 2015).

### **Data Collection Procedures**

#### **Quantitative**

The researcher obtained permission to conduct the study from the University of Houston-Clear Lake (UHCL) Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) and the school district's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before collecting data. After permission was granted to conduct the study, the researcher began solicitation of names and emails of elementary and secondary principals in the region. Next, emails was sent to participants apprising them of the research study along with a link to a web-based survey used for the quantitative portion of the study. A Survey cover letter was provided with the email conveying the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, the time frame for completing the survey, and confidentiality considerations.

Survey cover letters of informed consent outlining the details of the study was given to each participant prior to the administration of the survey. Appendix D contains the participant informed consent form. The consent asserts participation is voluntary, the

approximate timeline to complete the survey (15-30 minutes), and the confidentiality of the demographic information. Subsequent to the receipt of the returned signed letters, the researcher administered the surveys. An electronic link was provided to participants with a cover letter.

The responses to the survey were collected over a four-month period. Participants were notified of the survey via email by the researcher at the beginning of the data collection period. Follow up emails were sent the first two weeks and periodically during the collection process. When all survey responses were received, the data was entered into quantitative research software Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) for further analysis.

All data were secured in a password-protected folder on the researcher's computer and in the researcher's office within a locked file cabinet at all times. At the conclusion of the study, the data was maintained by the researcher for five years, which is required by CPHS guidelines. The contents of the file will be destroyed once the deadline has expired.

### **Qualitative**

Standardized open-ended interviews were used in the qualitative portion of the study. This type provided structure during the interview. Similar questions were asked to all participants, and the questions were worded in an open-ended style. Open-ended questioning allowed the participants to give detailed accounts of their experiences, and it allowed the interviewer to ask probing questions (Turner, 2010). Interviews are useful when multiple viewpoints or responses are needed on a particular topic. Consequently, emails were sent out to principals in districts served by the Region 5 Service Center. To obtain a sample representing the population, demographics such as race, gender, level, and experience were considered. The email requested participation in an interview and

appropriately discussed the purpose of the research, procedures, and the actual interview. The interviewees participated in person. The interviews lasted approximately 20-25 minutes, and the interview protocol responded to 18 items about perceived leadership behaviors. The interviews took place on various dates from March to July. The principal investigator conducted the interviews and the responses were audio recorded and transcribed. The flash drive containing the stored data was stored in two locations: on a hard drive belonging to the researcher and locked in a storage room. The data will be destroyed after five years.

### **Data Analysis**

#### **Quantitative**

To answer Research Questions 1-5, a Pearson's product-moment correlation ( $r$ ) was conducted to determine whether a relationship existed between culture/climate and the core principles of leadership (setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program) and student achievement. To measure student achievement, the overall percent of students "approaches grade level" for the STAAR reading and mathematics tests from each principal's campus were used. All variables were continuous in measurement. The coefficient of determination ( $r^2$ ) was used to calculate effect size, and a significance value of .05 was used for the study.

#### **Qualitative**

Subsequent to the analysis of the quantitative data, the findings were utilized to validate the interview questions to provide a more in-depth understanding of the relationship between the core leadership principles, culture/climate, and student achievement. To answer Question Five, data from the interview transcripts were gathered, analyzed, and coded into themes. The data was categorized according to themes. The data provided the researcher an opportunity to further study the constructs

in greater detail. The research was aimed to provide an in-depth understanding of the general pattern emerging from the quantitative study by using open-ended questions in the interview. The coding process began by inputting the information into In-Vivo software. The researcher established themes and patterns from the data and place them into categories. After the categories were established, the codes were reorganized into subcategories, and the findings documented.

### **Validity**

The mixed methods design strengthened the validity of the study by triangulating the data across the quantitative and qualitative designs. For the qualitative portion, focus interview responses were organized into themes. Bracketing during the data collection process enhanced the validity by reducing potential bias. Member checking was used during the coding of the interviews to ensure the voices of the participants were accurately captured and thus increase the validity of the findings. Triangulation of themes from the interviews can enhance a detailed description of the findings. To increase the validity, the researcher utilized peer reviews, such as asking colleagues to audit decision points throughout the process and conferring the interpretation of data.

### **Privacy and Ethical Considerations**

The researcher obtained permission to conduct the study from the UHCL's CPHS and the participating district's IRB before collecting data. A survey cover letter was attached to the email survey discussing the purpose of the study, their volunteer participation, and protection of their identity. Pseudonyms were used in place of districts' and participants' names; they were not disclosed at anytime during the study. To protect the anonymity of participants, numbers were assigned and all information for participants was reflected in their assigned number. Careful consideration was taken when transferring survey data to Excel for analysis.

To ensure the protection of confidentiality during the qualitative portion of the study, the researcher conveyed to interview participants that confidentiality could not be guaranteed due to the ability of the interviewees to discuss information with outside people. Although in this case, the researcher assigned participant numbers to all interview participants to assist in protecting the confidentiality. Informed consent documents were disseminated to all participants before the collection of data. All data collected during the study was locked in a file cabinet in the researcher's office and will be destroyed after five years.

### **Research Design Limitations**

There are several limitations that may affect the findings of the study. First, the number of female and male principals was disproportional. There were more female principals than male principals. As a result, outcomes may have been affected. Previous research shows a difference in leadership outcomes of female principals and male principals when they engage similar leadership behaviors (Wolfram & Gratton, 2014). Also, school context contributes to how leaders indirectly impacts student achievement (Hallinger, 2014). Context includes aspects such as demographics, available staff, resources, and funding. As a result of the varied contexts in each of the school environments, it may be difficult to generalize across other districts where specific leadership behaviors impact the student achievement.

Second, interviews allow the opportunity for collaboration and varied thoughts around a central subject. As such, the interviews may go off topic, and more importantly, the information presented in the interviews is based on individual experiences and may not be generalize in every setting. The interviewee may find it uncomfortable to disclose the truth about their activities as a principal, thus honesty limits the validity of the

interviews. As a result of the different levels of experience, it may be difficult to ascertain what is effective and what is ineffective as a leadership practice.

Finally, the study must also consider equity in resources for each district. Some districts were afforded more monies to provide more resources to teachers and students. As a result, in some schools, factors beyond the behaviors of the principals may have lead student achievement. The ability for principals to secure the needed resources to carry out the vision and the mission is important.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to determine whether leadership behaviors of principals' have a relationship with student achievement in participating districts in the Southeast Region of Texas. This chapter provided a succinct guide to the reader regarding how the study was conducted. The guide includes the research problem, operational definitions of the theoretical constructs, the purpose of the research, questions, the design, population and sampling techniques, data collection, privacy and ethical issues, and possible limitations of the study. The following chapter discusses the results and findings from the research questions that guided the study.

## CHAPTER IV:

### RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine if principals' leadership behaviors have a relationship with student achievement in elementary and secondary schools. The chapter begins by presenting a detailed description of the demographic characteristics of participants followed by the findings illustrated in Research Questions One, Two, Three, Four, and Five. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the study's findings.

#### **Participant Demographics**

Principals (elementary, middle, and high school) working in schools located in the southeast region of Texas were sent an email soliciting their participation in the study. Of the 183 principals contacted, 89 completed and submitted the survey via SurveyMonkey. Nine respondents were deleted as a result of missing data and not meeting the requirements for participation in the study, leaving 80 eligible participants (36 elementary school principals, 16 middle school principals, 28 high school principals). Elementary school principals lead schools consisting of intermediate 4-5 and Pre-K-5<sup>th</sup>, middle school principals lead schools consisting of grades 6-8<sup>th</sup>, and high school principals lead schools consisting of grades 6-12<sup>th</sup> and 9-12<sup>th</sup>.

Table 4.1 displays participant demographics regarding grade level, gender, age classification, and race/ethnicity. The majority of the study's participants were Elementary school principals (45.0%,  $n = 36$ ), while the remaining participants were middle school principals (20.0%,  $n = 16$ ) and high school principals (35.0%,  $n = 28$ ). The majority of the principals were female (58.2%,  $n = 46$ ) and the remaining were male (41.8%,  $n = 33$ ). The majority of the participants fell in the age range of 50-59 (39.3%  $n = 31$ ), followed by 40-49 (35.4%  $n = 28$ ), 30-39 (19.1%  $n = 15$ ) and 60 or older (6.3%  $n = 5$ ). The average number of years a participant served as an administrator was 6.5 years.

The average number of years participants served in their current position was 3.5 years with their average for overall administrative experience at 10.8 years.

Table 4.1

*Principal Participant Demographics*

	Frequency ( <i>n</i> )	Percentage (%)
1. Principal Participants		
Total Principals	80	100.0
Elementary School Principals	36	45.0
Middle School Principals	16	20.0
High School Principals	28	35.0
2. Gender		
Female	46	58.2
Male	33	41.8
3. Age Classification		
20-29 Years of Age	0	0.0
30-39 Years of Age	15	19.1
40-49 Years of Age	28	35.4
50-59 Years of Age	31	39.2
60 or Older	5	6.3
4. Race/Ethnicity		
African American	29	36.7
Asian	1	1.3
Hispanic	3	3.8
White	46	58.2
Two or More Races	0	0.0

### Research Question One

Research Question One, *Is there a relationship between leaders setting direction and student achievement?*, was answered using frequencies and percentages of responses to the *School Leadership Survey*, which required the participants to rate the extent to which leaders felt the need to respond to activities that supported setting the direction. Research Question One was also measured using a Pearson's Product-Moment

Correlation ( $r$ ). Results indicated no statistically significant relationship between leaders setting direction and student achievement,  $r = -.177, p = .116$ .

Table 4.2 illustrates the results of the participant responses. For setting directions, almost all principals' responses suggested the activities should be *often/always* engage. However, some responses suggested engagement should be occasional. There were some principals who believed providing teachers with useful assistance in setting short-term goals for teaching and learning should be only engaged in *occasionally* (15.0%,  $n = 12$ ). Helping to clarify the reasons for school improvement initiatives had several responses as *occasional* (10.0%,  $n = 8$ ).

The results of principals' responses by high school, middle school, and elementary school varied. Elementary principals believed they should *always* feel responsible for achieving their school's goals (88.9%,  $n = 32$ ). The majority of middle school principals believed there should be a process for identifying school goals with their highest responses *always* (75.0%,  $n = 12$ ). The majority of middle school principals believed it is important to clarify reasons for school improvement with the highest responses *always* (52.8%,  $n = 19$ ). For high school principals it was not as important. The responses for high school yielded responses that suggested they felt engagement was *often* (39.3%,  $n = 11$ ).

Principals, at all three levels, perceived it to be important to demonstrate high expectations for teachers. However, high school had a significant number that responded *often* and not *always* (35.7%,  $n = 10$ ). When referring to a school's goals when engaging the decision-making process, elementary and high school principals felt engagement was important but did not engage it *always* (44.4%,  $n = 16$ ) and (50.0%,  $n = 14$ ). Elementary principals *always* felt they were responsible for achieving the school's goals (88.9%,  $n = 32$ ). High school principals felt it was important, however, many responded *often* and

*always* (35.7%,  $n = 10$ ). The responses for each level yielded *often* and *always* for most of the survey items. Although, high school had several responses that suggested they believed occasional engagement was sufficient. Of all three levels, principals from high schools had the most *occasional* responses. Middle school principals followed high school with the most *occasional* responses.

Table 4.2

*Setting Direction for All Participants (%)*

Survey Item		Never	Occasionally	Often	Always
5. Give staff a sense of overall purpose	High	0.0 ( $n = 0$ )	10.7 ( $n = 3$ )	46.4 ( $n = 13$ )	42.9 ( $n = 12$ )
	Middle	0.0 ( $n = 0$ )	0.0 ( $n = 0$ )	43.8 ( $n = 7$ )	56.3 ( $n = 9$ )
	Elementary	0.0 ( $n = 0$ )	0.0 ( $n = 0$ )	50.0 ( $n = 18$ )	50.0 ( $n = 18$ )
	All	0.0 ( $n = 0$ )	3.8 ( $n = 3$ )	47.5 ( $n = 38$ )	48.8 ( $n = 39$ )
6. Help clarify the reasons for our school's improvement initiatives.	High	0.0 ( $n = 0$ )	25.0 ( $n = 7$ )	39.3 ( $n = 11$ )	35.7 ( $n = 10$ )
	Middle	0.0 ( $n = 0$ )	6.3 ( $n = 1$ )	31.3 ( $n = 5$ )	62.4 ( $n = 10$ )
	Elementary	0.0 ( $n = 0$ )	0.0 ( $n = 0$ )	47.2 ( $n = 17$ )	52.8 ( $n = 19$ )
	All	0.0 ( $n = 0$ )	10.0 ( $n = 8$ )	41.3 ( $n = 33$ )	48.8 ( $n = 39$ )
7. Provide teachers useful assistance in setting short-term goals for teaching and learning.	High	0.0 ( $n = 0$ )	25.0 ( $n = 7$ )	50.0 ( $n = 14$ )	25.0 ( $n = 7$ )
	Middle	0.0 ( $n = 0$ )	6.3 ( $n = 1$ )	50.0 ( $n = 8$ )	43.8 ( $n = 7$ )
	Elementary	0.0 ( $n = 0$ )	11.1 ( $n = 4$ )	66.7 ( $n = 24$ )	22.2 ( $n = 8$ )
	All	0.0 ( $n = 0$ )	15.0 ( $n = 12$ )	57.5 ( $n = 46$ )	27.5 ( $n = 22$ )

Table 4.2 Continued

Survey Item		Never	Never	Occasionally	Often	Always
8. Demonstrate high expectations for teachers.	High	0.0 (n = 0)	7.2 (n = 2)	35.7 (n = 10)	57.1 (n = 16)	
	Middle	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	18.8 (n = 3)	81.3 (n = 13)	
	Elementary	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	25.0 (n = 11)	75.0 (n = 27)	
	All	0.0 (n = 0)	2.5 (n = 2)	27.5 (n = 22)	70.0 (n = 56)	
9. Refer to school's goals when engaged in decision making?	High	3.6 (n = 1)	7.1 (n = 2)	50.0 (n = 14)	39.3 (n = 11)	
	Middle	0.0 (n = 0)	12.4 (n = 2)	18.8 (n = 3)	68.8 (n = 11)	
	Elementary	0.0 (n = 0)	11.1 (n = 4)	44.4 (n = 16)	44.4 (n = 16)	
	All	1.3 (n = 1)	10.0 (n = 8)	41.2 (n = 33)	47.5 (n = 38)	
10. Feel responsible for achieving the school's goals?	High	3.6 (n = 1)	3.6 (n = 1)	35.7 (n = 10)	57.1 (n = 16)	
	Middle	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	25.0 (n = 4)	75.0 (n = 12)	
	Elementary	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	11.1 (n = 4)	88.9 (n = 32)	
	All	1.3 (n = 1)	1.3 (n = 1)	22.5 (n = 18)	75.0 (n = 60)	
11. Does your school have a process for identifying school goals?	High	0.0 (n = 0)	7.1 (n = 2)	42.9 (n = 12)	50.0 (n = 14)	
	Middle	0.0 (n = 0)	6.3 (n = 1)	18.8 (n = 3)	75.0 (n = 12)	
	Elementary	0.0 (n = 0)	11.1 (n = 4)	41.7 (n = 15)	47.2 (n = 17)	
	All	0.0 (n = 0)	8.8 (n = 7)	37.5 (n = 30)	53.8 (n = 43)	

## Research Question Two

Research Question Two, *Is there a relationship between leaders developing people and student achievement?*, was answered using frequencies and percentages of responses to the *School Leadership Survey*, which required the participants to rate the extent to which they felt the need to engage particular activities that supported developing people. Research Question Two was also measured using a Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation ( $r$ ). Results indicated no statistically significant relationship between leaders developing people and student achievement,  $r = -.064$ ,  $p = .572$ .

Table 4.3 illustrates the results of the participant responses. For developing people, most of the principals believed engagement in specific activities should be frequented *often/always* (93.8%,  $n = 75$ ). Principals believed modeling a high level of professional practice and developing an atmosphere of caring and trust should be engaged in *often/always* (98.7%,  $n = 78$ ). Giving teachers individual support to improve teaching practice was important in developing people supported by majority of responses as *often* (72.5%,  $n = 58$ ). Encouraging people to consider new ideas seen as important in developing people (57.5%,  $n = 46$ ).

The participant responses for developing people were analyzed according to school level—high, middle, and elementary, and the responses were varied. Principals at the high school level believed giving teachers individual support to improve teaching practices should be engaged in *often* (82.1%,  $n = 23$ ). There was a difference in what high school and elementary principals believed about engaging the modeling professional practice: elementary *often* (42.9%,  $n = 12$ ); high school *often* (27.8%,  $n = 10$ ).

Table 4.3

*Developing People for All Participants (%)*

Survey Item		Never	Occasionally	Often	Always
12. Give teachers individual support to improve teaching practices	High	0.0 (n = 0)	3.6 (n = 1)	82.1 (n = 23)	14.3 (n = 4)
	Middle	0.0 (n = 0)	6.3 (n = 1)	75.0 (n = 12)	18.8 (n = 3)
	Elementary	0.0 (n = 0)	22.2 (n = 8)	63.9 (n = 23)	13.9 (n = 5)
	All	0.0 (n = 0)	12.5 (n = 10)	72.5 (n = 58)	15.0 (n = 12)
13. Encourage teachers to consider new ideas for teaching?	High	0.0 (n = 0)	3.6 (n = 1)	64.3 (n = 18)	32.1 (n = 9)
	Middle	0.0 (n = 0)	6.3 (n = 1)	50.0 (n = 8)	43.8 (n = 7)
	Elementary	0.0 (n = 0)	8.3 (n = 3)	55.6 (n = 20)	36.1 (n = 13)
	All	0.0 (n = 0)	6.3 (n = 5)	57.5 (n = 46)	36.3 (n = 29)
14. Model a high level of professional practice?	High	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	42.9 (n = 12)	57.1 (n = 16)
	Middle	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	26.7 (n = 4)	73.3 (n = 11)
	Elementary	0.0 (n = 0)	2.8 (n = 1)	27.8 (n = 10)	69.4 (n = 25)
	All	0.0 (n = 0)	1.3 (n = 1)	32.9 (n = 26)	65.8 (n = 52)
15. Develop an atmosphere of caring and trust?	High	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	28.6 (n = 8)	71.4 (n = 20)
	Middle	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	26.7 (n = 4)	73.3 (n = 11)
	Elementary	0.0 (n = 0)	2.8 (n = 1)	27.8 (n = 10)	69.4 (n = 25)
	All	0.0 (n = 0)	1.3 (n = 1)	27.8 (n = 22)	70.9 (n = 56)

Table 4.3 Continued

Survey Item		Never	Occasionally	Often	Always
16. Promote leadership development among teachers?	High	3.6 ( <i>n</i> = 1)	7.1 ( <i>n</i> = 2)	46.4 ( <i>n</i> = 13)	42.9 ( <i>n</i> = 12)
	Middle	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	13.3 ( <i>n</i> = 2)	46.7 ( <i>n</i> = 7)	40.0 ( <i>n</i> = 6)
	Elementary	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	5.6 ( <i>n</i> = 2)	50.0 ( <i>n</i> = 18)	44.4 ( <i>n</i> = 16)
	All	1.3 ( <i>n</i> = 1)	7.6 ( <i>n</i> = 6)	48.1 ( <i>n</i> = 38)	43.0 ( <i>n</i> = 34)

### Research Question Three

Research Question Three, *Is there a relationship between leaders improving the instructional program and student achievement?*, was answered using frequencies and percentages of responses to the *School Leadership Survey*, which required the participants to rate the extent to which they felt the need to engage in particular activities that supported improving the instructional program. Research Question Three was also measured using a Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation (*r*). Results indicated a statistically significant positive relationship existed between leaders improving the instructional program and student achievement,  $r = -.226$ ,  $p = .044$ ,  $r^2 = .051$ . The more a principal engaged in activities that supported improving the instructional program, the more student achievement increased in his/her schools. The proportion of variation in student achievement scores attributed to leaders improving the instructional program was 5.1%.

Table 4.4 illustrates the results of the participant responses. For improving the instructional program, most principals thought regularly observing classroom activities should be engaged in *often/always* (97.5%, *n* = 78). Principals also believed after observing activities, they should work with teachers to improve their teaching and discuss

instructional issues *often/always* (73.8%,  $n = 59$  and 85.0%,  $n = 68$ ). Some principals believed working with teachers to improve their teaching should only be engaged in *occasionally* (26.3%,  $n = 21$ ). Most principals believed encouraging the use of data in planning for individual student needs should be engaged in *often/always* 96.2%,  $n = 77$ ). Principals believed minimizing daily disruptions during classroom instructional time should be engaged in *often/always* (97.5%,  $n = 78$ ).

The results of principals' responses by high school, middle school, and elementary school were varied. Principals at all three levels believed regular observation of classroom activities should be engaged in *often/always* (96.4%,  $n = 27$ ) high school; (100.0%,  $n = 16$ ) middle school; and (97.2%,  $n = 35$ ) elementary school. A large portion of high school principals believed working with teachers after observing activities should only be engaged in *occasionally* (32.2%,  $n = 9$ ). The majority of elementary school principals believed encouraging teachers to use data in their work should be engaged in *always* (75.0%,  $n = 27$ ). Elementary principals believed encouraging teachers to use planning for individual student needs should be engaged in *always* (61.1%,  $n = 22$ ). Middle school principals believed ensuring teachers know which students have the most need of additional support should be engaged in *often* (62.5%,  $n = 10$ ).

Table 4.4

*Improving the Instructional Program (%)*

Survey Items		Never	Occasionally	Often	Always
17. Provide or locate resources to help staff improve their teaching	High	0.0 (n = 0)	28.5 (n = 8)	53.6 (n = 15)	17.9 (n = 5)
	Middle	0.0 (n = 0)	12.5 (n = 2)	56.3 (n = 9)	31.3 (n = 5)
	Elementary	0.0 (n = 0)	8.3 (n = 3)	61.1 (n = 22)	30.6 (n = 11)
	All	0.0 (n = 0)	16.2 (n = 13)	57.5 (n = 46)	26.3 (n = 21)
18. Regularly observe classroom activities	High	0.0 (n = 0)	3.6 (n = 1)	64.3 (n = 18)	32.1 (n = 9)
	Middle	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	62.5 (n = 10)	37.5 (n = 6)
	Elementary	0.0 (n = 0)	2.8 (n = 1)	58.3 (n = 21)	38.9 (n = 14)
	All	0.0 (n = 0)	2.5 (n = 2)	61.3 (n = 49)	36.2 (n = 29)
19. After observing classroom activities, work with teachers to improve their teaching.	High	0.0 (n = 0)	32.2 (n = 9)	57.1 (n = 16)	10.7 (n = 3)
	Middle	0.0 (n = 0)	12.5 (n = 2)	62.5 (n = 10)	25.0 (n = 4)
	Elementary	0.0 (n = 0)	27.8 (n = 10)	47.2 (n = 17)	25.0 (n = 9)
	All	0.0 (n = 0)	26.3 (n = 21)	53.8 (n = 43)	20 (n = 16)
20. Frequently discuss instructional issues with teachers.	High	0.0 (n = 0)	14.2 (n = 4)	67.9 (n = 19)	17.9 (n = 5 )
	Middle	0.0 (n = 0)	18.8 (n = 3)	37.4 (n = 6)	43.8 (n = 7)
	Elementary	0.0 (n = 0)	13.9 (n = 5)	58.3 (n = 21)	27.8 (n = 10)
	All	0.0 (n = 0)	15.0 (n = 12)	57.5 (n = 46)	27.5 (n = 22)

Table 4.4 Continued

Survey Items		Never	Occasionally	Often	Always
21. Buffer teachers from distractions in their work	High	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	14.3 ( <i>n</i> = 4)	46.4 ( <i>n</i> = 13)	39.3 ( <i>n</i> = 11)
	Middle	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	62.5 ( <i>n</i> = 10)	37.5 ( <i>n</i> = 6)
	Elementary	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	13.9 ( <i>n</i> = 5)	61.1 ( <i>n</i> = 22)	25.0 ( <i>n</i> = 9)
	All	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	11.3 ( <i>n</i> = 9)	56.3 ( <i>n</i> = 45)	32.5 ( <i>n</i> = 26)
22. Encourage teachers to use data in their work	High	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	7.2 ( <i>n</i> = 2)	46.4 ( <i>n</i> = 13)	46.4 ( <i>n</i> = 13)
	Middle	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	56.3 ( <i>n</i> = 9)	43.8 ( <i>n</i> = 7)
	Elementary	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	2.8 ( <i>n</i> = 1)	22.2 ( <i>n</i> = 8)	75.0 ( <i>n</i> = 27)
	All	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	3.8 ( <i>n</i> = 3)	37.5 ( <i>n</i> = 30)	58.8 ( <i>n</i> = 47)
23. Encourage data use in planning for individual student needs	High	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	7.1 ( <i>n</i> = 2)	50.0 ( <i>n</i> = 14)	42.9 ( <i>n</i> = 12)
	Middle	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	56.3 ( <i>n</i> = 9)	43.8 ( <i>n</i> = 7)
	Elementary	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	2.8 ( <i>n</i> = 1)	36.1 ( <i>n</i> = 13)	61.1 ( <i>n</i> = 22)
	All	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	3.8 ( <i>n</i> = 3)	45.0 ( <i>n</i> = 36)	51.2 ( <i>n</i> = 41)
24. Minimize daily disruptions to classroom instructional time	High	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	3.6 ( <i>n</i> = 1)	57.1 ( <i>n</i> = 16)	39.3 ( <i>n</i> = 11)
	Middle	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	50.0 ( <i>n</i> = 8)	50.0 ( <i>n</i> = 8)
	Elementary	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	2.8 ( <i>n</i> = 1)	52.8 ( <i>n</i> = 19)	44.4 ( <i>n</i> = 16)
	All	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	2.5 ( <i>n</i> = 2)	53.8 ( <i>n</i> = 43)	43.7 ( <i>n</i> = 35)

Table 4.4 Continued

Survey Items		Never	Occasionally	Often	Always
25. Ensure teachers know which students have the most need of additional support	High	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	2.6 ( <i>n</i> = 1)	50.0 ( <i>n</i> = 14)	35.7 ( <i>n</i> = 10)
	Middle	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	62.5 ( <i>n</i> = 10)	37.5 ( <i>n</i> = 6)
	Elementary	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	2.8 ( <i>n</i> = 1)	44.4 ( <i>n</i> = 16)	52.8 ( <i>n</i> = 19)
	All	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	6.3 ( <i>n</i> = 5)	50.0 ( <i>n</i> = 40)	43.8 ( <i>n</i> = 35)

#### Research Question Four

Research Question Four, *Is there a relationship between leaders redesigning the organization and student achievement?*, was answered using frequencies and percentages of responses to the *School Leadership Survey*, which required the participants to rate the extent in which they felt the need to engage particular activities that supported redesigning the organization. Research Question Four was also measured using a Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation (*r*). Results indicated no statistically significant relationship between leaders redesigning the organization and student achievement,  $r = -.103, p = .364$ .

Table 4.5 illustrates the results of the participant responses for redesigning the organization. The results indicated practices included for redesigning the organization should be engaged in *often/always* (83.8%, *n* = 64). Some principals believed the practices should have been engaged in *occasionally* (14.8%, *n* = 10). When principals engaged parents in the school's improvement process, the results indicated it should be engaged in *occasionally* (38.8%, *n* = 31) and *often* (50.0%, *n* = 40).

The results of principals' responses by high school, middle school, and elementary school were varied. Responses for elementary school principals indicated it

is important to engage activities to ensure wide participation in decisions about school improvement be engaged in *often/always* (86.1%,  $n = 31$ ). Middle school principals indicated engagement activities that support the collaborative work among staff are important and should be engaged in *often/always* (100.0%,  $n = 16$ ). Middle school principals indicated having a system to monitor the collaborative work of teachers and staff should be engaged in *often/always* (93.8%,  $n = 15$ ).

Table 4.5

*Redesigning the Organization for All Participants (%)*

Survey Item		Never	Occasionally	Often	Always
26. Encourage collaborative work among staff	High	0.0 ( $n = 0$ )	3.6 ( $n = 1$ )	39.3 ( $n = 11$ )	57.1 ( $n = 16$ )
	Middle	0.0 ( $n = 0$ )	0.0 ( $n = 0$ )	37.5 ( $n = 6$ )	62.5 ( $n = 10$ )
	Elementary	0.0 ( $n = 0$ )	0.0 ( $n = 0$ )	38.9 ( $n = 14$ )	61.1 ( $n = 22$ )
	All	0.0 ( $n = 0$ )	1.3 ( $n = 1$ )	38.8 ( $n = 31$ )	60.0 ( $n = 48$ )
27. Ensure wide participation in decisions about school improvement	High	3.6 ( $n = 1$ )	14.3 ( $n = 4$ )	46.4 ( $n = 13$ )	35.7 ( $n = 10$ )
	Middle	0.0 ( $n = 0$ )	6.3 ( $n = 1$ )	68.8 ( $n = 11$ )	25.0 ( $n = 4$ )
	Elementary	0.0 ( $n = 0$ )	13.9 ( $n = 5$ )	63.9 ( $n = 23$ )	22.2 ( $n = 8$ )
	All	1.3 ( $n = 1$ )	12.5 ( $n = 10$ )	58.8 ( $n = 47$ )	27.5 ( $n = 22$ )
28. Engage parents in the school's improvement efforts.	High	0.0 ( $n = 0$ )	35.7 ( $n = 10$ )	53.6 ( $n = 15$ )	10.7 ( $n = 3$ )
	Middle	0.0 ( $n = 0$ )	31.2 ( $n = 5$ )	43.8 ( $n = 7$ )	25.0 ( $n = 4$ )
	Elementary	0.0 ( $n = 0$ )	44.4 ( $n = 16$ )	50.0 ( $n = 18$ )	5.6 ( $n = 2$ )

Table 4.5 Continued

Survey Items		Never	Occasionally	Often	Always
	All	0.0 (n = 0)	38.8 (n = 31)	50.0 (n = 40)	11.2 (n = 9)
29. Build community support for the school's improvement efforts.	High	3.6 (n = 1)	25.0 (n = 7)	64.3 (n = 18)	7.1 (n = 2)
	Middle	0.0 (n = 0)	25.0 (n = 4)	50.0 (n = 8)	25.0 (n = 4)
	Elementary	3.6 (n = 1)	25.7 (n = 9)	60.0 (n = 21)	14.3 (n = 5)
	All	1.3 (n = 1)	25.3 (n = 20)	59.5 (n = 47)	13.9 (n = 11)
30. Involve staff in the design of important school decisions.	High	0.0 (n = 0)	114.3 (n = 4)	57.1 (n = 16)	28.6 (n = 8)
	Middle	0.0 (n = 0)	6.2 (n = 1)	50.0 (n = 8)	43.8 (n = 7)
	Elementary	0.0 (n = 0)	11.1 (n = 4)	58.3 (n = 21)	30.6 (n = 11)
	All	0.0 (n = 0)	11.2 (n = 9)	56.3 (n = 45)	32.5 (n = 26)
31. Have a system for monitoring the collaborative work of teachers at my school	High	0.0 (n = 0)	10.7 (n = 3)	60.7 (n = 21)	28.6 (n = 8)
	Middle	0.0 (n = 0)	6.2 (n = 1)	56.3 (n = 9)	37.5 (n = 6)
	Elementary	0.0 (n = 0)	16.7 (n = 6)	50.0 (n = 18)	30.6 (n = 11)
	All	1.3 (n = 1)	12.5 (n = 10)	55.0 (n = 44)	31.3 (n = 25)
32. Ensure that teachers at your school collaborate to improve academic achievement.	High	0.0 (n = 0)	14.3 (n = 4)	46.4 (n = 13)	39.3 (n = 11)
	Middle	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	60.0 (n = 9)	40.0 (n = 6)
	Elementary	0.0 (n = 0)	5.6 (n = 2)	50.0 (n = 18)	44.4 (n = 16)
	All	0.0 (n = 0)	7.6 (n = 6)	50.6 (n = 40)	41.8 (n = 33)

### **Research Question Five**

Research Question Five, *What leadership behaviors, if any, lead to continuous improvement?*, was addressed by using a qualitative inductive coding process. In an attempt to capture a more in-depth understanding of the relationship between leadership behaviors and student achievement, seven principals (four elementary, one middle, two high school) were interviewed and asked questions regarding their leadership behaviors. The responses were based on attitudes and actions leaders perceived to support setting direction, managing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program. The responses were coded and used to develop themes and subthemes to guide the results of the study. The themes that emerged from the interviews include: (a) collaboration; (b) communication; (c) goal setting; (d) data analysis; (e) monitoring and accountability; (f) and staff quality.

#### **Collaboration**

The principals' responses indicated collaboration is important while leading their schools, and multiple methods are used to engage as many stakeholders as possible. All seven principals mentioned collaboration as a tool to support their role as a leader. Principals use the Professional Learning Community to engage staff on campus, site-based decision-making team, and parent and community meetings.

**Professional learning communities.** Six out of the seven principals mentioned they used the Professional Learning Community (PLC) concept as a way to collaborate with their stakeholders. The responses indicated principals used the concept for various purposes. Principal One, a high school principal, used the PLC format once a week to allow teachers to plan. Principal One also uses the format to engage PLC format to collaborate at the district level with other principals to increase her capacity:

While collaborating with regard to planning, our PLC meets every week. We make sure that teacher with like classes have the same planning period to participate in the PLC. And so, we use our district committees. And so, the two high schools will collaborate. I collaborate a lot with my partner, and that's Ron Jackson, who is at the other high school. And we have a principal PLC as well that not all the other schools are like-minded, Mr. Jackson's. But we can collaborate.

Principal Six also meets weekly for planning, however, the principal also uses the PLC as an opportunity for teachers to voice their instructional concerns:

We do allow them to meet with one another. We require them to meet with one another in PLCs at least once a week to plan. The team is able to have common planning periods for our grade level teachers to plan and they communicate on their own. We basically allow them to discuss things on their own. And if they need to bring instructional concerns we make sure that we can address those concerns as best as we can.

Similarly, Principals Three, Five and Seven use the PLC to discuss instructional concerns to support students. Principal Three engages teachers at least once a week in the PLC setting to allow teachers to give input about their instructional concerns:

We use our PLC as an opportunity to garner what instructional resources or needs teachers have. The needs and resources are sometimes identified and discussed in our PLCs.

Principal Five also engages the PLC format weekly and allow teachers to voice their concerns around instruction and provides food every other week for the teachers:

In the PLC, teachers are able to discuss their concerns or needs during our weekly meetings during my principal Chat and Chew sessions every other week.

Principal Seven seeks opportunities for teachers to collaborate and utilizes the PLC setting. She discusses how the campus uses multiple classrooms to bring teachers together to have discussions about the instructional needs of the campus:

I want collaboration. And so I look for a place or somewhere they all can work together. And in more than one teacher's classroom, we're bringing those teachers together and talk about what those needs are. They're able to discuss that in PLC.

Principals Four and Six use the PLC concept to engage their teachers in the data analysis process. During the PLC, an opportunity is provided for teachers to disaggregate formal and informal data. Principal four engages his PLC format twice a week. One of the PLCs is used specifically for the disaggregation of data.

Well, we have what we call professional learning communities, which are twice a week meetings that we have for each core department. We use one PLC Meeting for data review and that data could be anything from a formal assessment, informal assessment, teacher created test a student work.

As a part of her data analysis, Principal Six engages her staff in the PLC to disaggregate campus data:

Weekly, we have professional learning communities meetings where our teachers come as a grade level and they plan together, they disaggregating data together.

Principal Two did not mention using the PLC platform to collaborate with her stakeholders. However, the principal did use other platforms to collaborate.

Six out of the seven participating principals mentioned using the PLC as a means to collaborate with their stakeholders. Some principals used the platform to disaggregate data. Principals also used the platform to collaborate around planning and goals setting. One principal believed the use of the PLC would be more beneficial in a twice-a-week

format. Concomitantly, there is an indication some principals view the PLC as an important activity to engage as a part of their leadership responsibilities.

**Site-based decision-making committee.** The site-based decision-making committee (SBDMC) is a committee designed to ensure all stakeholders are represented in the decision-making process and is mandated on every public school campus. As a result, principals use the platform to create a needs assessment, set goals for their campus, complete surveys, and create a campus plan. Five out of the seven principals shared how they use their SBDC to support the school improvement process on their campus. Two of the principals did not provide comments related to the use of their SBDC. Principal One and Four mention they see the SBDMC as an opportunity to involve their stakeholders in the development of their needs assessment. Principal One responded this way about the importance of the needs assessment and the SBDMC:

Well, I think I've got 18 members on my CEIC, including three parents, one business and one community member. And I think that is just where you start with the needs assessment and try to pull them all in.

Similarly, Principal Four also values the SBDC and uses it to establish goals by completing a needs assessment. Principal Four shares how he implements the SBDMC in the needs assessment process to establish goals for their campus:

And as we come up with our needs assessment, we implement our site-based decision-making committee, we incorporate all of those individuals in the process in the same data and information and our review with the leadership team as well. And we get feedback from them regarding where we are trying to go. This how we initiate our goal setting of our goals.

Goal setting is key to setting direction in the school environment and one principal uses the site-based committee support direction setting. Principal Three also utilizes the

SBDMC for the establishment of goals his their campus and believes it is a must when identifying the needs of the students and the goal setting process. Principal Three talked about the engagement of parents in SBDMC process to establish goals and how important it is to ensure parents attend the meetings to engage the process:

When making decision on the campus about the students' needs and setting goals, it comes down to the site-based meeting. Parents are a part of the site-based decision-making committee. But, how do you engage them and make sure that they show up and they have a voice?

One principal considered the importance of providing feedback to her stakeholders to support the school improvement process. Principal Five commented on how she engages their SBDMC throughout the year to acquire input from her stakeholders. Principal Five shares the intent of her SBDMC and the expectations of the participants:

All stakeholders are involved when staff, teachers and parents are invited to our site-based meetings and during our yearly events we have throughout the year. Staff and community members are asked to be involved and we're open to suggestions and recommendations through surveys and other forms of communication.

Principal Six engages the SBDC and uses the platform to develop her campus improvement plan from the completion of the needs assessment. She mentioned not only the importance of the stakeholders being present but also being comfortable with the process. She explained how the site-based committee is enacted on her campus to initiate the establishment of her campus improvement plan:

The process begins with the needs assessment and members of the committee are separated according to specific areas. They serve as chairpersons for those committees. Once the committees have been established, they complete the goals

setting process, which contributes to the campus improvement plan. Well, of course with our campus improvement plan, we're encouraged and also required to have a campus improvement education committee to assist with the development of our goals. So we are able to ensure that we have business partners, parents and all involved in the campus needs assessment, as well as devising the strategies that we will put in place to meet our goals. We divide our staff amongst the eight areas, which we use first, but now we are using our multiple measures in the area. Of course, our demographics, our perceptions, and so what we do is ensure that our staff is aware of the needs of the school. And the same method, we try to ensure that parents feel that they have a voice. And, so, of course you have to be strategic in how you involve your parents in an area where they feel that they are defeated if you have them on a committee. You may want to put them on a committee to where they are working with perceptions and the culture of the campus and the climate. So you want them to feel empowered. And at the same time, you'd be surprised that you will have some parents that are apt and ready to disaggregate data and work right alongside you.

Principals Two and Seven did not respond regarding how they used or if they used the site-based committee at all.

The responses indicate the engagement of the site-based committee by principals varies. Based on the responses, all but two principals responded they use the site-based committee to collaborate, whether for establishing needs for their campus, setting goals, or surveying staff to get input from stakeholders.

**Parental and community meetings.** All the participants' responses noted their engagement of parental and community meetings. One principal engaged in the meetings to support the school improvement process. Principal One shared thoughts on how she

ensures parents and community members are constantly a part of the school improvement process:

We have multiple parent meetings, coffee with the principal after school. I think we've had about five meetings in the last five months. And so when we sit down with our parents and we actually review data, whether it's a parent meeting or a CEIC meeting, I usually PowerPoint it and break it down in more layman's terms. I don't use acronyms and so they understand what I'm talking about. And again, I don't share with them every single piece of data. Just the things that are impactful to their roles in decision making.

Three principals engaged in meetings to garner as much parental and community support as possible. Principal Three believed collaborating with the community does not just involve the community coming to his school. The principal regularly attends events in the community and ensures the school is connected to as many community resources as possible. Principal Three communicated how he engaged the school's community resources to ensure the needs of the students are being met:

Reaching out to them, you know, being in the community? If they make a donation or something like that, we make sure to send them a thank you card. If they are a Volunteer, we include a name and a volunteer banquet we have towards the end of the year. Those types of things, do you think. I might go to funerals or my enemies' list? I go to the Vietnamese counter-terrorism the way out for a celebration and I'm invited by other writers, 4 years old with their 4-year celebration on Saturday. Counselor, if they may need counseling, if they need some counseling that we can provide our CIS person will reach out to MHMR or any other community resources that we need. I have issues with clothing. We'll try to get them clothes to wear either at the campus level or what we have donated

or need be things are purchased to meet those needs. We have to make sure we're communicating with parents when these students have needs their parents may not know about. For example, if they have been cutting themselves, we let the parents know, bring the parent in for a conference with the child and also get MHMR involved in there as well. They have other issues, of course. We let our social worker know so that social work can try support provide support as well. And then also that if need be, it is laws that CPS help with those schooling needs as well.

Principal Four shared that people must feel comfortable when arriving at the campus. The principal believes that getting parents and community members to come and collaborate begins with making them feel welcomed. The principal provided accounts of how he involved parents and community members on the campus:

We have to over communicate with the parents so that they know they're welcome. And then we have to have events that are that are going to bring the parents in where we're we focus on curriculum events or athletic events or fine art events.

Principal Six believes parental engagement begins with the PTA. The principal attempts to get as many parents as possible to attend and then engages the school's business partners by inviting them to programing on the campus:

And so whenever we get the opportunity, we like to invite parents to those meetings and to different PTA functions that we can have their input. And so whenever we have events that involve our community, we reach out to our community partners, invite them to participate in whatever way they can. I'm not always in a monetary way, but just being present helps our community feel like they are a part.

Two principals engaged in parent and community meetings when redesigning the organization. Principal Two established relationships with clubs and community organizations and then included them in the professional development activities during the year contributing to the redesign of the organization. Principal Two shared the clubs and community relationships garnered and how they were infused into the staff development activities and other individuals from the community that support the school:

We have some partnerships with some different community organizations like the Lions Club and local churches. And so we try to have opportunities like it back to school professional development for them to interact with administrators as well as with the teachers. Another thing that I do with the community is we have like a senior center, a senior center for senior adults where they meet in some of the little small-town community centers for lunch. And so I will go I try to go twice a year to eat lunch with them and just visit with them. And we have some parent nights and some content level minds, and we'll invite particular people from the community to come in present, especially if it's over like on math night. And I invite, you know, a local engineer to come and do a presentation or have a booth.

Likewise, Principal Five engages the community members as well as all stakeholders in the redesign process. Stakeholders are invited throughout the year to provide input through surveys:

All stakeholders are involved when staff, teachers, and parents are invited to our site base meetings and during our yearly events we have throughout the year. Staff and community are asked to be involved and we're open to suggestions and recommendations through surveys and other forms of communication.

The below response was given by Principal 5 sharing how the parents and community were involved in the redesign process. Principal 5 offered these sentiments as she attempted to share how parents engaged in the school's redesign process.

The comments shared by the principals illustrate how they engage parents and community members on their campuses. Despite the fact that all have responded noting their meetings, the way and the purpose of the meetings differ. Seemingly, it is important to engage the SDMC when collaborating with multiple stakeholders. The PLC is a way to provide intellectual stimulation and collaboration with staff.

### **Communication**

Based on principals' interview responses, all the principals agreed communication is an important activity to support their leadership on campus. Communication can be broken down into two categories: (a) staff communication and (b) parent and community communication.

**Staff communication.** Three out of the seven principals indicated an open line of communication must exist when building capacity in their staff and discussing concerns; one principal believed communication is important when attempting to improve their school, and another principal shared thoughts on communication and school goals. Principals Two, Four, and Six shared how they use an open line of communication to support the goals and objectives for their campus. Principal Two explained how she uses an open line of communication to establish expectations and give her staff an opportunity to grow:

And then I just try to keep my verbal and written communication always centered around my expectations for student's success, staff behavior, classroom management, all of those things. I mean, they email, they text, they call, they see me in person in the hallway. I try to always be available for them, not just for

instruction, but any type of concern, because I feel like I'm really there direct, you know, not their lifesaver, but their life support.

Principal Four's sentiments are aligned with Principal Two and explained how he establish a rapport with his staff, so an open line of communication can take place in a safe manner:

I think you have to have a open line of communication, which is that one thing that I meet with my staff about when I when I tell them that I'm asking for input and I'm open to a brainstorming session, I don't take any of it personally. You know, you have to expose yourself and make yourself vulnerable so that the teachers know that you're not opposed to being vulnerable. Therefore, they're more likely to participate in an open and honest manner.

Similarly, Principal Six shared how she utilizes an open line of communication establish dialogue to support the continuous improvement process:

Just make sure that we continue to keep that line of communication open, inviting our staff to bring ideas, inviting them to participate and just kind of tell us what's working, what's not working, because ultimately they're in the trenches and they're the individuals that will help us meet our goals when it comes to meeting the needs of our students.

The following principal responded differently from the previous principals and believed communication should be used in a very different way. Principal Seven believed communication is vital in the school improvement process and setting goals. Principal Seven communicates with her staff ensuring they are aware of the campus goals and uses newsletters a tool to reach them, "And so and we post them in my newsletter, I always communicate where they are meeting those goals." Principals One, Three and Five did not offer comments regarding communication with her staff.

All the respondents' comments lend to the idea that communication was important and was carried out regularly in their duties as principals. However, the way the principals engaged their staff varied from one principal to the next. The principals used informal and formal methods to communicate with their staff verbally, written, or electronically.

**Parents and community.** The principals' responses revealed principals regularly engage parents and community when attempting to redesign their organization. All the principals used communication methods to include parents and community members in the decision-making process. Four of the principals—Principals One, Three, Four and Five—used communication methods to engage parents and community in the decision-making process. Principals Six and Seven used multiple mediums to communicate with their parents and community members. Principal One uses social media to communicate with students' parents and community member. Principal Two employs the use of surveys to communicate with her students' parents and community members. Principal One provided accounts of how she uses social media to garner support from community stakeholders and utilizes her CEIC to include them in the decision-making process:

I think you just have an ear. We have a parent informational Facebook page that where we get information out immediately if there's a problem on campus. Well, the first thing we do is meet with our CEIC, our decision-making committee, and we determine the areas that we have needs based on our needs assessment.

Principal Two shared how she utilizes surveys to connect parents and community members to the decision-making process and establishes community relationships to garner support through communication in professional development opportunities with staff and the leadership team:

Well, for we use a lot of surveys and we survey the staff, the staff, we send surveys out to the parents. We have some partnerships with some different community organizations like the Lions Club and local churches. And so we try to have opportunities like it back to school professional development for them to interact with administrators as well as with the teachers.

Principal Three shared how parents are included in the decision-making process when working on projects that assist in redesigning the school. He also shared how the school garners parent and community support by communicating their importance to the organization:

Reaching out to them, you know, being in the community? If they make a donation or something like that, we make sure to send them a thank you card when they volunteer, we include a name a volunteer banquet we have towards the end of the year.

Principal Four also engaged his parents and community members in the decision-making process through the use of communication. The principal includes these entities on his CEIC and communicates the needs of the campus and allows them to give feedback. Additionally, he over-communicates using multiple platforms to encourage parents and community members to support his school:

Well, we have community partners. We have parents. We have PTA members. And as we come up with things and we implement our site based decision-making committee, we incorporate all of those individuals in the process in the same data and information. And we get feedback from them regarding where we're trying to go. We have to over communicate. I believe in verbal e-mail send it home hard copy, Marquee. We have to over communicate with the parents so that they know they're welcome. And then we have to have events that are that are going to bring

the parents in where we're we focus on curriculum events or athletic events or fine art events.

Principal Five talked about how she communicated during collaboration to include individuals in the decision-making process, but also commented that multiple platforms must be used to communicate with parents. She stated, "Community members are given communication about what is happening on the campus through email, newsletters, computer programs, etc. in addition to invitations to school meetings and programs." Similarly, Principal Six uses multiple platform to communicate with parents and community members ensuring they have voice when it comes to the decision-making process:

I'm not always in a monetary way, but just being present helps our community feel like they are a part. We have a marquee in the front of our campus, a digital marquee that we keep community keep events posted. We also the newsletter that we do for our staff, we share it with our community partners, business partners, so that they're also aware of what's happening on the campus.

Finally, Principal Seven utilizes multiple means to communicate with parents and community members in attempt to garner support for her school. The principal achieves this by communicating what events are planned for the campus:

And we have a Web page, a Facebook Web page, as well as the campus signage. And so we send out our communication of what's going on and accomplishments to the community.

These mediums were also employed when engaging parents and community members in the decision-making process.

The principals' responses suggested communication with parents and community members is an action that must be considered when attempting to include them in the

decision-making process, as well as getting them to support their school. The principals showed communication, though consistent with each principal, is carried out in multiple ways. Principals used emails, webpages, surveys, newsletters, social media, and school signage to communicate with parents and community members.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis is an important action taken by principals and their responses suggest it is an ongoing task, every day. Principals engage in data analysis in different ways, and the methods for data disaggregation differs depending on the learning environment. Principal One believes you must start with the data analysis process when attempting to improve your campus. Principal Two utilizes Lead4ward, a unique data format, to support their data analysis; Principals Three, Four, Five, and Seven believe multiple measures should be used when reviewing data for the improvement of their schools; and Principal Six considers the breakdown of standards and drill down important parts of the data analysis process. Principal One shares how she uses the data to strengthen their perception of what's going on to support decisions for change:

Data is where you start, and you usually see a problem before you look at the data on it. So, yes, you see the problem, you hear about the problem. You investigate the problem. Then you start looking at your data and what changes do you have to make

Setting direction is an important leadership skill leaders employ to lead change on their campuses, and Principal Two showed how she uses data for goal setting, which is a key component when setting direction. Principal Two uses the lead4ward platform to establish goals for staff as well as students. Once goals have been completed, the principal engages staff in planning to actualize those goals through an intervention program:

We use we use lots of data. Most recently, our initiative has been using data for goal setting and trying to get the kids in on setting their own goals and actually teaching the kids how to use data to set a goal and then track their own progress towards goals. We also use lead forward for just disaggregating data on benchmarks and star. We use the lead forward also for determent for planning and we try to emphasize the most how we testing takes the readiness standards. And so, it's just looking at not only the data and the performance of our kids, but data centered around how the test is designed and data for intervention programs, data for reading and math, growth pieces. So, lots of data.

Principals Three, Four, Five and Seven provided accounts of how they engage the data disaggregation process with the use of multiple measures to strengthen outcomes in their learning environment. Principal Three uses informal and formal assessments and multiple measures of data to determine what adjustments should be made to support student performance positively. This includes asking teachers questions, classroom observations, and supervisor comments:

We'll get the data and look at the data. Then, make the shifts accordingly, or whatever. Then, we decide what we are going to do. And then I'll make whatever adjustments I need to make accordingly. You know, to fix the situation. Looking at the data, you know, asking students, what did they learn and what did you learn today? We're just working on audit in general. We do it plus ten audit I told you about earlier, the new CBA data, stored data. You know, the formal and informal form observations in the classroom as well, conversations with teachers as well about data to go on or whatever just something that happened maybe in the class going to classroom, speaking with supervisors and Directors who are involved in the observation and monitoring process as well.

Likewise, Principal Four uses multiple measures of data to guide his data analyses process. The principal uses the PLC format to review informal and formal assessment data. Also, the principal reviews academic data, discipline data and counseling data to plan for the needs of the whole student:

We use one PLC Meeting for data review and that data could be anything from a formal assessment, informal assessment, teacher created test a student work. And so we look at that and we determine on what we see from that particular data, then we start planning on how we're going to address those needs and how we want to accentuate those growths. And we do that in our second PLC. You know, you have to monitor various types of data. If I want to know if their academic needs are being met, then I'm looking at things such as lesson plans. I'm looking at data. I'm looking at observation notes from the leadership team if I want to know if their safety needs are being met. And I'm looking at discipline referrals, if I want to know if there's social emotional needs met. I'm looking at sciences into the counseling center and an end to our behavior intervention especially is how many kids are going to see that. So those are just different things that you look at to determine which needs are being met and how to be met.

Principal five also uses the PLC format. The principal uses the PLC to review multiple measures of data such as STAAR assessments, computer programs, and observation data:

Data is discussed weekly during our PLC meetings. In addition, students are required to track their own data and have discussions with their teachers about their +10 growth. Student growth is determined by observation, monitoring of journals, studying their data from our educational computer programs, STAR Literacy, Imagine Math, and STAAR data.

Principal Seven compares data from the previous year, as well as other schools in the district to gauge how well her school performs. The principal uses multiple measures of data, and regularly communicates results to her stakeholders:

I meet with them again, and I give them data on how the school performed the year before, not just academic data, but also behavior surveys that was conducted in the previous year. And I grouped them up in having to discuss it. And together we look for improvements and then they have to present their findings. So, what I did was I looked at the data and I looked at the year before as data before Hurricane Harvey, and then I looked at the data from last year. So, the goal that that was set was to beat the year before. And so, when I started communicating that they were competing with other goals, it drove a campus wide conversation. Because everything is about the data, in the newsletters data is being communicated. When I come back from our monthly administrative meetings, there's data presented there, and I like to share the data with the campus because sometimes you need. I open to see where you are compared to the other campuses. And so every day is about the data.

Additionally, Principal Seven believes that data should be communicated daily and has created a competitive spirit with her staff.

Principal Six believes the data analysis process is intricate and assures the data dig is completed to the lowest level. Principal Six believes you have to drill down the information and uses the PLC to engage data, and this is where she ensures staff are aware of the data disaggregation process:

Weekly, we have professional learning communities meetings where our teachers come as a grade level and they plan together, they disaggregating data together. We show our teachers and staff how important the use of data can be, hard and

soft data. And so, of course, a lot of times our teachers just need support and practice on how to utilize data, how to look at the data, what story the data is actually telling them. I mean, because you can give them a lot of numbers, but until they understand how it all comes together and when you compare it with the soft data, only then will it make sense to them and they see the purpose in it. So we encourage use of data by showing our staff how it actually can be utilized. DDI meetings, data driven, unstructured meetings we use, we drill down with assessments, we drill down to the weaker standards, we unpack those standards and we just kind of show them how just looking at numbers. We were able to delve deeper and see how looking at those that data can take us all the way to unpacking a certain teach and help us see success in our students.

The PLC process is seen as a trusting environment to review the data in a non-threatening environment. The principal engages the PLC weekly to review data. As viewed within the principals' responses, data disaggregation is an important part of the school improvement process. Although data analysis is a tool used on the campus, the process differs from principal to principal, all complete the process to increase student performance.

### **Goal Setting**

All principals mentioned the goal setting process as an action to facilitate continuous improvement. All principals shared they engaged in some type of assessment to contribute to the goal setting process.

Principal One and Four believed goals must be reasonable and narrowed down to one or two goals, and the admin team plays a strong role in the development of the goals. Principal One shared how she engages their team around the goal-setting process that

narrows the goals down to one or two. The principal mentioned how she prioritized and ensured stakeholders are empowered to attain the goals:

And after that, I meet with my campus leadership team and let them know what the CEIC direction is for the year. And then we establish the specific strategies under those main goals. And I think the key is not to have a too broad. I think you have to have it narrow. And, we do most things. Well, not a lot of things. You know, average. Right. But I go back to we do a few things well, and so we prioritize like my behavior goals are two my educational goes two. So, I think you do. You keep them narrow and you go deep with them. Then I think you also empower them because they know what your expectations are. Finally, you inspect what you expect.

Principal Four shared how he involves his entire staff in the goal setting process by collaborating and assessing amongst the subject areas and then allowing the admin team to select the goals they will focus on for the year. The principal also shared how he uses the professional learning community to track goal progress:

I usually have my leadership team take the chair on the different areas and get feedback from the various departments about what their concerns or thoughts are about those various sub areas. Then we bring it back to the leadership team and we identify where we think we want to go as far as describing the top one or two school goals. Then we present that to the staff as a whole, getting feedback. And if everyone is in alignment with what we're presenting, then we go ahead and roll those out as our goals. And so, we look at that and we determine on what we see from that particular data, then we start planning on how we're going to address those needs and how we want to accentuate those growths. And we do that in our second PLC meeting. So, we, you know, we plan review and then we act.

Principals Two, Three, and seven compared the previous year's goal attainment to the current year to ascertain whether the goals needed to be forwarded to the new year or to restructure the goal. Principal Two shared how she engages her leadership team at the end of the year to review goals for the year in preparation for goal setting for the upcoming year. The principal also shared how she communicates those goals once they are set:

Well, I have a campus leadership team and we meet biweekly. And at the end of every school year, we kind of are in a cyclic rotation and we analyze where we have come from and where we are and determined at that time what goals we want to pull forward. Maybe we didn't reach them. Maybe the goal needs to be adjusted and then those that we have reached; how can we tweak them and kind of take that to the next level? So, it's really an ongoing, continuous process. I try to pick one of those goals, and even if it's not profound and direct, somehow it's embedded in or implied in some of the things that either activities that we're doing on campus or instructional reminders.

Similarly, Principal Three looks at data from the previous year to assess his goal attainment. The principal believes communicating the goal is important to achieving the goal but also gives the latitude for his staff to support the goal in a way that is most comfortable for them:

The goal that we have lacked in the past and this year we need to improve. We made sure that we were consistently talking about it and monitoring it with an audit each six weeks. I am telling them what the goal is and allowing them to come up with how they're going to meet the goal. So I do try to afford them the autonomy to come up with how they want to participate in whatever initiative where that goal may be... Maybe.

Principal Seven expressed why she has a silent goal and a communicated goal and explained how an assessment is completed to establish the goals. The principal also shared how the professional learning community is used to set goals for grade levels and subject areas on her campus:

So, what I did was I looked at the data and I looked at the year before as data before Hurricane Harvey, and then I looked at the data from last year. So, the goal that that was set was to beat the year before. And so, when I started communicating that they were competing, it drove a campus wide conversation I always have a goal in mind. I have two different goals in mind. I have a communicated goal and I have a silent goal. The difference between the two is the communicated goal was always going to be extremely high. And then I have what I call a silent goal where I would be where I want the range to fall in between the minimum that I would accept. But you don't ever want to give the minimum. So, I have we have PLCs for of course the subject area where we set goals for. But then we also do grade level meetings where we're setting goals for our particular grade levels as well.

Principal Six engages her staff and admin team to complete the goal-setting process. This principal and her team complete an assessment of needs and develop plans accordingly. The principal also ensures the goals are aligned with her district goals:

And with our campus needs assessment, we're able to develop priority needs. With our priority needs, we come together as a staff and we devise some ideas and some plans that we think would help us meet our needs and our goals. So, we start our school year with our goals. Of course, the goals mirror the school, the goals for the district. But of course we discuss strategies that we will follow to assist in us reaching our goals. But we ensure that our staff members at beginning

of the year professional development sessions are exposed to the goals. We talk about data and how we do, how we also, you know, came up, and came up with our goals and the strategies. We definitely insist that we discuss those goals at faculty meetings when we have meetings with our staff.

Principal Five included their site-based team and grade-level chairpersons in the goals-setting process. Principal Five's response was limited, but she did share how they include the site-based team and her grade-level chairs. She shared this comment, "All grade level chairpersons and site base team members are involved with the planning and setting of our school goals."

Drilling down to establish goals, providing a hidden goal on top of the communicated goal, and keeping the goals narrow are all tactics principals used to establish goals. Most important, all the principals used some type of assessment to establish goals for their organizations. This shows goal setting is an important part of the improvement process, and an assessment of needs is a foundational element of the process.

### **Monitoring and Accountability**

All the principals discussed monitoring and accountability as a major action taken during the management of the instructional program and the redesign of the organization. All the principals, except Principal Three, mentioned monitoring teachers and students in the classroom when instruction is taking place.

Principal One discusses how she uses the classroom walk-through to identify those teachers that are struggling:

You got to go into the classrooms. You look at student failures and you listen to parents, listen to students. You walk around, you see for yourself. We identify the teachers who struggle, and we try and provide support to them.

Principal Two visits classes and other parts of her building to discover the needs of the students. She stated, “And so, I am in the classrooms and in the gym in the mornings, and I just try to make myself available throughout the day to monitor students and teachers.” Principal Three went into detail to explain a special process he uses to monitor classrooms and instruction:

Got to get in classrooms. I mean, there's no way around that. We implement something on our campus. We use coaching rounds. And so, we believe the coaching cycles are more effective than just a five-minute walk that we do. We do a five-minute walk. Was as well. Just, you know, people hate it and maybe give a quick response, but it's hard to get a good feel for what's going on in the classroom in three to five minutes and what our coaching rounds. What we do is we go into the classroom for about 15, 20 minutes and then we take scripting notes. And then at that point we come in, we sit with the teacher and we talk about things that we saw that were great, things we saw were consistent with our vision and our school wide initiatives. We talk about the “where” area for growth. We give no more than 2 action steps. We give a practice window for then implement the practice, the action steps, and then we go back and follow up to see how those extra steps are truly being utilized. And then we meet again and talk about what we saw. If it's if it's aligned, what we hope to see and if not, then what do we need to do to get it there?

Similarly, Principal Five saw the importance of the classroom visits, however, her process is not as detailed:

Instruction has to be monitored daily. Not only through observing teacher and student interaction, but conversations and dialoging with students is a form of measuring good instruction.

Principals Six spoke about her role as the principal to do walk-throughs but also spoke about the importance of the admin team participating in the process, as well. The principal also described a program she uses on the campus to give quality feedback to their teachers:

Through our consistent walkthroughs with the leadership team. Also, we use a program called Whetstone, which within Whetstone we're able to provide feedback and a coaching type scenario. And so not only do I, along with my assistant principal conduct walkthroughs, we also are able to include our reading coach, math coach, instructional coach to do walkthroughs, but get more on a feedback and more of a it's not evaluative. It's more so support there in a support role.

Finally, Principal Seven described the importance of giving her teachers “to dos” in the feedback; feedback alone is not enough. She responded, “But don't you just don't stop with a walkthrough where you are putting something in and telling them you need to work on this. We actually have meetings after the walkthrough.” Principal Seven also believes involving district personal in the monitoring process. She shared these words, “We also incorporate our district supervisors a lot into instruction, have them do walk-throughs and end with the teacher in a conference.”

Principals One, Four, Five, Six, and Seven focused on monitoring instructional time as teachers engaged their students in the classroom. Principal One discussed how she plans meetings with students, so instructional time is preserved. Additionally, she reminds teachers of how important other teachers' classes are, so they do not pull kids or keep kids in their class when they are assigned to another teacher's class:

And so I try and I try and respect that instructional time. I don't, we don't do a lot of corporate meetings with students. We don't twice a year. And I make sure the

teachers know that even though you think your class is the most important all day long, there are six other teachers that feel that same way. So we have to respect one another.

Principal Four spoke on his expectations regarding allowing students to leave class during instructional time. He also shared that there is a limit on the amount of public address announcements made during the day:

We limit those interruptions. We don't do outs during instructional time. We don't allow kids out of the class during the first 15 minutes or the last fifteen minutes in a class. Safety zone. So, we try to get as much out of instructional time as possible.

Aligned with the thinking of Principal Four, Principal Five shared how she plans during the summer to ensure her team is maximizing instructional time during the school year. She ensures collaboration with all stakeholders are involved in the scheduling process:

A daily schedule of instructional learning is determined during the summer planning meeting. Instructional time is mapped out including a restroom break schedule to determine how much instructional is being interrupted and when. Throughout the year, the schedule is monitored and adjusted if needed to be adjusted.

Ensuring teachers are utilizing every instructional minute, Principal Six minimizes extracurricular activities impacting the instruction during the day. The principal built a bell schedule to minimize interruptions:

We've got to ensure that our teachers are utilizing every moment of instruction, built a bell, minimizing the number of interruptions with the intercom horns, minimizing any other type of extracurricular things that could impact and interrupt the instructional day.

Lastly, Principal Seven focused on how she empowers her teachers to recognize the importance of not wasting instructional time:

There are no free days except for that one last day. The last day of the nine weeks. Because you build and build and build instruction, you should be finished with everything.

Principal Seven shared this charge to her staff, “Bell to bell instruction! It is what drives instruction and prevents wasted instructional time.”

Principal Three and Four discussed the importance of monitoring data to guide the school improvement process. Principal Three explained how he uses data to plan and monitor gaps and to support his intervention program. He also uses the data monitor to track students’ strengths and weaknesses:

Also, we use the data also to plan, but also to monitor, to see where the gaps are. And, also to help teachers know what's being fed the most, where do where student’s weaknesses are and where weaknesses have been, also for preparation for extended day for additional support and those types of things.

Principal Four shared he reviews data that spans beyond the numbers from student assessments. The principal explained how he uses multiple measures of data to support goal attainment on his campus:

You know, you have to monitor various types of data. If I want to know if their academic needs are being met, then I'm looking at things such as lesson plans. I'm looking at data. I'm looking at observation notes from the leadership team if I want to know if their safety needs are being met.

These two principals also shared how they used the data to guide the planning process as they attempted to improve student achievement on their campuses.

Principals Five and Six shared their beliefs on how important it is for principals to monitor resources to ensure teachers have what they need to deliver quality instruction. They also wanted to ensure the resources and materials are used effectively. Principal Five explained how she monitors the dissemination and use of resources on her campus:

Resources and materials are monitored by checklist our administrators have with ordered materials and resources that are to be utilized in the classroom. Teachers are reminded through observations and teacher meetings that resources are to be used everyday for the development and growth of student learning. The office staff also has a charge to monitor materials and resources has been ordered and used. We have established a resource room where many of our materials must be checked out of the resource room when used on a continuous bases.

Principal Six explained the procurement and evaluation of resources received on her campus. She shared these sentiments, “We spend based on the needs of our campus. When we purchase supplemental materials, we ensure that they are in line with our curriculum.” The principal also considers cost and effectiveness and connects the value of the program to student outcomes. She shared this, “We ensure we are going to get the biggest bang for our buck. We also monitor any programs that we purchase to ensure that we some impact on our student data.”

The principals understand the importance of monitoring and accountability, considering their responses for this section. It is clear monitoring and accountability affect various dynamics in the school setting. The way the monitoring and accountability are carried out depends on the principals and the environment in which they serve.

### **Staff Quality**

All the principals mentioned activities contributing to staff quality that aligns with the core principle developing people. Five out of seven principals (1, 3, 5, 6, and 7)

shared how they supported growth to build capacity in their staff. Five of the seven principals (2, 3, 4, 6, and 7) spoke about how they empower teachers to enhance their pedagogy. Four of the seven principals (3, 4, 5, and 7) discussed the importance of fostering creativity to enhance their staff's development. And three of the seven principals (1, 6, and 7) mention mentorship as a means to provide support for their staff's growth.

Supporting teachers' passions, providing resources to teachers, and using walk-through data are ways the following principals provided support to their staff. Principal One shared the importance of supporting the passions of their staff when attempting to increase capacity:

You allow them grace! You allow them freedom to pursue their passions. If one teacher's passion is an outside passion, then allow that until it becomes a problem.

Principal Three supports her staff's development by ensuring monies are available for resources and staff development opportunities to connect with other teachers:

We try to make sure we have enough in the budget and if not in the budget we ask for resources to be able to support what ever Gap or deficit and or needs are if it is not anything monetary. We just try and make sure that we provide opportunities for teachers to be able to see other teachers to observe other teachers in what they are doing if they want to go to another camp to see what they are doing.

Principal Five utilizes support from the district as well as workshops and conferences to establish a strong support base for her staff:

Teachers are supported by having campus teachers, supervisors, and out side Region 5 trainers assist teachers with their growth needs. By allowing teachers to

attend district training, online training, and other regional training sessions allow teachers to build their leadership skills.

Similarly, Principal Six utilizes outside entities to provide support to her staff's development.

We also not only try to provide professional development for our teachers that are struggling, but we also try to build capacity in our teachers that are showing those strengths so that they can also turn that around for our staff members. That may be weaker in the areas. As I said, our teachers that are weaker in areas we do provide professional development byways participating at district level staff development. We try to reach outside the campus level and district with region Region 5 staff developments and even out of the city if need be met. We also like to pay our teachers up in the form of a mentor or just, you know, with their team when we do our APL. We provide many PD sessions.

Principal Seven shared how she uses walk-through data to schedule staff developments, "I may have as I go on and as you're doing walkthroughs identify, you know, you may have some weak teachers that are veteran teachers. So then as I start to specialize staff developments around those concerns."

The following principals spoke about how they empower their staff to engage activities to build capacity. Principal Two provided opportunities to engage in leadership that support the decision-making process:

Well, you hate to say you give them more work, but I think that's probably the better answer. I mean, the most honest answer is just by involving them in decisions that I have to make.

Principal Three questions their staff about professional goals and empowers them to expand their capacity of leadership:

Asking them about their professional goals. What are you going to do next? You know, what's your next move? I'm trying to mentor them and supply guidance and to get them to take whatever professional development and growth and giving them an opportunity to expand their capacity of leadership. Basically, just that. Afford them opportunities to lead given them assignments, you know, to do what they require leadership let them know what I needed to do and how to go about doing that, giving them an opportunity to ask questions.

Principal Four uses his evaluation process to encourage his staff and to provide any support or resources they might need. In addition, he provides opportunities for their staff to lead once they have shown that they are capable:

When I meet with teachers as part of the yearly evaluation, one of the things I just ask is, you know, where do you want to be in five years? How can I help you get there? And so then will look at what professional goals they have. And so when when I see individuals who are really taking ownership of what we're trying to do, then that's when I try to get him additional responsibilities, sort of docking, grow them outside of a comfort zone, so that I can stretch their skill zone so that I can, you know, enhance them as an asset to the campus.

Assigning literature to staff and allowing them to provide feedback is a way Principal Six empowers her staff to build capacity:

Well, what we do, we do a weekly newsletter for our staff and we try to throw out different strategies and techniques from different literature that our leadership team has read or different ideas that we've come across. At the same time, you know, allowing our teachers to also get out there, do some research and bring ideas to us. And it's almost that open door where our teachers feel like they can come to us when they have different ideas.

Principal Seven uses grade-level challenges to impact staff growth and participation. She stated, “And I think that with the with the grade-level challenges, I think that has made the biggest impact on any campus that I've been on with the high school or the middle school, because they were working towards something.”

Fostering creativity to increase staff quality is what the following principals use to increase in capacity with their staff. Principal Three creates an environment where their staff can take risk and encourages them to do so:

A lot of times they'll come to me principal three this is what we have. And this is, you know, what we'll want to do. They'll come up with it on their own. Many times I try to create an environment where they feel comfortable. You know, we're taking a risk. I encourage them to take risk.

Allowing staff to take own additional responsibilities to grow outside their comfort zones and stretching their skills is how Principal Four fosters creativity in their staff:

And so, when I see individuals who are really taking ownership of what we're trying to do, then that's when I try to get him additional responsibilities, sort of docking, grow them outside of a comfort zone, so that I can stretch their skill zone so that I can, you know, enhance them as an asset to the campus.

Principal Five connects their staff with each other to provide opportunities to collaborate and share their gifts and to think outside the box. This how she fosters a sense of creativity with her staff:

Allowing teachers to pair up with teachers on our campus who think outside of the box. There are teachers who have gifts and talents that can be shared with other teachers to help in these areas. After seeking talented teachers, district supervisors, and Region 5 trainers are then asked to assist.

Principal Seven allows teachers to research and select books they want to incorporate in their classes with students:

Teachers tried to figure out what type of books they can incorporate in their classrooms so that the students can read. And they were researching if they had a queries to match it. And so in those grade level meetings, they're talking about what the issues are for that particular grade level.

Additionally, the principal then provides opportunities to have discussions in meetings to resolve issues plaguing the grade level.

The following principals shared how they implemented mentoring plans to support the development of old and new teachers in their learning environments. Principal One shared how they look at specific teachers to build leadership skills based on their special talents:

This year, one of my professional goals was to build capacity, not in my leadership team, but in my teachers. So I'm working with five individual teachers this year trying to build their capacity and leadership skills. I think you seek out those who have a talent in a particular area because they're all doing completely different things.

Principal Six described how they identify problems or deficiencies with teachers and utilize veteran teachers to pair up and provide support:

We have third grade reading as a problem. And we know for a fact that one of our three great teachers is strong in third grade reading. We make sure that we pair them up with someone that's maybe not so strong and we capitalize on the strength of our teachers.

Principal Seven explained how they use a mentoring program to support new teachers to her campus. She responded this way, “And so I have them go into classrooms in and

observe and also have the new teachers observe their mentor, teacher, and then I give them time to discuss what they saw and what was, you know, what needed to be changed.”

Staff quality seemingly is important in the process of building a successful school. It is also aligned with a core principal of leadership, developing people. To support that notion, principals explained a variety of ways they increased staff quality. This is completed through support growth, fostering creativity, empowering staff, and mentoring. Principals, and those who are seeking the principalship, must establish themselves as transformational and instructional leaders and be able to readily engage in the aforementioned activities to support the development of their staff.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter presented the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data collected from surveys and interviews, participant demographics, and processes of answering each research question. In the next chapter, the findings will be presented to compare what was found through this study with existing literature. Implications of this study in education and future research will be discussed.

## CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOOMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine if principals' leadership behaviors have a relationship with student achievement in elementary and secondary schools. The Four Core Leadership Principles was used for the study and have been well documented. However, contexts and a principal's ability to employ the practices have been explored minimally (Klar & Brewer, 2013).

To quantify the behaviors of principals, 89 principals from the Southeast region of Texas completed *The School Leadership Survey*. The principals also participated in semi-structured interviews: qualitative data enriched the understanding of perceptions and attitudes regarding the employment of practices and behaviors in varied contexts. In this chapter, the findings of this study are contextualized in the larger body of research literature. Implications for school administrators as well as recommendations for future research are included.

### **Summary**

The research questions addressed whether a relationship between leadership behaviors and student achievement exists. The following questions guided the study:

1. Is there a relationship between leaders setting the direction and student achievement?
2. Is there a relationship between leaders developing people and student achievement?
3. Is there a relationship between leaders managing the instructional program and student achievement?

4. Is there a relationship between leaders redesigning the organization and student achievement?
5. What types of leadership behaviors, if any, impact student achievement?

Leadership behaviors are governed by four principles (Setting Direction, Developing People, Redesigning the Organization, and Managing the Instructional Program) and student achievement as defined by the schools performance on the Math and Reading STAAR test. The relationship was examined for each respective question by the researcher.

### **Research Question 1**

The current research does not provide evidence to support a direct relationship between setting direction and student achievement. However, it does show specific behaviors, such as goal setting and establishing a shared vision, support school processes that support student achievement. As a result, school administrators should be engaging the goal-setting process and establishing a shared vision with staff and students.

**Setting direction and student achievement.** There was no statistically significant relationship between setting direction and student achievement, inconsistent with the research of Klar & Brewer (2013). Based on the quantitative findings for the current study, the principals' engagement with setting direction cannot predict higher student achievement in elementary and high schools. However, qualitative findings showed goal setting and setting direction are important parts of what principals do in their role as a principal. As a result, there is an indirect relationship between setting direction and student achievement. Considering the research, it is suggested those actions and practices exhibited by principals do support the entire learning environment and establishes an indirect link to student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1996;

Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). However, the ability for principals to operate around practices depends on the context of the learning environment.

One explanation for the difference in the results could be the current study uses a correlation to establish whether a relationship exists between setting direction and student achievement. As a result, there may be confounding variables that may exist that contribute to the strength of the relationship, thus, resulting in an insignificant statistical relationship. Another explanation for the difference may lie in the fact that the Klar and Brewer's (2013) study considers context as a factor for principals' abilities to carry out practice in their learning environment. As a result, the study uses a regression model to predict outcomes for students in low-performing schools based on principals self-reported behaviors in their environment. The study concluded the principals who increased their student achievement built a shared vision, created high performance expectations and communicated the direction of the school. The study also may have concluded different results because of the selection of participants. The current study used convenient random sampling and the Klar and Brewer (2013) study used a systemic sampling to select participants for the study. Their participants were selected based on their ability to move the school from low performing to high performing.

## **Research Question 2**

Similar to the results of Research Question One, there was no statistically significant relationship between principals developing people and student achievement. However, based on the qualitative findings, there was evidence to support the fact that principals regularly engaged their staff in activities that improved teachers' capacity and contributed to high student achievement. This suggests principals should examine

resources and create opportunities for teachers to engage in staff development and training to increase their capacity.

**Developing people and student achievement.** As mentioned previously, there was no statistically significant relationship between developing people and student achievement. Based on the quantitative findings, this is inconsistent with the findings of Sun and Liethwood (2015) who concluded when leaders focused on improving teacher emotions or dispositions, the effect on teaching and learning was direct and contributed to high student achievement. Further, in earlier qualitative findings from Blasé and Blasé (1999) it was found when principals interact with their teachers about instruction, teachers became flexible in their repertoire and their practices lead to increased student achievement. As a result, principals face a challenge to design an effective staff development program structure to stimulate teachers intellectually, and it is essential for principal success and increased student achievement. The current research does not lend to those specific activities related to how to support the development of staff; however, Liethwood and Seashore-Louis (2012) categorized three components and provided activities for each of the components:

1. Individualized support. Leaders show concern and respect for the needs and feelings of their staff.
2. Intellectual stimulation. Leaders encourage staff reflection and challenge them to examine assumptions about their work.
3. Model appropriate values and practice. Leaders set examples for staff and others to follow that are consistent with the values that support the goals and mission of the learning environment.

The current quantitative findings do not support an existing statistical relationship with student achievement and developing people; however, there are qualitative findings that

support an existing relationship between the two. That relationship will be explored in the response to Question Five. It will further explain the difference in results between past research and the current study.

### **Research Question 3**

The current study did provide evidence of a statistical significant relationship between managing the instructional program and student achievement. Additionally, findings concluded from the qualitative assessment provided evidence to support the statistically significant relationship. Principals shared actions and activities that facilitated the management and improvement of the instructional program. This suggests principals must be aware of those specific behaviors and actions that facilitate the support of the instructional program and should be employed regularly to support the improvement in student achievement.

**Managing the instructional program and student achievement.** Sufficient evidence existed to suggest a statistically significant relationship exists between managing the instructional program and student achievement. Based on the quantitative findings from the current study, it can be concluded that student achievement is directly related to the management of the instructional program. The findings support the research of Leithwood and Riehl (2003) and Leithwood and Seashore (2012) that suggest the instructional program must significantly improve teaching and learning, and principals must employ practices that have the most direct effects on student learning. In other words, principals must attend to intricacies that develop curriculum content that is accessible, provide resources, determine assessment methods, monitor performance, consider context, and regulate organizational structures. For the qualitative findings in the current study, all the principals prescribed various types of activities to support the management of instruction in their learning environments. Those activities included

providing resources to align with the mission and goals of the school, providing instructional support to teachers through collaboration and intellectual thought in the professional learning community (PLC) platform, monitoring student performance, and selecting effective staff. One principal in the current study uses her PLC to disaggregate data to monitor students' progress. She also uses the same platform to set learning goals for the students. Another principal involved their staff in the procurement of resources for the their campus to meet the needs of the campus. Those resources are aligned with the mission, vision, and goals for the campus. The principal used formal and informal communication with staff to engage them in conversation about what they perceived were needs of the campus. Nearly all the principals commented on the importance of completing walk-throughs regularly to monitor the instruction in the classroom. "You have to inspect what you expect", is what principal One stated pertaining to their thoughts on walk-throughs. The principals also shared the importance of protecting instructional time to ensure a viable curriculum was being implemented daily. These behaviors of the principals may be used to strengthen the validity of the statistical relationship garnered in the quantitate portion of the study.

#### **Research Question 4**

As with previous research questions, there was no statistically significant relationship found between redesigning the organization and student achievement. However, there is evidence from the current study's qualitative investigation that indicates the activities that support the redesign of the organization are carried out regularly by principals and may be indirectly related to student achievement.

**Redesigning the organization and student achievement.** There was no statistically significant relationship between redesigning the organization and student achievement, which is inconsistent with the research of Heck and Hallinger (2009) who

suggest when leaders engage all stakeholders in the decision making process, the overall academic capacity of the school improves and student achievement increases. The difference in the results may rest in the fact that the current study only attempted to establish an existing relationship between the two constructs. Heck and Hallinger (2009) used a longitudinal study using a multilevel change analysis to yield their results. As a result, principals must provide opportunities for all stakeholders in the decision making process for their campuses.

### **Research Question 5**

Research Question Five, was answered using an inductive thematic coding process based on semi-structured interviews with principals from participating campuses in the South East region of Texas. The responses were organized into seven major themes: collaboration, communication, data analysis, goal setting, monitoring and accountability, and staff quality.

**Collaboration.** Principal responses to the interview questions pertaining to collaboration varied with emphasis placed on subthemes including professional learning communities (PLC), site-based decision making committee (SBDMC), and parental meetings. Overall, the principals expressed how they used collaboration platforms to engage their stakeholders in the decision-making process. Most principals used the platform as a means to establish goals as well as communicate the goals that supported the mission and vision of the campus. Principals also responded regarding how they used parent meetings and the SBDMC to engage family and community members to support the work of their campuses.

**Communication.** The emerging subthemes relative to communication addressed in the interviews include staff and parents and community. The participant responses showed the principals understood the importance of communicating with all

stakeholders. Most principals used electronic means to communicate, but the establishment of an open line of communication was important to others. Some principals believed communication should be consistent and used weekly communication with staff and monthly communication with the parents and community members. The primary purpose of the communication with parents was to involve them in the redesign of the organization as well as encourage them to participate in school processes.

**Data analysis.** There were no emerging subthemes related to the data analysis addressed in the interviews. Overall, the principals believed data analysis is an important action they employ, and data analysis is on-going. Their responses reveal data analysis is used in different ways to support the vision and mission of their campuses. Data analysis is used to set goals for staff and students and, in some cases, used to monitor student growth and support intervention efforts. Principals reported multiple measures of data are used to support the overall function of the campus that support student achievement—attendance, discipline, informal assessments, and STAAR data. The disaggregation of data occurs in multiple venues such as the PLC and SBDMC.

**Goal setting.** There were no emerging subthemes for goal setting addressed in the interviews. The principal's responses revealed goal setting is a process and action that supports the continuous improvement process. The principals' responses align with the research of Leithwood and Jantzi (2013) that suggested the leader must foster the development and acceptance of organizational goals, and it contributes strongly to their ability to set direction for their learning environments. The current study revealed principals employ the goal setting process in various areas—grade level, subject area, discipline, teaching and learning, and state assessments. Principals look at goal attainment from previous years to ascertain whether they need to transition the goal to

the current year. As a result, the principals communicate goals regularly and make adjustments as they move through the year. The goal-setting process must be simple, and having too many goals does not support success in the school environment. Additionally, as the leader, it may be plausible to have silent goals and communicated goals. The communicated goal is a realistic goal that is high and may be a stretch to accomplish. The silent goal is the more attainable goal. The study also revealed the goal-setting process is shared, and stakeholders in the learning environment should participate in the process. The principal should ensure they utilize proven platforms for inclusion.

**Monitoring and accountability.** There were no emerging subthemes for monitoring and accountability in the interviews. Classroom walk-throughs, modeling expectations, monitoring data, and protection of instructional time were seen as key factors in the success of the school improvement process and aligned with the research from Leithwood, (2005) that suggested the principal must manage the instructional program and will accomplish this expectation in large part by monitoring the progress of students, teachers, and the school. Most of the principals stated classroom visits and feedback from walk-throughs were important and should be carried out daily. Some principals believed, considering the limited time allocated to reach their students, instructional time should be protected. This meant announcements, field trips, and school programming were strategically planned, so instructional time would not be affected. Some principals shared a need to monitor resources provided to teachers or resources needed for teachers exists. Finally, some principals agreed the monitoring of data was important in ensuring an increase in student achievement.

**Staff Quality.** Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) suggested a leader must have the ability to provide intellectual stimulation while modeling desirable professional practices

and values and offer individualized support to the staff. This is how principals must develop their principles, and the respondents in this study shared how they carried out their responsibilities. Most of the principals indicated providing support for teachers and staff is important. The principals also shared that fostering creativity is viable to the development of staff. Some principals indicated they must empower their staff towards growth while monitoring their professional development engagement. Finally, there were principals who suggested celebrations should occur when staff development opportunities or growth has taken place from staff developments.

### **Implications**

When considering the findings for this study regarding the relationship of leadership practices and student achievement, implications for school administrators emerged. They include evaluating and implementation of leadership practice, develop platforms for collaboration, communicate in multiple mediums, understand the data analysis process, and control all dynamics that support the school improvement process. There is a need for administrators to evaluate and implement those practices that contribute to the support of student achievement, and effective leaders exhibit skills that meet the needs of their learning environment (Marzano, McNulty & Waters, 2001). School leaders play a critical role in the overall success of the schools they lead and leadership in schools is second only to that of the instruction provided by teachers (Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). As a result, campus leaders must be able to employ those practices that support student achievement regardless of the contextual restraints. The campus leader must be able to engage in the process to establish a shared vision and mission and establish goals that facilitate the attainment of the two. The development of platforms to provide an opportunity for stakeholders to collaborate is paramount, and the collaboration should reflect those

dynamics that directly influence student achievement. For example, the professional learning community (PLC) is a venue where teachers and staff can convene to have intellectual conversations about instructional and curriculum practices. The campus leader must be able to facilitate the development and implementation of the PLC in support of increased student achievement.

Considering the findings, there is a need for school leaders to communicate effectively and in varied mediums. The most important points leaders must communicate are the vision, mission, and the goals established for the learning environment. Leaders must understand the audiences that are attached to their learning environment and must ensure communications are designed so that all audiences have access. The communication must be clear and concise and must be aligned with activities and actions that support the schools direction, and communication must be two-way. Therefore, the campus leader must be readily available to receive feedback from stakeholders as they attempt to improve their schools and increase student achievement.

The study also revealed the principal's role as it relates to the data analysis process. Principals are required to lead the data analysis process, and they should be able to engage multiple measures of data to support the improvement process that support student achievement. They also have the responsibility to engage all stakeholders in the process of data analysis. Data disaggregation is key to monitoring student performance and for the development of intervention. As a result, the school leader must understand the data analysis process and be skilled in engaging all stakeholders. The most important action the leader can take during the data analysis process is communicating the results to all in the learning environment.

Finally, this study revealed the need for the campus leader to connect all the components that support the increase in student achievement. The campus leader should

be able to embody, model, and overtly talk about what drives the learning environment and keeps everyone focused on the urgency to improve student achievement. They must understand how to solicit, engage, and act on stakeholder input to support the continuous improvement process, and they must readily provide feedback to build and strengthen relationships grounded in trust. The campus leader must be able to manage the instructional program by ensuring resources are available; provide opportunities for staff to engage in viable professional development to increase their capacity, which will increase student achievement; and use data to guide the curriculum and instruction processes.

### **Recommendation for Future Research**

The finding from this study entailed quantitative and qualitative designs to receive responses from principals regarding their perceptions of principal practices relative to the four core principles of leadership. The findings from the study provided data and information regarding principals' accounts of their practices. However, there are recommendations rendered to expand the knowledge of this topic. The following recommendations are based on data and findings from this study.

The study took place in participating elementary, middle, and high schools located in the Region 5 educational service areas in Texas. Therefore, results cannot be generalized to other environments and are only applicable to campuses where demographics and size parallel the current study. Increasing the size of the population and sample may produce different results. A recommendation for future research would be to include more schools in the study to produce stronger relationships between leadership behaviors and student achievement. Considering the fact that males have a different impact on the learning environment than females, this researcher recommends studies look specifically at behaviors of males compared to females and what relationship

exist between the two constructs. Also, years of experience play an important role in the success of school leaders. Administrators with more experience may be able to carry out the functions of the position much differently than a novice leader. Additionally, a recommendation for future research could be to examine males and females to ascertain what specific leadership behaviors for each contribute to high student achievement. Finally, school context plays a role in the effectiveness of leadership practices. As such, a study on the school context is recommended to identify those dynamics in the learning environment that contribute to the effectiveness of the leadership behaviors on a school campus.

### **Conclusion**

The current study attempted to determine whether a relationship existed between leadership practices and student achievement. To guide the study, the four core principles of leadership—setting direction, developing people, managing the instructional program, and redesigning the organization—were used to determine whether a relationship existed between the two constructs. Leithwood (2017), who modified the core principles, believed if leaders engage in specific practices aligned with the principles, regardless of context, their schools would become high-performing schools, thus, an increase in student achievement would result. The research on the two constructs is exhaustive and supports the fact that an indirect relationship exists between leadership behaviors and student achievement. In this current study, 89 individuals completed surveys and seven of those participants completed interviews regarding their perceptions of their leadership practices. Unfortunately, the quantitative portion of the study yielded results from only one core principle—managing the instructional program—that were statistically significant and supported the body of research suggesting a relationship exists between leadership practices and student achievement. This was inconsistent with

the existing body of research suggesting leadership has an indirect relationship with student achievement and leadership is second only to classroom instruction when supporting student success (Bass, 1995; Hallenger & Heck, 1996; Liethwood, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006; Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010). However, the qualitative portion, based on participant responses, provided evidence of specific behaviors that align with the core leadership principles that support the improvement in student achievement. For example, several principals spoke about utilizing the PLC to collaborate with their staff in the goals setting process. Goal setting is a key component of the setting direction principle. It is the foundation of how leaders attain their visions and support their missions (Gurley, Peters, Collins, & Fifolt, 2014). Principals gave accounts of how they engaged in the goal-setting process to set direction with their stakeholders. Also, principals engaged in the data analysis platform to strategically plan using multiple measures of data. The principals were consistent in their assertions about protecting instructional time and ensuring teachers had the resources needed to support instruction. Data analysis, protecting instructional, and procurement of resources are all aligned with managing the instructional program. The principals also supported the management of the instructional program when they spoke about regularly visiting classrooms to monitor instruction and student learning. Additionally, the principals also shared how they developed their staff through empowering them to think outside the lines, foster creativity, and supported their professional growth.

School leaders are at the forefront of change, and it is imperative leaders increase their knowledge and understanding of the principles and practices that must be employed to increase the opportunities for students to be successful. This study could provide a significant contribution to district and school leaders as well as the overall discussion on the relationship between leadership behaviors and student achievement. While this study

did not provide a statistically significant relationship between all the leadership principles and student achievement, the quantitative data raises some interesting questions regarding common practices used by principals that align with the leadership principles. Every school is required to engage in the goal-setting process as a part of the continuous improvement process. School leadership is mandated to collaborate with multiple stakeholders to ensure the decisions made for the campus are shared. Surprisingly, there was no statistically significant difference in the relationship between setting direction and student achievement. Although there was no statistical relationship, the responses from the principals on how often they engage the activities were high. Why, then, did the study not show a relationship with student achievement? Most of the high responses were from elementary school principals. In elementary schools, staffs are small, and a family atmosphere is easily established. It is also easier for elementary schools to engage in the campus improvement process as they have smaller staffs. On the contrary, secondary campuses—middle, junior high, and high—have more dynamics. As a result, they are less likely to engage those activities that support the setting direction frequently.

Developing people also garnered no statistically significant relationship with student achievement. The principals' responses for developing people varied, however, they were consistent with what is viewed as important in many districts and schools. When asked about giving teachers support to improve instruction, 89% of the principals responded they engaged in the activity often or always. Why, then, would there not be a positive relationship? Developing people encompasses a variety of actions—modeling expectations, modeling professional practice, developing an atmosphere of caring and trust, and encouraging thinking outside the box. Although the principals responded high for individual support, which is aligned with staff development, they did not readily support teachers and staff in those other areas. The principals understood the importance

of staff development and may have perceived the “Developing” in developing people as primarily providing staff development. It is evident the dynamics for developing people must be employed regularly to establish a relationship with developing people.

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APPENDIX A:  
SCHOOL LEADERSHIP SURVEY  
**School Leadership Survey**

1. Your title:
  - a. Principal
  - b. Assistant Principal
  - c. Other
2. Which category below describes your years of experience in education?
  - a. 1-5 years
  - b. 6-10 Years
  - c. 11-15 years
  - d. 16-20 Years
  - e. Over 20 years
3. Years in current position? (Enter numerical value). \_\_\_\_\_
4. Total years of educational administrative experience? (Enter numerical value). \_\_\_\_\_

**Setting Direction**

*To what extent do you:*

5. Give staff a sense of overall purpose.
  1. Never
  2. Occasionally
  3. Often
  4. Always
6. Help clarify the reasons for our school's improvement initiatives.
  1. Never
  2. Occasionally
  3. Often
  4. Always
7. Provide teachers useful assistance in setting short-term goals for teaching and learning.
  1. Never
  2. Occasionally
  3. Often
  4. Always
8. Demonstrate high expectations for teachers.
  1. Never
  2. Occasionally
  3. Often
  4. Always
9. Refer to the school's goals when engaged in decision making.
  1. Never
  2. Occasionally
  3. Often
  4. Always

10. Feel responsible for achieving the schools goals.  
1. Never      2. Occasionally      3. Often      4. Always
11. Does your school have a process for identifying school goals.  
1. Never      2. Occasionally      3. Often      4. Always

### **Developing People**

*To what extent do you:*

12. Give teachers individual support to improve teaching practices.  
1. Never      2. Occasionally      3. Often      4. Always
13. Encourage teachers to consider new ideas for teaching.  
1. Never      2. Occasionally      3. Often      4. Always
14. Model a high level of professional practice.  
1. Never      2. Occasionally      3. Often      4. Always
15. Develop an atmosphere of caring and trust.  
1. Never      2. Occasionally      3. Often      4. Always
16. Promote leadership development among teachers.  
1. Never      2. Occasionally      3. Often      4. Always

### **Redesigning the Organization**

*To what extent do you:*

17. Encourage Collaborative work among staff.  
1. Never      2. Occasionally      3. Often      4. Always
18. Ensure wide participation in decisions about school improvement  
1. Never      2. Occasionally      3. Often      4. Always
19. Engage parents in the school's improvement efforts.  
1. Never      2. Occasionally      3. Often      4. Always
20. Build community support for the school's improvement efforts  
1. Never      2. Occasionally      3. Often      4. Always
21. Involve staff in the design of important school decisions.  
1. Never      2. Occasionally      3. Often      4. Always

22. Have a system for monitoring the collaborative work of teachers at my school.

1. Never      2. Occasionally      3. Often      4. Always

23. Ensure that teachers at your school collaborate to improve academic achievement.

1. Never      2. Occasionally      3. Often      4. Always

### **Improving the instructional Program**

*To what extent do you:*

24. Provide or locate resources to help staff improve their teaching.

1. Never      2. Occasionally      3. Often      4. Always

25. Regularly observe classroom activities

1. Never      2. Occasionally      3. Often      4. Always

26. After observing classroom activities, work with teacher to improve their teaching.

1. Never      2. Occasionally      3. Often      4. Always

27. Frequently discuss instructional issues with teachers.

1. Never      2. Occasionally      3. Often      4. Always

28. Buffer teachers from distractions to their instruction.

1. Never      2. Occasionally      3. Often      4. Always

29. Encourage teachers to use data in their work.

1. Never      2. Occasionally      3. Often      4. Always

30. Encourage data use in planning for individual student needs.

1. Never      2. Occasionally      3. Often      4. Always

31. Minimize daily disruptions to classroom instructional time.

1. Never      2. Occasionally      3. Often      4. Always

32. Ensure teachers know which students have the most need of additional support.

1. Never      2. Occasionally      3. Often      4. Always

33. What is your gender?

- a. Male  
b. Female

34. Which category below includes your age?

- a. 20-29
- b. 30-39
- c. 40-49
- d. 50-59
- e. 60 or older

35. What is your ethnicity? Mark one or more.

- a. African American
- b. Asian, Asian American
- c. Hispanic or Latino (a)
- d. Native American/Alaska Native
- e. White
- f. Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

36. Years of teaching experience? (Enter numerical value). \_\_\_\_\_

37. In your opinion, how important are the following to improve student achievement?

	Extremely important	Very important	Low importance	Not at all important
Forty hours of professional development for certificated employees				
Class size reduction				
Hiring or retaining Highly Qualified Teachers				
Meeting API Requirements				
Increasing student attendance				

APPENDIX B:  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS  
Interview Questions

**Setting Direction**

1. How do you collaborate with your staff to prescribe school goals?
2. In what ways do you engage your staff around the need to improve the school?
3. How do you establish high expectations on your campus?
4. How do you empower teachers to realize the goals established through collaboration on your campus?

**Developing People**

5. What types of activities do you employ that compel teachers to think outside the box?
6. How do you support teacher's professional growth?
7. How do you build teacher leaders on your campus?
8. How do you manage the culture and climate on your campus?

**Redesigning the organization**

9. In what ways do you include all stakeholders in the decision making process?
10. How do you engage parents in the school improvement process?
11. What system do you use to monitor collaboration amongst teachers in your school?
12. How do you build community support from community members?

**Managing the Instructional Program**

13. How do you manage resources for teacher support on your campus?
14. How do you ensure that viable instruction is taking place on your campus?
15. How do you encourage the use of data on your campus?
16. How do you ensure that student's needs are being met on your campus?
17. How do you protect "instructional minutes" on your campus?
18. What platforms do you make available for teachers to discuss instructional concerns?

APPENDIX C:  
SURVEY COVER LETTER

March 1, 2019

Dear Principal:

Greetings! You are being solicited to complete the *School Leadership Survey*. The purpose of this survey is to examine relationship of principals' leadership behaviors and student achievement. This research will increase the understanding of public school leadership in Texas' secondary schools. The project's focus will be on leadership stems from my personal experience as a school principal and the need to better understand how leadership behaviors indirectly impact students.

Please try to answer all the questions. Filling out the attached survey is entirely voluntary, but answering each response will make the survey most useful. This survey will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete and all of your responses will be kept completely confidential. Your participation is completely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will in no way impact your current position as a principal. You have the right to withdraw from the research at any time.

Your completion of the School Leadership Survey is invaluable, and your willingness to participate in this study and complete the survey is greatly appreciated. Please understand that your completion of the survey implies your consent to participate. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact Calvin Rice ([crice@bmtisd.com](mailto:crice@bmtisd.com)). Thank you!

Sincerely,

Calvin Rice, Sr.  
Doctoral Student  
University of Houston – Clear Lake  
(409)350-8441  
[crice@bmtisd.com](mailto:crice@bmtisd.com)

APPENDIX D:  
INFORMED CONSET

## **Informed Consent to Participate in Research**

You are being asked to participate in the research project described below. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate, or you may decide to stop your participation at any time. Should you refuse to participate in the study or should you withdraw your consent and stop participation in the study, your decision will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you may be otherwise entitled. You are being asked to read the information below carefully, and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to participate.

**Title:** Instructional Leader Practices: Do They Influence student Achievement

**Principal Investigator(s):** Calvin A. Rice

**Student Investigator(s):** None

**Faculty Sponsor:** Dr. Felix Simeou

### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to determine if leadership behaviors influence student achievement in elementary and secondary schools

### PROCEDURES

A purposeful sample of K-12 principals employed in districts throughout southeastern Texas will be solicited to provide responses to the *School Leadership Survey*. Participants from three of the largest districts within the region will be solicited to participate in interviews. The quantitative data collected from the *School Leadership Survey* will be analyzed using the Pearson's product moment correlation (r). The data from the survey will be analyzed using frequencies and percentages. An inductive coding process will be used to identify emergent themes from participant interviews. Participants will engage the interview, the survey or both.

### EXPECTED DURATION

The total anticipated time commitment will be approximately 30 minutes if the participant is responding to the survey and a total of 60 minutes if they are engaging the interview process.

### RISKS OF PARTICIPATION

There are no anticipated risks associated with participation in this project.

#### BENEFITS TO THE SUBJECT

There is no direct benefit received from your participation in this study, but your participation will help the investigator(s) better understand the contributions that leaders in schools make in the increase in student outcomes.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS

Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of your study records. The data collected from the study will be used for educational and publication purposes, however, you will not be identified by name. For federal audit purposes, the participant's documentation for this research project will be maintained and safeguarded by the Calvin Rice for a minimum of three years after completion of the study. After that time, the participant's documentation may be destroyed.

#### FINANCIAL COMPENSATION

There is no financial compensation to be offered for participation in the study.

#### INVESTIGATOR'S RIGHT TO WITHDRAW PARTICIPANT

The investigator has the right to withdraw you from this study at any time.

#### CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

The investigator has offered to answer all your questions. If you have additional questions during the course of this study about the research or any related problem, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Calvin Rice at 409-350-8441 or by email at [omegafour@yahoo.com](mailto:omegafour@yahoo.com).

If you have additional questions during the course of this study about the research or any related problem, you may contact the Student Researcher, Calvin Rice, at phone number 409-350-8441 or by email at [omegafour@yahoo.com](mailto:omegafour@yahoo.com). The Faculty Sponsor Felix Simeiou, Ph.D., may be contacted at phone number 832-364-5480 or by email at [simieou@uchl.edu](mailto:simieou@uchl.edu)