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Pepperdine University
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

EXAMINING EDUCATION LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATION PRACTICES AROUND
BASIC AND ADVANCED SKILL SETS: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Leadership, Administration and Policy

by

Leslie Minger

July, 2017

Linda Purrington, Ed.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

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under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore and describe the leadership communication practices of school principals in Southern California schools with demonstrated high levels of academic performance in order to identify practices that might be replicated in other schools. Communication practices were studied in relation to two leadership skill sets, basic and advanced. Basic leadership skill set includes (a) setting direction, (b) developing people, and (c) redesigning the organization. Advanced leadership skill set includes: (a) creating and sustaining a competitive school, (b) empowering others to make significant decisions, (c) providing instructional guidance, and d) developing and implementing a strategic school improvement plan.

This multiple case study was conducted in a K-12 public school district and included two elementary schools and one middle school. Four data collection instruments, designed by the researcher included principal and teacher interviews, observations, and artifacts. Eleven certified teachers and three school principals were interviewed, each school provided communication artifacts, and the researcher spent one day observing the principals' interactions to observe the overall feel of the school culture. The study yielded five conclusions. First, fostering a positive school climate is an important means school leaders have for improving student learning. Second, establishing trust is an integral part of leadership communication practices. Third, providing meaningful professional development communicates a focus on professional practice. Fourth, coordinating strategies school wide for instructional feedback provides a focus on learning and student achievement. Fifth, effective communication around both basic and advanced skill sets is essential to successful leadership.

The study yielded five recommendations. First, state, district and school leaders are encouraged to include communication strategies that foster a positive school climate in leadership preparation courses. Second, school administrators should remain aware of the importance of establishing trust with all stakeholders. Third, school administrators should communicate the importance of professional practice through meaningful professional development. Fourth, school administrators should use consistent strategies for providing instructional feedback to ensure a focus on student achievement. Fifth, through communication practices school administrators need to provide a clear understanding of the basic and advanced skill sets for all staff members.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background of the Study

School leadership is one of many complex and interdependent factors that influence student learning and it is second only to classroom teachers in terms of impact (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Successfully leading a school requires many skill sets to ensure improvement of teaching and learning. In an effort to improve student learning and prepare students for the future, education often undergoes change and reform. Currently, the implementation of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) requires strong leaders to address diverse schools and extensive accountability measures. Leithwood et al. (2004) identify three leadership skill sets that are basic leadership skills sets for leading learning; setting direction, developing people and redesigning the organization. An additional group of four advanced skill sets assist leaders through major change processes that include addressing state accountability measures and diverse student populations in schools; creating and sustaining a competitive school, empowering others to make significant decisions, providing instructional guidance, and developing and implementing strategic school improvement plans. Communication is an important component of both the basic and advanced skill sets. (Leithwood et al., 2004; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).

Interdependent factors that impact student learning. There are many factors that can influence student learning, these factors are often complex and interdependent. Using empirical research, Leithwood et al. (2004) identified some of the important factors that impact student learning; state and district leadership, policies and practice, school leadership, school and classroom conditions, schools community, other stakeholders, and student family and background. The framework guiding the Leithwood et al. (2004) study identifies personnel,

capacities, and work environment as the areas for variation in workplace performance. However, throughout the framework, the school leader is linked to the majority of these factors influencing student learning. Leithwood et al. (2004) conclude that the principal is not only linked to most of the many factors impacting student learning, but in fact, the school leader is second only to the classroom teacher in influencing student achievement. Other studies also support the idea of leadership being linked to student achievement (Marzano et al., 2005; Reeves, 2002; Sergiovanni, 2007).

Impact of school leadership on student learning. A school's operation directly affects a student's chances for academic success (Marzano et al., 2005). School leadership mobilizes people to adapt practices that ensure student achievement (Donaldson, 2001). Hallinger (2003) claims that substantial progress has been made in research over the past 40 years clarifying the principals' key role in student learning and achievement. Principals hold an important role in helping students achieve and in shaping the context of the school in which students learn. Basic skill sets aide in the leadership of any organization and Leithwood et al. (2004) identify leadership skills as the basics for leading any organization. There are basic skill sets that are commonly called on by leaders of diverse organizations but are essential practices as a basis for successful school leadership. These are setting direction, developing people, and redesigning an organization; three core practices of successful leadership. These leadership basics are utilized to ensure effective and efficient leadership in schools.

Effective school leadership basic skill sets that foster student learning. Leithwood et al. (2004) identified practices of successful leaders, referring to these practices as basic leadership skill sets. They identify setting direction, developing people, and redesigning organization as the basic three skill sets needed for successful leadership. Although these basics

are a necessary part of any organizational leadership, they have special context within a school setting.

Three basic skill sets. Setting direction is defined by Leithwood et al. (2004) as shared understanding, purpose, vision, and challenging goals. They note ways that successful leaders help to set direction as articulating a vision, fostering acceptance of goals and expectations, monitoring organizational performance and promoting effective communication. Leithwood et al. (2004) define their second successful leadership practice, developing people, as experiences with the school leader that build capacity and motivation. They believe organizational context or culture can be influenced by leaders who; offer intellectual stimulation, provide individualized support, and model best practice rooted in the organizations beliefs. Kaser, Mundry, Stiles, and Loucks-Horsley (2002) say leaders communicate intentionally and unintentionally in ways that have profound effects. They go on to say leaders behaviors are always being observed and interpreted. The last of the successful leadership practices is redesigning the organization and this takes place when teachers and school leaders act individually and collaboratively (Leithwood et al., 2004).

Forces changing the context for leadership. In the United States, the reform currently underway to address college and career readiness and incorporate 21st century skills for all learners is titled Common Core State Standards or CCSS. The Common Core State Standards are a set of rigorous, researched based K-12 standards, aligned with college and career expectations, and based on strengths of current state standards along with knowledge from top performing countries globally. The impetus for the CCSS was to ensure standardization across states; thus ensuring an equal, quality education and rigorous preparation for all students to compete in a globalized world in the 21st century (Massell & Perrault, 2014; McLaughlin & Overturf, 2012).

One of the biggest challenges and goals of education today, is preparing all students to contribute to work and civic life in the Knowledge Age (Hansen, 2013; Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Kotter (2012) evaluates some of the changes due to globalization; comparing the hazards of the increase in competition and speed of the economy with the opportunities of a globalized world that has bigger markets and fewer barriers. Wagner (2008) begins to define what 21st century skills look like. His investigation of necessary skills revealed seven key skill sets students need when they enter into today's workforce including: "critical thinking, collaboration & leadership, agility [and] adaptability, initiative and entrepreneurialism, effective oral & written communication, assessing & analyzing information, [and] curiosity and imagination" (Wagner, 2008, p. 21). The 21st century represents a shift from the Industrial Age to the Knowledge Age and requires educators to reflect on the skills needed for their students to be successful in a new age.

The CCSS were established in 2009 with the intention of ensuring all students are college and career ready by graduation (Common Core State Standards, 2015). "As of June 2014, 43 states, the Department of Defense Education Activity, Washington D.C., Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have adopted the CCSS in ELA/literacy and math" (Common Core State Standards, 2015, p. 1) which was developed by National Governors Association (NGA) and Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). These standards represent the newest U.S. educational reform efforts that include expectations of rigor and higher thinking skills for all students. This reform has components that exist outside of current educational paradigms; and implementation across 43 states and multiple territories is requiring new knowledge and skill sets, indicating both first (incremental) and second (substantial) order change.

Leadership responsibilities related to educational reform. Educational reform requires a knowledgeable and skilled leader in order for successful implementation to occur. Leadership is a critical piece of educational reform; requiring leaders to help colleagues see possible integration, provide support for implementation, and recruit external stakeholder support (Leithwood et al., 2004). Reform demands leaders to be able to anticipate and adapt quickly to change while continuing to strive for increased student achievement, promote equality, and pursue new knowledge (Carter, 2013). Leadership in time of reform must use the correct leadership techniques that address the magnitude of change or it is bound to fail (Marzano et al., 2005).

Additional school leadership skill sets needed in highly accountable policy contexts to improve student learning. In addition to the basic leadership skill sets, Leithwood et al. (2004) identify skills needed to address the uniqueness of leading a school through highly accountable policy contexts. These additional four skill sets specifically address the challenges of extensive accountability and conditions associated with diverse student populations. These advanced leadership skill sets include: creating and sustaining a competitive school, empowering others to make significant decisions, providing instructional guidance, and developing and implementing strategic school improvement plans. Creating and sustaining a competitive school addresses the challenges of being in competition for students. Empowering others to make significant decisions by managing the political context to include multiple stakeholders addresses building leadership capacity with all stakeholders. Providing instructional guidance through the use of professional standards and ongoing professional development, allows leaders to more explicitly assist in improving student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004). Developing and

implementing strategic school improvement plans is required by districts to ensure the diverse populations of students are best served (Leithwood et al., 2004).

School leadership must support and encourage changes that apply to teacher practice, knowledge, and attitudes to meet the developing needs of students (Donaldson, 2001). Therefore, the job of a principal is multi-faceted and requires a principal to be thorough in their basic skill sets and competent in the additional advanced leadership skills. One thread that connects all of these basic and advanced leadership skills is communication.

School leadership communication. The most important factor in school improvement initiatives and developing a collaborative environment is effective communication (Halawah, 2005). Communication happens through an interaction of sender to receiver, and effects changes and growth in an organization (Pomroy, 2005). Communication helps ensure the quality of relationships between individuals and their organizations as well as the productivity of the entire organization.

One practice of a school principal, that affects school climate, is how well they are able to communicate. Studies support the relationships between positive school climate and its effects on staff performance, morale, and student achievement (Kelley, Thornton, & Daugherty, 2005). Goddard and Goddard (2007) conclude that there is a statistically significance relationship between teacher collaboration and student achievement. Hipp, Huffman, Pankake, and Olivier (2008) have shown that an increase in student achievement is expected as teachers learn collaboratively. Collaboration requires communication skills and Kaser et al. (2002) state that organizations need leaders who send clear, coherent, and consistent appropriate messages. Communication practices allow successful execution of setting direction, developing people, and redesigning an organization. It is important to ensure site administrators have effective and

efficient communication practices and both the basic and advanced skill sets to aide in addressing impetus of change such as accountability and diverse student populations through effective and efficient communication strategies.

Problem Statement

New learning skills will be required in order to best prepare students for the 21st century economy and competition with other industrialized nations. The U.S. Education system is undergoing great reform with Common Core State Standards to address college and career readiness while incorporating 21st century skills. Leading a reform, such as CCSS, takes sophisticated leadership, leaders with purpose, direction, and knowledge about shifting practice. Leadership is an important part of successful reform. Leithwood et al. (2004) identify three basic leadership skill sets that must be present for successful leadership; setting direction, developing people, and redesigning an organization. In addition to these three basic leadership skills there are four advanced leadership skills that are also important, especially in time of educational reform; creating and sustaining a competitive school, empowering others to make significant decisions, providing instructional guidance, and developing and implementing strategic school improvement plans (Leithwood et al., 2004). These advanced skill sets aid in change at a school especially around high accountability policy and diverse student populations. Communication is also an important part of all of these leadership skill sets.

What has not been fully studied, however, is how successful principals operationalize these seven skill sets identified by Leithwood et al. (2004) and more specifically, principal communication practices related to the basic and advanced leadership skills.

In District X, a number of school principals were identified by the superintendent as being successful in leading CCSS reform and promoting high levels of student performance.

Therefore, an opportunity existed to study these school leaders' communication practices in order to see how successful school leaders operationalized setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, creating and sustaining competitive schools, empowering others, providing instructional guidance, and developing and implementing school improvement plans to influence student learning.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore and describe the leadership practices of school principals as related to the basic leadership skill sets (a) setting directions, (b) developing people, and (c) redesigning the organization in purposely selected Southern California schools that have demonstrated high levels of academic performance and were identified by the Superintendent as exemplary schools. This multiple case study also explored and described the leadership practices of school principals as related to the advanced leadership skill sets; (a) creating and sustaining a competitive school, (b) empowering others to make significant decisions, (c) providing instructional guidance, and (d) developing and implementing a strategic school improvement plan. More specifically, the intent of this multiple case study was to uncover the communication aspect of effective leadership related to the seven sets of practices (basic and advanced skill sets) utilized by the principals that might be replicated in other schools to improve student learning and achievement.

Importance of the Study

There is a plethora of literature on the importance of communication in regards to educational leadership, however, literature regarding best practices and competency in communication remain vague. Leadership and communication can have an effect on student achievement and the communication behaviors of the principal regarding goals, vision, and

teachers' classroom practices contribute to student success (Pomroy, 2005). Leadership requires the ability to communicate well and the key is personal connection (Maxwell, 2010). Marzano et al. (2005) say good communication is critical for a shared purpose. Educators engage in written or spoken communication up to 200 times a day (Johns, 1997). Effective communication is implicitly and explicitly woven through many aspects of leadership (Marzano et al., 2005). This study focused specifically on the effective communication that happens between the school principals and their teaching staff around the three basic skills of a successful leader and the additional four advanced skills necessary for leading change and reform.

This study may be of interest to district and/or school leaders who seek to understand how to operationalize communication practices around the basic three skill sets for successful leadership; setting direction, developing people, or redesigning an organization. This study also looked in depth at how communication around creating and sustaining a competitive school, empowering others, providing instructional guidance and developing and implementing a strategic school improvement plan assisted in leading change at three schools. With the implementation of Common Core State Standards it is more important than ever that principals use best practices in communicating with their staff members. This study intended to add to the body of literature on how successful principals operationalize communication practices around important leadership skill sets. The outcomes of this study may have implications for a model of best practices for school leadership communication.

Definition of Terms

Collaboration. DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker (2008) define collaboration as a “systematic process where people work together interdependently to analyze and impact professional practice for collective results” (p. 464).

Developing people. Leithwood et al. (2004) define developing people as direct experiences with organizational leaders that stimulate intellect, provide individualized support, or model organizational beliefs and practices in the context of the organization.

Human communication. Human Communication is defined by authors Wrench and Punyanut-Carter (2007) as the process whereby one individual (or group of individuals) attempts to stimulate meaning in the mind of another individual (or group of individuals) through intentional use of verbal, nonverbal, and/or mediated messages.

Leadership. Donaldson (2001) defines leadership as “the mobilization of people to adapt a school’s practices and beliefs to achieve its mission with all children” (p. 2).

Professional learning community. Professional Learning Communities as defined by DuFour et al. (2008) are educators committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve.

Redesigning an organization. Leithwood et al. (2004) define redesigning an organization as; supporting and sustaining the performance of leaders, teachers, and students by strengthening the organizational culture, modifying structures, and building collaborative process.

Setting direction. Developing shared understanding of the organization by identifying and articulating a vision and motivating with challenging and compelling goals (Leithwood et al., 2004).

Student performance data/achievement. A report of a student’s academic progress using formative and summative assessment data, coursework, instructor observations, information about student engagement and time on task (U.S. Department of Education, 2014a).

Technology. Solomon (as cited in Luppicini, 2005) defines technology as the systematic application of all sources of organized knowledge (i.e., literature, science, the arts), suggesting that art, craft, and science all have roles to play in technology application.

Research Questions

1. What communication practices are used by principals as part of their basic core leadership skill sets to foster student learning?
2. What communication practices are used by principals as part of their advanced skill sets to improve teaching and student learning in a highly accountable policy context?

Conceptual Framework

In a study commissioned by the Wallace Foundation researchers from the Universities of Minnesota and Toronto attempted to define how leadership matters in student success and the essential practices of a leader that promote learning in schools (Leithwood et al., 2004).

Leithwood et al. (2004) identified leadership as the second most influential piece in student achievement at a school. Moreover, their research around leadership practices identified three basic practices that are essential to a school leader's success and four advanced skill sets for leading change. These key practices will serve as the conceptual framework for this study.

Leithwood et al. (2004) identify "setting direction as developing [shared understanding] and giving staff members [a sense of purpose and vision,] motivating people through [compelling, challenging, and achievable goals] and [utilizing goals to give a sense of identity and clarity] to staff members' work" (p. 8). Another key leadership practice Leithwood et al. (2004) define is developing people by directly effecting staff members through "providing intellectual stimulation, individualized support, and appropriately modeling practices and beliefs of the organization" (p. 8). Lastly, the third basic leadership practice, redesigning the

organization is explained as successful leaders “strengthening organizational culture, modifying structure, and building collaborative processes” (p. 9) to support and sustain organizational performance.

Beyond the basics are four advanced skill sets that are geared toward times of reform and leading change. Creating and sustaining a competitive school is important for leading schools in time of reform and addressing highly accountable policy contexts (Leithwood et al., 2004). Empowering others to make significant decisions, especially stakeholders who may be included in the accountability measures for the school, is a necessary skill for school leaders (Leithwood et al., 2004). Providing instructional guidance includes the ability to assess the work of the educators in the school setting and use professional standards to both evaluate and enhance ongoing professional development (Leithwood et al., 2004). Lastly Leithwood et al. (2004) identify productive planning and implementing of strategic processes in the last skill set, developing and implementing strategic school improvement plans.

The researcher intended to view leadership communication as it is operationalized at multiple schools through the lens of the basics and advanced leadership skill sets.

Delimitations

This study had the following delimitations: (a) the schools studied were located in Southern California and were identified by the superintendent as exemplary schools that had success in student achievement; (b) leadership communication practices through the lens of basic and advanced skill sets, on the part of the school principals, that have served at the study sites for three or more years; and (c) the researcher collected artifacts, and investigated through observations, at three schools in Southern California.

Limitations

Due to the nature of multiple case studies, broad generalizations about leadership communication practices around basic and advanced skill sets at schools were not made in this study. The study was limited geographically to schools in Southern California and to the communication practices of the principals within these schools. This study was also limited in terms of the window for data collection and the type and volume of data that were collected by one researcher. The data was triangulated and the researcher employed participant review to ensure trustworthiness of the study. The study may be biased to the practices of schools in the western part of the United States. Thus the findings may be affected by the location of the cases studied. This study looked specifically to the communication practices between administration and staff at a school. Communication is part of many aspects of an organization but this study focused only on communication between principals and their staff members around the basic and advanced leadership skill sets. This study was also limited by the communication practices of the administration and staff at the school. Therefore, the organizations culture or other practices may have had some impact on the results of the study.

Assumptions

A leading assumption of the study was that leadership communication impacts teaching and learning. This study assumed effective leadership practices, specifically communication practices, have a positive impact on teaching and learning. Research by Leithwood et al. (2004) identify the principal as second only to teachers in affecting student achievement. A meta-analysis by Marzano et al. (2005) identify key leadership practices that affect student learning and among the list of twenty-one important characteristics is communication.

This study assumed the participants would be honest in their responses and the researcher would not be leading in the discussions during principal and teacher interviews. It was assumed the data provided from the school case were accurate and valid. Lastly, the assumption of the researcher was that the participants understood their communication practices and the part it played in their organizations' instructional practices.

Organization of the Study

This dissertation study contains five chapters. The first chapter covers the purpose statement, research questions, and background of the study as an introduction. The second chapter looks in depth at literature that framed a historical context surrounding educational reform and educational leadership. The third chapter describes the methodological approach of these cases. The research design, population and sample, instrumentation, data and analyses are also included in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study and looks into the cases of principals that have successfully operationalized their communication practices. In addition this chapter attempted to identify implications for a framework or model for future school administrators to shape the communication practices at their schools. Chapter 5 concludes the study and provides recommendations for future studies pertaining to the topic of communication by the school principal around leadership skill sets.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter presents the rationale for conducting research on school leadership practices that influence student learning, more specifically looking at communication as part of two leadership skill sets, basic and advanced, that influence student learning. Leithwood et al. (2004) discuss the influence of school leadership on student learning and basic and advanced leadership skill sets in a study commissioned by the Wallace Foundation titled, *How Leadership Influences Student Learning*. Leithwood et al. (2004) claim, “School leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school” (p. 5). The researchers identify three basic skill sets that are needed for everyday leadership to ensure students are learning: setting direction, developing people, and redesigning the organization. Beyond basic skills are more advanced skill sets, needed to lead an organization in the 21st century. Advanced skill sets address diversity and reform and include “creating and sustaining a competitive school, empowering others to make decisions, providing instructional guidance, and developing and implementing school improvement plans” (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 26). Today’s educational environment is undergoing transformative change and is requiring that school principals demonstrate basic and advanced skill competency. Communication is an important element of basic and advanced skill sets. This study explored the communication aspect of effective leadership related to both the basic and advanced skill sets that influence student learning.

This chapter presents a comprehensive review of the literature on school leadership practices that support student achievement including both the basic and advanced skill sets and communication as variables. Chapter 2 is organized into eight main sections. The first section

includes a description and analysis of the conceptual framework that defines ideas about successful practices of a principal that directly influence student learning. The second section introduces the historical context looking at forces that prompted educational reform. The third section identifies ways in which reform changed the defining attributes of the job of leading a school. The fourth section identifies Marzano et al.'s (2005) leadership responsibilities and first and second order change needed during times of reform. The fifth section looks in depth at the basic leadership skill sets; setting direction, developing people, and redesigning the organization as defined by Leithwood et al. (2004). The sixth section reviews the literature on advanced skill sets that are needed for leading change, especially in a highly political and accountable setting with diverse challenges. Advanced skill sets include: creating and sustaining a competitive school, empowering others to make decisions, providing instructional guidance, and developing and implementing a strategic school improvement plan (Leithwood et al., 2004). The seventh section addresses communication and the role of a principal's communication practices in all of the identified leadership practices. The last section summarizes the chapter.

Conceptual Framework

Leithwood et al. (2004) claim there are two functions at the core of the definition of leadership; providing direction and exercising influence. However they go on to claim defining leadership is a difficult task because of the complexity of the concept of leadership. One major contribution of Leithwood et al.'s (2004) study was inquiry based, to find links between "leadership sources, interactions, and effects that are linked to district policy and improvements" (p. 21). Their meta-analysis of research around leadership and leadership practice also intends to contribute to the effects of leadership on student learning and what practices are considered the basics of leadership. Their study is based on the widely regarded fact that leadership plays a part

in the differences in success at schools. Leithwood et al. (2004) utilize a framework to look at the influences around student learning and school leadership.

Leithwood et al. (2004) make the claim that much research identifies differences in school success related to leadership. They identify qualitative case studies, large scale quantitative studies, and large scale quantitative studies that are directly related to specific leadership qualities, as the main research supporting their claims. Qualitative case studies supporting Leithwood et al.'s 2004 meta-analysis tended to focus on exceptional schools and included an array of effects of successful leadership. Between 1980 and 1998, researchers Hallinger and Heck (1998) compile four dozen quantitative studies with variations in school types that find significant relationships between school leadership and student outcomes, significant in fact to represent about one quarter of the variation between schools. Lastly another meta-analysis by Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2004) identified twenty-one leadership responsibilities that effect student achievement.

Leithwood et al. (2004) believe leadership is a catalyst for school turnaround and accounts for the difference in schools' success. In their study, they consider the 'who, what, and how' of successful leadership. Their study utilizes a framework that states variations in workplace performance is a function of capacities therefore, leaders play an important part in establishing the structure and setting of the workplace.

Expanding on past research and claims, Leithwood et al. (2004) discuss the basics of good leadership. They identify Hallinger and Heck (1998) labeling leadership categories of "purpose, people, and structure and social systems." Conger and Kanungo (1997) referring to "visioning strategies, "efficacy building strategies" and "context changing strategies" (p. 290), and the 21 specific leadership qualities identified by Waters et al. (2004) as fitting into these

other categories. Lastly Leithwood (1994) categorized *setting direction, developing people* and *redesigning an organization* in his 1994 study as basic of good leadership. Leithwood et al. (2004) believe all these basics of good leadership identify with transformational leadership.

Leithwood et al. (2004) identify the principal as second only to teachers in effecting student performance. Through their meta-analysis of educational leadership and the effects on student performance they identify three basic successful leadership practices that are essential in improving student achievement. The three successful leadership practices are: setting direction, developing people, and redesigning an organization (Leithwood et al., 2004).

The first critical aspect of leadership identified by Leithwood et al. (2004) is setting direction. They report that fundamentally, setting direction is a basis of human motivation. Setting direction allows for sense making of an individual's work and identity in the context of their work. Practices of setting direction often include a "shared vision, acceptance of group goals, and high performance expectations" (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 24).

The second leadership skill set developing people includes intellectual stimulation and providing, both intellectual support and appropriate modeling, (Leithwood et al., 2004). The theory of instructional leadership relating to a leader's emotional intelligence is a factor in developing people.

Redesigning the organization, the third leadership skill set, emerged from evidence about learning organizations and professional learning communities practices that identify malleability and organizational culture as main facilitators that positively affect the organization and its' members, (Leithwood et al., 2004). This basis of successful leadership includes a strong culture, malleable organizational structures, and collaborative processes (Leithwood et al., 2004).

Forces Prompting Educational Reform

Five important forces have prompted educational reform over the past fifty years including the Educational and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) of 2002 legislation, Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) data, 21st century education and the knowledge age, and the CCSS. These forces have required leaders and the role of the school principal to change. Principals are again being called to lead transformative change as educational reform is requiring both basic and advanced skill sets. The following sections cover literature surrounding each of the forces that have called on leadership and concludes with a brief history of how these forces have affected school leaders over the past 50 years.

ESEA. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 shifted education's focus to approaches in closing achievement gaps between different socioeconomic and minority groups with the right support and interventions. ESEA aimed to improve the quality and opportunities of education. ESEA was the first time the federal government advised states on educational matters such as curriculum or general school operations and was accompanied by federal funding assistance to schools in need (Standerfer, 2006). Although the reform had big promise, especially with inclusion of special education revisions in the 1970s, achievement gaps still remained. The National Commission on Excellence in Education told the story of failing schools and increased achievement gaps in a report titled, *A Nation at Risk* (Standerfer, 2006). Almost four decades later, revisions to ESEA led to new reform. NCLB was written to span different ideological and political differences to again address socioeconomic differences, cultural diversities, and students with disabilities.

NCLB. NCLB legislation passed in 2002 representing significant and controversial

changes in federal education policy (Sunderman, Kim, & Orfield, 2005). President George W. Bush announced his framework for bipartisan educational reform, NCLB, just days after taking office. President Bush's NCLB Act reauthorized ESEA with new strategies that intended to increase accountability, give families greater choice in the schools they wanted to attend, strong emphasis on reading, and more flexibility in spending federal dollars at the state and local levels (U.S. Department of Education, 2014b). NCLB addressed; funding for schools that served lower socioeconomic students, ensuring highly qualified teachers in all public schools, and accountability measures such as adequate yearly progress reports that included disaggregated achievement reports (Meier, Kohn, Darling-Hammond, Sizer, & Wood, 2004). However, due to state liberties in deciding accountability and achievement measures and the limitations of standardized testing data; challenges arose. One major challenge of NCLB was trying to identify whether or not the policies were working in all states and all districts that are so diverse (Sunderman et al., 2005). Sunderman et al. (2005) state that other major problems with NCLB included the lofty expectations; continued inequities, especially for lower socioeconomic schools; and an emphasis on narrow outcomes.

PISA performance. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a test given every three years to fifteen-year old students in many different parts of the world. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reports PISA results for 34 member countries and an additional 31 partner countries (OECD, 2014). The most recent test results have created areas of concern and criticism of education in the United States. The U.S. has seen a small but steady decrease in PISA performance mean scores according to the 2000, 2003, 2009 and 2012 PISA reports, although these results are not considered statistically significant. The latest PISA results from 2012 rate U.S. students' performance in comparison to

all nations as average in reading and science and below average in math. In the key findings for the United States, the OECD (2014) ranks the U.S. as compared to other participating nations; 17th in reading, 20th in science, and 27th in math. In an overview of the PISA results and the key findings reported by the OECD (2014), there are additional areas of concern such as low percentages of high performing students, high percentages of low performing students and variations between students from different socio-economic status schools.

Concerns about student achievement span both low and high achievement percentages in the U.S. According to PISA results in 2012, one in four students in the U.S. does not reach level 2, the baseline, in math proficiency. Comparably, only 2% of students in the U.S. reached the highest level of achievement in math, scoring a level 6 in 2012, again slightly below the OECD average. These results translate to weaknesses in students' ability to use math skills learned in a founded manner, (OECD, 2014). In addition, students are not performing higher cognitively demanding tasks that translate to real-world scenarios or problems. One suggestion offered by the OECD (2014) is for students to be involved in higher-order activities, examples being application to real-world models and situations.

The average overall scores and a lack of high performers are not the only problems reported from the PISA results. Twenty-six percent of U.S. students are reported as low performing on the PISA test and this presents a need to reflect on equity in schools. According to the OECD 2014 report on variance between high and low socio-economic statuses, the United States, although not considered statistically significant, is below the OECD average for equity in education. The U.S. has a performance variance of 15% explained by socio-economic status. Wilde (2015) asserts that the United States has one of the biggest achievement gaps in the industrialized nation. With the past few centuries of reform efforts focused on decreasing

achievement gaps, the data from results such as the PISA assessments shows there is still much work to be done.

In every state, the U.S. education system is doing far worse for low-income students and students of color than for their white or more affluent peers (The Education Trust, 2014). There are still achievement gaps for under-represented and under-served students. According to Meier et al. (2004), public education can be viewed as a national promise to allow equal access to all students regardless of cultural diversities, socioeconomic status, gender, and disabilities so all may enjoy freedom and citizenship. In order to be globally competitive and remember the national promise of public education, it is important to remember the goal of educating all students for a connected and complex world (Meier et al., 2004).

21st century education. Education has shifted over the years, from the Agrarian Age to the Industrial age and most recently into the Knowledge Age (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Past and present educational reforms address inequity and the challenges of the changing world. However, many reports, like PISA, are showing the United States is still not performing in a way that supports 21st century skills for the future of its students. The Knowledge Age is “information-driven” and “globally networked” (p. 3) and involves an economy based on data, information, knowledge and expertise (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). The United States Department of Education (SDE) asserts that students need education beyond high school to be ready for tomorrow’s economy and to be competitive globally. The SDE also proposes that a college degree or advanced certificate is necessary for rewarding careers (U.S. Department of Education, 2014c). Politicians, business leaders, educators agree that students today need 21st century skills to be successful (Rotherham & Willingham, 2009).

The Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21) is a coalition of the business community, education leaders, and policymakers with the goal of leading conversations and ensuring readiness for K-12 education in the United States (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2015). P21 has developed a framework for what constitutes necessary 21st century skills for students to succeed in work, life, and citizenship. P21's framework includes skills in these four key areas; learning and innovation, life and career, key subjects, and information, media, and technology (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2015). Learning in the 21st century requires all children to master core subjects, as well as standards, and to apply 21st century skills (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Skills identified as important to learners in the 21st century can be grouped into three main categories including; life and career skills, learning and innovation skills, and information, media and technology skills (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). In addition to core subjects, such as math and reading, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills has identified global awareness and literacy in: civics, health, environment, business, finance, and economics as interdisciplinary themes for success in the Knowledge Age (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2015). Responsibility, accountability, flexibility, innovation, critical thinking and problem solving are all skills listed in these categories identified by the Partnership for the 21st Century (Brusic & Shearer, 2014). The awareness of the need for 21st century knowledge and skills has prompted a national educational reform. In order to address some of the shortcomings of NCLB and to continue to challenge the equity and effectiveness of public education a new reform has emerged titled Common Core State Standards, CCSS. The OECD (2014) reflects on the adopting of Common Core State Standards and believes that successful implementation would assist the United States with higher performance on the PISA tests in the future.

CCSS. Common Core State Standards (CCSS) emerged from the desire to enable all students to be college and career ready by graduation and to compete on a global level (Common Core State Standards, 2015; McLaughlin & Overturf, 2012). The Common Core State Standards are a set of rigorous, researched based K-12 standards, aligned with college and career expectations, and based on strengths of current state standards along with knowledge from top performing countries globally (Common Core State Standards, 2015). The impetus for the CCSS was to ensure standardization across states, ensuring an equal, quality education for all students as well as the rigorous preparation for all students to compete in a globalized world in the 21st century (Massell & Perrault, 2014 & McLaughlin & Overturf, 2012). The Common Core State Standards were created by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) however the implementation is left to the state and local districts. Two incentives encouraging states to adopt the Common Core are access to additional funding titled “Race to the Top” and the options of modifying up to 15% of the content (McLaughlin & Overturf, 2012).

Common Core State Standards were adopted first by Kentucky. With Kentucky having led the initial transition to CCSS, forty-three states in addition to Guam, District of Columbia, American Samoan Islands, US Virgin Islands, and Northern Marina Islands have currently transitioned to CCSS. Oklahoma and Indiana initially adopted the standards but have withdrawn as of June 2014 and South Carolina is due to transition to new state standards and withdrawn from CCSS in 2015. Minnesota has accepted only the English Language Arts Standards. There are still four states (Alaska, Nebraska, Texas, and Virginia) and U.S. Territory, Puerto Rico that have not adopted the Common Core. McLaughlin and Overturf (2012) proclaim that because the CCSS are multifaceted, there is complexity to implementing and using the standards in addition

many educators are participating in “on-going and in-depth professional development,” to prepare and improve on implementation of these standards” (p.161).

Evolution of School Leadership

Educational Reform has evolved over the past fifty years as noted in the previous section. Along with changes to education, the role of a school leader has also changed. Although there are many adjectives and theories related to educational leadership. The following section reviews just a few theories that have been used to describe effective educational leadership. Research from the 1960s began to address the principal’s role in leading a school. Research addressed the shift from manager to school leader and now, more specifically, the school principal as the leader of learning. For the purpose of this study on elementary principals communication practices around both basic and advanced skill sets, the literature included is limited to the evolution of multiple theories leading to the Leithwood et al. (2004) study identifying the principal as second to teachers in affecting student achievement.

The relationship of effective principals’ relationship to effective schools is not a new concept to research on educational leadership. Lipman began a movement with his work that left two legacies of this relationship: support for the knowledge that instructional leadership was associated with school improvement (as cited in Hallinger & Murphy, 2012) and many large empirical studies that identified the if and how of instructional leadership’s contributions to effective leadership (Hallinger, 2011; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood et al., 2004; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008; Witziers, Bosker, & Kruger, as cited in Hallinger & Murphy, 2012). Instructional leadership research in the 1980s tried to demonstrate and define practices associated with instructional leadership and thirty years later the focus had again shifted to how the role contributes the quality of student learning (Hallinger & Murphy, 2012). Although many

terms coined versions of instructional leadership, today's literature defines leading quality instruction as leading learning (Hallinger 2011; Hallinger & Murphy, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2004). Instructional leadership has become an "influence process through which leaders identify direction, motivate staff, and coordinate school classroom-based strategies aimed at improvements in teaching and learning" (Hallinger & Murphy, 2012, p. 7).

Leithwood et al. (2004) refer to the past century as having many adjectives to describe what school leadership should look like or how it should operate. Marzano et al. (2005) support this saying that there is a plethora of theories on leadership and some studies on the effects of leadership on school success. Theories of leadership have evolved over the course of the past few centuries. Leadership theory has developed over the years from a transactional approach to a transformational approach. Transactional and transformational leadership have their roots in works by Burns, Bass, and Bass & Avolio, and Leithwood and are all tied to the development of a model for transformational leadership, (as cited in Marzano et al., 2005). The key characteristics of transformational leadership are highlighted by Sergiovanni (2007) who states that transformational leadership characteristics include; developing a culture that is tight but structures that are loose, giving purpose to the organization, empowering others, quality control as part of the culture, and the value-basis comes from beliefs and values.

Models of school leadership were prescribed such as checklists of school leadership tasks and becoming instructional leaders and from the world of business workshops textbook revisions highlighted quality leaders from a management perspective, (Donaldson, 2001). Theories such as Total Quality Management by Deming (1986), Servant Leadership by Greenleaf (1970) and Greenleaf (1978), and Situational Leadership by Hersey and Blanchard (2001) all help to pave the way for Instructional Leadership as a theory. Smith and Andrews identified four roles of an

instructional leader; “resource provider, instructional resource, communicator, and visible presence” (as cited in Marzano et al., 2005, p. 5). So with changes to the way the general public and media view schools, the principalship also has changed to reflect a more knowledge and instructional based approach.

Historically principals, also known as site administrators, were considered to be tasked primarily with managerial leadership responsibilities (Branch, 2011). However with changes to education in regards to teaching in the 21st century and supporting the Knowledge Age, the role of principals is changing. Branch (2011) explores Hartle and Hobby’s statements about the changes in schooling from the assumptions of the industrial age, identifying a requirement to teach for a knowledge-based economy.

Implications for educators and leaders in transitioning into CCSS and 21st century learning include balancing educational shifts while considering different accountability measures. This requires educators to consider activities like projects, collaboration, learner-centered instruction, processes, and global community as part of the learning process for 21st century skilled students. One of the roles of education is to prepare students as future workers that are capable of dealing with the challenges of their time (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Knapp and Feldman (2012) argue that although reform is not new to education, the strict, high-stakes accountability is somewhat new and effects internal and external accountability in schools. Concerns about losing focus on rigorous standards with a shift to focusing on new skills also conflicts with necessary changes to ensure students are educated for the twenty-first century (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Trilling and Fadel (2009) assert that although our current educational accountability systems utilize standardized testing to measure basic skills in math and reading, they neglect measurement of twenty-first century skills. In an article from the Council on

Foreign Relations (2011), Randi Weingarten, President of American Federation of Teachers warns that our education policies misuse standardized testing, discourage collaboration, and have top-down reform approaches.

In a time when reform is again changing the way we view education, it is crucial to reflect on the leadership in the schools responsible for leading the reform. Hallinger (2003) explains that scholars in the areas of educational instructional leadership found a key factor in school success, improvement, and effectiveness was a skilled school principal. Schoen and Fusarelli (2008) explain that the success of federal and state policies for educational reform rely on the nation's school principals. Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, and Orr (2007) assert that our underperforming nation requires shifting to a focus on leadership. Many of the nation's reforms have been criticized for their whole system and top down approaches. Halawah (2005) states that there are many contributing factors to a schools success but the influence of the principal remains an important success factor.

Shifting focus to school leadership may help with accountability and implementation of CCSS. Killion (2012) says that principals are a key component of any teaching and learning focused reform and the CCSS require as much from principals as they do teachers. Principals are in a position to ensure learning is happening in classrooms and ineffective practices are not continued (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). Donaldson (2001) believes we need to rethink the way we view school leadership especially the job of principals, simply satisfying principal task protocols does not make a leader. "Big shifts like organizational change are not just logistical but a cultural challenge as well" (Newton & Davis, 2014, p. 1). A principal's job is "difficult, multi-contextual and requires immediate and difficult choices," (p. 702) say Parsons and Beauchamp (2012) it also sometimes challenges the instructional leadership side against the administrative

side of the job. Fullan (2010) believes a culture of high expectations and relentless pursuit of goals, which he refers to as resolute leadership, builds and sustains success and is a critical part of implementation and encountering beginning difficulties.

Leadership Responsibilities for Different Orders of Change

In a meta-analysis spanning 21 years and 69 studies on school leadership, Marzano et al. (2005) set out to discover to what extent a school leader plays in a school's success. The study resulted in identify correlations between leadership traits later defined as 21 key responsibilities of school leaders and the two types of change that underlie these responsibilities. These 21 key leadership responsibilities Marzano et al. (2005) identify as related to student achievement include:

affirmation; change agent; contingent rewards; communication; culture; discipline; flexibility; focus; ideas/beliefs; input; intellectual stimulation; involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment; knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment; monitoring/evaluating; optimizer; order; outreach; relationships; resources; situational awareness; and visibility. (p. 42)

These responsibilities are evident in decades of research on school leadership, and furthermore, are deemed important to the effective execution of school leadership (Marzano et al., 2005).

Although many responsibilities are interrelated, there are two factors underlying all the leadership responsibilities; first and second order change.

Leading learning and educational reform, such as CCSS, requires leaders to be knowledgeable and highly skilled relative to two kinds of leadership factors: first and second order change responsibilities. First order change responsibilities can be implemented using existing knowledge, and are consistent with existing norms and values. Second order change

responsibilities exist outside of the current paradigms, require new knowledge and skill sets due to complexity, and may conflict with norms and values (Marzano et al., 2005; Waters et al., 2004).

First order change. First order change is “incremental” [and] “does not differ from the past” (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 66). First order change incorporates all of the 21 responsibilities necessary for day to day school management. Marzano et al. (2005) go on to state that “routine business of a school demands corrections and alterations that are first order in nature” (p. 70). When implementing change that utilizes current knowledge and is consistent with the organizations norms first order change is prevalent (Marzano et al., 2005). Argyris and Schon (as cited in Marzano et al., 2005) gave an early definition of change that uses past, successful strategy, these types of change are called single-loop learning. This type of change does not require major shifts in day to day work of the school principal, however in order to purposefully shape the school community or culture nine of the twenty-one responsibilities are more pertinent; optimizer, affirmation, ideas/beliefs, situational awareness, visibility, relationships, communication, culture, and input.

Second order change. Second order change also utilizes only a specific few of the 21 leadership responsibilities; knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, setting an optimistic and intellectually challenging culture, showing flexibility in implementations and throughout a change, monitoring, evaluating, and ultimately being a change agent who operates from a strong set of beliefs and ideals (Marzano et al., 2005). Because of the second order change nature of CCSS, an even more sophisticated leadership knowledge and skill set are necessary. Sustainable change requires the change process to generate depth of understanding and commitment (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, & Flowers, 2005).

Some researchers believe that the necessary changes will come from the bottom and from leaders that are able to perform second order change. Kotter (2012) says there are success stories of leadership that have been able to create necessary change in organizations and two important patterns can be extracted from this success; multiple-step change processes and driven by high-quality leadership. Donaldson (2001) believes school leaderships' function is to develop people and the way they work to better serve the needs of children and society.

Research by Leithwood et al. (2004) identified the principal as second only to teachers in effecting student achievement. Therefore in order for successful implementation of reform, an increase in student achievement, or changes for the inequities of schools the focus needs to be on successful school leaders and their practices. Halawah (2005) identifies the most important piece to school improvement initiatives as “collaborative environments and open communication” (p. 335). The practices used by the principal to communicate about setting direction, developing people, and redesigning an organization may affect the success of the school and ultimately student achievement.

Basic Leadership Skill Sets

Leithwood et al. (2004) using evidence from district, school, and non-educational organizations identify three broad categories they believe are the necessary piece in successful school leadership. The following sections look in depth at the three practices that are independent of social and organizational context and are a necessary piece in leading learning; setting direction, developing people, and redesigning the organization (Leithwood et al., 2004). Each practice is supported by literature specific to the defining attributes of the practices set aside by the Leithwood et al. (2004) study in addition to other related studies on successful school leadership.

Setting direction. Setting direction is the first of three skill sets at the core of essential leadership practices by Leithwood et al. (2004). Principals set direction by establish and understand group goals, creating mission and vision statements that are rooted in the schools actions and practices, and establishing a positive school climate (Leithwood et al., 2004). This set of practices for setting direction help staff members develop shared goals and work with a sense of purpose or vision (Leithwood et al., 2004). Other key ideas that emerged from the literature review on setting direction include; shared goal setting, a leader’s personal goals, and a school’s mission and vision. Much of the literature supports the idea that both goals and vision contribute to student achievement. Jacobson (2011) says direction setting requires leaders to “identify and articulate a vision, foster the acceptance of group goals and create high performance expectations” for all (p. 36). Hallinger and Heck (1996) synthesized the effects of school leadership on student learning and identify goals and vision as the most important avenue. Robinson et al. (2008) affirm that the most direct avenue for leaders to impact student learning is through vision and goals. Vision refers to the broad picture and goals refer to the targets that need to be met along the way (Hallinger, 2011). Hallinger and Heck (1996) go on to argue that vision and goals are successful when they inspire people to contribute to the collective goal and narrow their focus and activities to meet the collective goals. DuFour et al. (2008) state, their belief that clarity of purpose and accepting the responsibility to always lead with that purpose are an important part of school improvement efforts. Cotton (as cited in Marzano et al., 2005) identified 25 categories of principal behaviors that affect student achievement, some of these include skills and characteristics of setting direction; having vision, setting goals, shared leadership, observation and feedback, instructional leadership, recognition of success for staff

and students, and communication and interaction. All of these characteristics help with shaping the schools direction.

Goals. Goal setting in a leadership context refers to both personal and professional goals. Literature on goals, in relationship to setting direction, spans both personal goals of a leader along with goal setting by a staff. Leithwood et al. (2004) state that people are motivated by compelling, challenging and achievable goals. Lipman (1981) argues that clear goals that staff views as important create commitment to the goals and result in school success. Hallinger (2011) argues leadership that inspires collective efforts towards goals results in “new aspirations” and “higher levels of performance” (p. 129). Goal setting requires teachers and leaders to reflect on their purpose and continue the goal of student achievement. Goal setting signals to staff that many things are important but some objectives are more important than others (Robinson et al., 2008).

From a business perspective in the literature review, two authors stand out as defining both purpose and goal setting throughout their work. In his work on what motivates people, Pink (2009), looks at goals as giving people purpose and defining the why or reason for their contributions. Sinek (2009) calls the why the term that defines what inspires people. His research on how leaders inspire others to take action defines, the what, how, and why organizations operate but know the inspiration behind your work directs the goals and purpose. In education, leaders hold the responsibility to make the why goals a part of setting direction for their staff.

Literature on goal setting from an educational perspective focuses on setting schoolwide goals and requires leaders to reflect on their personal goals. Burns (1978) a leaders’ job requires the ability to see and act on their personal goals and the goals and values of their followers. Leaders need to know and put into action their own personal goals and assure their actions are

aligned to their personal vision (Hallinger, 2011). A leader's personal values help to define his aspirations and the way to achieve their goals (Hallinger, 2011). Leaders who are skilled at both setting and pursuing their personal goals are better prepared to help their staff set and achieve goals pertaining to student achievement and professional growth.

Vision and mission. Kelley et al. (2005) states "skilled leaders correctly envision future needs and empower others to share and implement that vision" (p. 1). Setting direction includes creating visions statements and establishing a school wide mission (Leithwood et al., 2004). The literature surrounding setting direction often refers to the ability of a leader to write and follow through with vision and mission statements for successful leadership. The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards model the foundational principles of educational leadership the first standard refers to vision and mission. ISLLC standard two states: An educational leader promotes the success and of every student by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported all stakeholder.

Therefore, even standards set for educational leaders requires that leaders spend time and capacities to influence through writing and implementing the school vision and mission. Alvy and Robbins (2010) in their reflective research on qualities of an effective leader noted that President Lincoln touched on the importance of vision and mission, "success in carrying out the vision and mission of a cause should be a primary gauge of leadership success" (p. 7). Successful leadership demands carrying out a school's vision and mission. Without a school's vision any choice or decision can result in debate, conflict, and wasted time (Kotter, 2012). Kotter (2012) says the defined vision helps in the change process by assisting large numbers of people to "direct, align, and inspire action" (p. 8). School vision and mission create opportunities to set

direction for school leaders. However, the next variable set by Leithwood et al. (2004) of developing people allows for building the capacities through relationship building and trust.

Developing people. Leithwood et al. (2004) identify developing people as the second, necessary skill set for successful leadership. They define this skill set as contributing to an organization's members' motivations and capacities. These researchers reference definitions of instructional leadership and leaders' emotional intelligence to support the development of staff. Literature about ways in which a leader develops people includes building capacity, trust and relationships within the framework of professional development and professional learning communities. Human connection is an important part of socialization and important for building capacity and decision making within an organization (Sergiovanni, 2007). In addition to being responsible for the school site, making decisions, and building collaboration, Lambert (2003) identifies an important principal skill as the ability to build capacity by creating meaning and shared knowledge. Sergiovanni (2007) affirms that principals are tasked with developing instructional leadership in their teachers; therefore principals need to focus on capacity development that allows for school improvement overtime which he terms "management of effectiveness" (p. 136).

Build capacity. Leadership is vital to the success of schools often because of the ways the principal influences their staff (Marzano et al., 2005). Therefore, leaders are tasked with building capacity through influencing their staff. Fullan (2010) believes collective efficacy builds capacity in schools and districts and allows for problem solving and progress. Fullan (2010) further states principals look to their peers to build collective efficacy and know the collectivity ends with progress and results. In order to promote organizational effectiveness leaders must identify pride builders or master motivators to recommend specific measures that enable better

ways of working (Donaldson, 2001). Three specific measures identified by organizational pride builders include giving more autonomy to frontline workers, clearly explaining the significance and value (or the why) of everyday work, and providing better recognition and rewards to employees. “Giving employees the freedom to stretch and shape their work directly improves the customer experience” (Fullan, 2010, p. 2). Donaldson (2001) states that leadership mobilizes staff to operate in a way that supports organizational needs first, creating synchronicity throughout operations of the school and resulting in collective results instead of individual efforts. He goes on to say that leaders are the vital piece to ensure staff members are acting in unison to meet environmental changes.

Build trust and relationships. “Effective principals nurture and sustain a culture of collaboration, trust, learning, and high expectations,” (Branch, 2011, p. 2). A climate of trust in a school organization can have multiple benefits (Tschannen-Moran, 2001). Kelley et al. (2005) state that positive school climate has been linked to higher morale, staff performance and even student achievement. Kezar (2005) advises that the daunting task of relationship building that is an important part of collaboration can lead to an initiatives failure. Building trust takes additional time and is an important piece in working collaboratively. However, Kezar (2005) goes on to say that most school leaders and teachers note that over time the time vested in relationship building decrease individual work time and assists in building capacity. Tschannen-Moran (2001) speak to the importance of trust in reform efforts, they believe no authentic reform is possible without working through people who trust one another. “Understanding the complex perceptions of relationships between academic staff and administrators should raise the sensitivity and awareness of individuals in their appreciation of how relationship are constructed, and help to reflect upon cultural characteristics in an academic organization,” (Kuo, 2009, p. 43).

Redesigning an organization. Leithwood et al. (2004) identify redesigning an organization as the last of the three necessary basic skill sets needed for effective leadership. The literature reviewed in the following section identifies modification of organizational structures, and building collaborative cultures as part of the definition of redesigning an organization. Principals are now playing a critical role in utilizing data to guide practice; both in identifying weaknesses and reviewing current capacities (Levin & Datnow, 2012). The third basic leadership practice requires a leader to support and sustain student performance by building collaboration and modifying structures in which collaboration is fostered (Leithwood et al., 2004).

Modifying organizational structures. In an adapted article from his 2005 work on leading and learning in schools, Sergiovanni (2007) looks at school leadership through the lens of craftsmanship. Sergiovanni (2007) states that the craftsmanship of leading a school requires leaders to interpret larger educational concepts in a way that make them both understandable and useful bringing together the right mix of human resources to make these larger concepts work. Thomas, Herring, Redmond, and Smaldino (2013) researching the role of leaders during change also state that leaders enable and support both student and faculty members' work necessary to achieve the vision, later stating that this means utilizing controllable resources to inspire and considering how all organizational members can contribute.

Building collaborative process. Waldron and Mcleskey (2010) reviewed the last decade's research on school improvement to uncover how successful school reform includes developing a collaborative culture and leading school improvement activities that are essential for redesigning an organization. Waldron and Mcleskey (2010) reference work by Fullan (2001) stating that restructuring can also be viewed as re-culturing a school requiring leaders to question their beliefs and engaging in collaborative process that may change these beliefs and values.

Hord and Sommers (2008) research on professional learning communities reports that principals can utilize sharing tasks and building routines to allow time and capacity during collaborative processes.

Advanced Leadership Skill Sets

In addition to the basic skill sets that support learning in schools, Leithwood et al. (2004) also identify advanced skill sets that are necessary in leading schools with high stakes accountability and political implications. Knapp and Feldman (2012) identify strict, high stakes accountability systems as a part of school reform that may include political supports and/or constraints. They suggest the perspective of a school leader identifies these supports and constraints to help define and focus as to what the educators should be doing and producing day to day. This pressure on leaders to manage these constraints and balance instructional practice is a central interest of leadership today (Knapp & Feldman, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2004).

The following four sections define these variables and how they relate to successful leadership practices. The four advanced skill sets include: creating and sustaining a competitive school, empowering others to make significant decisions, providing instructional guidance, and developing and implementing strategic school improvement plans.

Creating and sustaining a competitive school. A number of key ideas resulted from the review of literature related to what constitutes a competitive school. The key ideas that emerged include: (a) high levels of student performance, (b) highly qualified teachers, and (c) quality student support services (Leithwood et al., 2004). Other themes that emerged throughout the literature were effects of charter and choice schools on public education and the approaches to remain competitive in an educational market. With competition from charter and choice schools researchers have looked in depth at the ways schools are promoting themselves in all sectors and

what research shows are the effects on public education. In order to best analyze levels of student performance, a brief overview of national and California state level accountability are reviewed. There are now alternatives to public education creating a market for education different from the past when other options were not as competitive or even an option (Leithwood et al., 2004).

National and state accountability. Over the past quarter of a century accountability has been at the forefront of school reform politics (DiGaetano, 2015). The re-authorization of ESEA in 1994 included requirements for statewide assessment. Section 111(b) (3) includes the requirements for state assessment reports: annual assessments in math and language arts grades 3-8, and once in high school; alignment with academic content standards; and validity, reliability and alignment with national standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). These accountability measures have resulted in standardization of both curriculum and assessments (DiGaetano, 2015). The U.S. Department of Education (2017) states, “raising academic standards for all students and measuring student achievement to hold schools accountable for educational progress are central strategies for promoting educational excellence and equity in our Nation's schools.” (p. 1)

High performing schools. Researchers have found that high achieving schools have similar factors that include challenging learning experiences for students, principals as instructional leaders, data driven decision making, emphasis on alignment of curriculum, and a shared belief that all students can achieve (Shellard, 2002). The US Department of Education (2014) under CFDA 84.361, Voluntary Public School Choice, allows students to expand their education options to attend high performing schools in their district or charter schools and utilize grant funds to cover costs for transportation to charter schools.

Empowering others to make significant decisions. Literature around shared decision making is plentiful. The 1960s highlighted many studies about leaders' ability to share the decision making with their staff and community. For the purpose of this study, the primary focus is on the leaders' communication practices with their staff members; therefore the literature highlights this relationship in addition to giving voice to other stakeholders. There is substantial research on shared decision making with the community. It is important to highlight the leader's role in developing shared decision making and initiating involvement at the school site. Leithwood et al. (2004) highlight this skill set especially in accountability when related to giving voice to the community. Often accountability gives a voice to multiple stakeholders and this leadership practice addresses how to manage this political context (Leithwood et al., 2004). Leithwood et al. (2004) also advise data-informed decision making be an important piece in sharing this voice with stakeholders.

Bridges (1967) discusses three major studies that influence his research on shared decision making in a school. He argues that teachers prefer principals who involve their staff in decision-making. In his literature review, Bridges (1967) identifies the teachers' area of concern and applicability to their personal stakes as areas of influence on their desires to participate in decision making. He notes that teachers are not as interested in being a part of decisions that fall outside their "scope of experiences of sphere of competence" (Bridges, 1967, p. 4). He goes on to highlight steps to involve teachers in decision making and to what extent their role will be (Bridges, 1967). In conclusion of the research, Bridges (1967) states that principals have the responsibility to take steps to make participation a possibility for a staff, upgrade the groups' efforts, and promote acceptance of ideas and discussions as part of the decision making process at a school.

Bulach, Lunenburg, and McCallon (1994) in their research on leadership styles, school climate, and student achievement identify a significant finding about shared decision making in schools. Their initial study utilized three survey components: Leadership Behavior Matrix, School Climate Inventory and Group Openness and Trust Scale to survey 20 schools, 20 principals, and 506 teachers to identify if specific leadership styles affected climate and in return affected student achievement. Although their study did not find positive correlations between these variables, they did find significant correlations between schools with higher levels of parent and community involvement and student achievement (Bulach et al., 1994). The leadership style that aligned with this idea was that of “promoter” referring to leadership styles that incorporated involvement with people in active and rapidly changing situations, and socially outgoing and friendly leadership” (Bulach et al., 1994, p. 7). This study points to the understanding that shared decision making can affect student achievement and needs to incorporate stakeholders. Knapp and Feldman (2012) look at accountability and leadership in their research on a leader’s role in managing internal and external accountability. They identify four forms of accountability and highlight one as the accountability to parents, or clients, who ultimately have the decision as to where to enroll their students.

Providing instructional guidance. Literature on instructional leadership has evolved over the past 60 years. Lipman (1981) first introduced the relationship between effective schools and their leaders. Hallinger (2011) reviewed 40 years of empirical research to note that curriculum and instruction have created the most debate beginning with the work of Bridges (1967). Bridges (1967) pursued a model for instructional leadership and although later questioned by other research for the applicability, it was the beginning of how many researchers would begin the discussion of how leadership has impacted learning. Now researchers like

Hallinger and Murphy (2012) state research supports the notion that “active skillful instructional leadership” is found as a proponent of sustainable school improvement (p. 6).

Hallinger (2011) defines instructional leadership as the process for leaders to improve student learning by: “identify direction for the school, motivate staff, and coordinate school and classroom strategies” (p. 7). Hallinger (2011) goes on to explain that years of research show many terms and definitions of how leadership can impact learning. Many researchers such as Hallinger; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom; and Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe would later term instructional leadership as “leadership for learning” which incorporates leadership capacities and actions to take towards leading, in addition to the approaches that achieve student outcomes (as cited in Hallinger, 2011).

Principals are positioned as lead learners and are required to know what is being taught as well as support the learning with external resources (Knapp & Feldman, 2012). Hord and Sommers (2008) advise that principals, who communicate about instruction and learning, create more professional dialogue in their school sites. Rosenholtz stated, “Moreover, teachers who find challenge and personal accomplishment, often through continued professional development, are more likely to remain in the teaching profession and to work hard to help their students succeed,” (as cited in Goddard & Goddard, 2007, p. 883).

Develop and implement strategic school improvement plans. Leaders in the highly accountable and political education system also need to have skills that allow for productive planning and implementation of those plans (Leithwood et al., 2004). The final advanced skill set described by Leithwood et al. (2004) is developing and implementing a strategic school improvement plan. Beach and Lindahl (2007) look at educational planning in relation to 3 broad categories of planning: rational, developmental, and incremental planning. Typically school

improvement begins with the leader when change, outside of the normal repertoire of school operation, requires leaders to consider a model that will challenge the school culture, climate, or current conditions (Beach & Lindahl, 2007). The researchers present a model of change but remind that a school's non-static nature usually calls for change in school planning to move fluidly through planning, implementing and even require revisiting both when the changes have become a part of the school's plan. Beach and Lindahl (2007) state, "the action plan developed during the school's improvement process must be considered a living document, subject to change as new information becomes available or changes occur" (p. 30). McCaskey (1974) argues from a management point of view that a quality leader recognizes the planning process that fits the organization, environment, and place in the planning process.

Communication in Schools

Maxwell (2010) quotes the Harvard Business Review in saying they identified communicating effectively as the number one criteria for advancement and promotion in professional careers. Kinnick and Parton (2005) observe the need for good communication skills; they are skills that employers see as key to managerial success. Maxwell (2010) states to convince, that people cannot be successful in life without being effective communicators. To be effective, "communication must be understood...believed...and accepted," (Dowling & Sayles, 1978, as cited in Pomroy, 2005). An integral part of being successful is the ability to communicate.

Communication is a key requirement in any managerial or leadership position. Thomas et al. (2013) believes being a true leader involves regular, persistent, human communication in expressing vision and encouraging participation in an organization. Lopp (2012) advises about communication in business, especially in regards to one-on-one communication with employees

“listen hard, repeat everything, and assume nothing” (p. 91). Maxwell (2010) also discusses that for any leader to be successful they must have good communication skills. Communication originating with the leader is important to organizational growth and the leader can enhance growth by instilling and maintaining multi-directional lines of communication (Pomroy, 2005).

Communication has changed drastically over the past few decades due to an increase in technological advancements. New opportunities have emerged for leaders to incorporate into the traditional face-to-face communications; with advancements in technology social media has the potential to complement the existing forms of communication and provides a wealth of new opportunities, (Carr, 2012, as cited in Cox, 2012). However, it remains important to remember the power of human communication and face-to-face communication to build relationships, display transparency and establish trust. Lencioni (2012) says the most effective means of communication is not technology it is word of mouth. So although utilizing technology tools is more efficient, the best messages from leaders to employees are to tell them directly. Lencioni (2012) goes on to explain employees over the past fifteen to twenty years have grown accustomed to manufactured electronic communication, this can affect how employees interpret the message because employees are left to wonder about the authenticity of what they are hearing or reading. Lencioni supports this claim by saying cohesiveness and clarity in formal communication at the top of an organization will go a long way.

Brown (2009) speaks to leading during challenging times, he states communicating to employees what is happening and preventing paralyzing rumors help with establishing transparency, provides credibility, and builds trust in the leader. Cornish and Seabrook (2012) advise that giving employees an avenue to “clear the air” helps prevent rumors or festering. Lencioni (2002) looks at trust as the foundation for a successful team or organization. In

discussing the functions of a team Lencioni (2002) says trust is a key factor and that the leader must take action to show vulnerability to ensure trust is established.

A leader's communication responsibilities extend beyond building trust and speaking directly to subordinates. Leaders communicate vision, missions, goals and what the organization is about to many stakeholders but their first line of communication is to their employees.

Instructional leadership is described as providing resources, supporting collaboration, modeling instruction, and creating a shared vision (Christy, 2009). Hord and Sommers (2008) believe that if a principal sets direction at the beginning of the year by opening discussions about high-performing schools and their attributes, it communicates to the staff a clear vision of what is needed to increase student achievement. York-Barr, Sommers, Ghere, & Montie (2001) say that recognizing that face-to-face time is important has cause professionals to focus on this time for learning.

McEwan (2003) says "Effective instructional leaders are confident about their ability to get along with just about anyone" (p. 120). Lovely (2006) says "Good communication provides encouragement and gives an organization a positive sense of direction" (p. 12). Kaser et al. (2002) say leaders communicate in different ways such as: "body language, physical presence, ability and willingness to listen, written and spoken words, and behaviors" (p. 50). McEwan (2003) notes that "effective instructional leaders rarely or never close their doors" (p. 69).

Summary

This literature review covered seven variables that fall under both basic and advanced leadership skill sets developed by researchers Leithwood et al. (2004). Their research created the conceptual framework for the study and allowed a lens through which to view leadership practices necessary for successful leadership. A united thread throughout the literature is that the

job of leader is multifaceted and demanding especially in times of reform (Leithwood et al., 2004; Parsons & Beauchamp, 2012). With the implications in the historical section of the literature review it becomes more important than ever to recognize the importance of the school leader, especially as second only to teachers in affecting student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004). With the principal as the lead learner accountability is managed and creates an opportunity for both internal and external support (Knapp & Feldman, 2012).

One common theme that creates a space for the variables to be enacted in the day to day practices of the school principal is the communication between a principal and staff around both the basic and advanced skill sets. This chapter highlighted the role of the principal, the necessary skill sets, and the importance of communication around the variables set by Leithwood et al. (2004).

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Introduction

This chapter is divided into sections: descriptions of the research design, sampling, human subject considerations, data collection and management, positionality of the researcher, and a summary. Section one includes a re-statement of the purpose of the study and research questions. Section two introduces the methodology and rationale for the study. Section three includes the population and sampling for the study. Section four reports the human subject considerations. Section five discusses instrumentation, interview, observation and artifact instruments, and instrument validity. Data collection procedures, data management and data reporting are addressed in section six. Section seven includes the positionality and summary of the study.

Purpose of the study. The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore and describe the leadership practices of school principals as related to the basic leadership skill sets (a) setting directions, (b) developing people, and (c) redesigning the organization in purposely selected Southern California schools that have demonstrated high levels of academic performance and were identified by the Superintendent as exemplary schools. This multiple case study also explored and described the leadership practices of school principals as related to the advanced leadership skill sets: (a) creating and sustaining a competitive school, (b) empowering others to make significant decisions, (c) providing instructional guidance, and (d) developing and implementing a strategic school improvement plan. More specifically, the intent of this multiple case study was to uncover the communication aspect of effective leadership related to the seven sets of practices (basic and advanced skill sets) utilized by the principals that might be replicated in other schools to improve student learning and achievement.

Research questions. The research questions which guided this study are:

1. What communication practices are used by principals as part of their basic leadership skill sets to foster student learning?
2. What communication practices are used by principals as part of their advanced skill sets to improve teaching and student learning in a highly accountable policy context?

Methodology

This study proposed a qualitative multiple case study design and investigated the communication practices of school principals in a Southern California school district. A qualitative approach was used for this study because according to Creswell (2013) a qualitative design begins with assumptions and uses frameworks to inform the study. Furthermore, a case study design was chosen for this study as Lunenburg and Irby (2008) describe a case study as “explorations or investigations of individuals or groups.” (p. 96) The researcher used interviews, observations, and review of any pertinent artifacts to uncover themes about communication practices that fall into both basic and advanced skill categories and utilize seven key variables defined by Leithwood et al. (2004). Extensive review of the literature pointed to both basic and advanced skill sets for effective leadership practice. These basic and advanced practices created a frame for the interview questions, observations and artifacts.

Qualitative research design is a plan for exploring a problem or issue (Creswell, 2013). This study explored the issue of principals’ communication around both basic and advanced skill sets. Richards and Morse (2013) argue qualitative research helps make sense of the world, offering different views and perspectives, to examine different interpretations of reality. A qualitative approach allowed the researcher to help define the cases through interviews to make

sense of the reality of principals' communication in the cases studied. Additionally, qualitative studies allow a researcher to be the key instrument in obtaining data and to utilize the participants' natural setting for data collection (Creswell, 2014).

Creswell (2013) defines the case study approach as “exploring real-life bounded systems through detailed data collection to report a case description and themes” (p. 97). The case study is most appropriate for looking at the communication practices of principals, allowing the elements defined by Creswell (2013) to emerge in their natural bounded system. Richards and Morse (2013) state that case studies seek to understand situations or processes by observing how it is done in one or more cases. Through interviews led by the researcher, observations, and review of artifacts, the researcher intended to uncover the processes of communication of principals through the frame of basic and advanced skill sets defined by Leithwood et al. (2004). Richards and Morse (2013) state case studies give “detailed descriptions” using “investigation or through illustration of processes” (p. 205). Detailed descriptions and illustrations of the processes of communication practices should result in future use of these skill sets by educational leadership practitioners.

Interviews, observations and review of pertinent artifacts were used for data collection. These instruments allowed the researcher a detailed description or investigation of the multiple cases.

Study Population and Sampling

Population. School principals and certificated teachers in a Southern California school district made up the population selected for the study. The population was selected to meet study constraints such as demographic location of the researcher and criteria set by the researcher.

Sample. The sample was limited based upon the superintendent's recommendations. The superintendent identified schools with exemplar leaders that had shown positive growth of 10 points or higher on the California Accountability Model and School Dashboard in the academic indicator criteria in both math and English Language Arts. The studies sample consisted of three principals selected by the superintendent for exemplar leadership and student achievement growth; and based on their length of time as the school leader. In addition three certificated teachers from School X, three certificated teachers from School Y, and five certificated teachers from School Z represented different grade levels and positions, participated in interviews. The principals at the selected school sites had each served for five consecutive years at their current location. Leithwood et al. (2004) identify the principal as second only to teachers in affecting student achievement. Therefore, looking at a principal's communication practices may indicate practices that influence student achievement.

Sampling. The researcher limited the sample population by reaching out to district leaders (see Appendix A) for permission to conduct research in the district and to obtain recommendations for schools that fit the criteria of high levels of student achievement or growth based on California academic indicators in math and ELA and a principal who has served at a school site for a minimum of five consecutive years. These principals were then contacted via email (see Appendix B) and invited along with three to five classroom teachers to participate in the study. The researcher requested the principal of the school site identified three to five teachers representing different levels and positions. Participants were asked to respond within one week and upon confirmation of interest, a follow-up email was sent. The email included consent forms (see Appendix C) in addition to the questions and requested convenient times and dates for a school site visit and interviews with participants. After the signed consent form was

returned to the researcher, the researcher contacted the participants via email or phone to clarify logistics of the interviews.

Human Subjects Consideration

In order to protect potential participants, the researcher had completed the Social Behavioral Research for Human Subjects training via the Collaborative Intuitional Training Initiative (CITI; see Appendix D). Prior to the start of the study or data collection the researcher completed the application and obtain approval from Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (see Appendix E). The human subjects that participated in this study are the school principals and teachers. In order to obtain participants consent, an email was sent to the potential participants (see Appendix B), and their willingness to participate was confirmed with consent forms (see Appendix C). In accordance with Pepperdine University requirements, the researcher provided a letter of consent to each participant as well as signed copies of the consent forms were uploaded to the researchers IRB application.

There are risks associated with human subject research that include: psychological, social, economic, and legal risks. Potential risks associated with this study included both physical risks such as fatigue and psychological risks such as boredom or anxiety. In relation to the benefits, the potential risk of this study was believed to be minimal by the researcher. In the event of any risks experienced by the participants, the researcher planned to provide a short break. In addition, the researcher intended to manage the interview time and was aware of number and nature of questions throughout the interview.

The researcher used audio recording throughout the interviews and transcribed the interviews into written documents with the participants' permission. The information and identities of the participants were kept confidential in the manuscript and known only to the

researcher. The researcher assigned numbers to the schools and school principals and the information remained confidential. Notes from the interviews are secured and at the conclusion of the study (after three years) will be shredded.

Instrumentation

The instruments used for this qualitative study included semi-structured interview for the principals (see Appendix F), a semi-structured interview for the certified teachers (see Appendix G), an observation collection form (see Appendix H), and an artifact collection form (see Appendix I). The interview instrument consisted of two sections. The semi-structured interviews towards both principals and teachers included thirteen questions around the basic and advanced skill sets. The questions were organized based on the seven variables studied throughout the literature review and identified under the categories of basic and advanced skill sets in the 2004 Leithwood et al. (2004) study. Table 1 and Table 2 show the alignment between the research questions, instrument questions, and supporting literature for each interview question. Additionally, the literature review identified themes around each of the leadership practices, which were considered in the construction of the interview instrument.

Table 1

Interview Questions for the School Principal

Research Questions	Interview Questions	Literature Review
1. What communication practices are used by principals as part of their basic core leadership skill sets to foster student learning?	Setting Direction: From your perspective, how might you describe the purpose of a schools vision or mission?	Lipman, 1981; Burns, 1978; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood et al., 2004; Marzano et al., 2005; Kelley et al., 2005; Hord & Somers, 2008; Halinger, 2011; Kotter, 2012)
	How do you communicate the schools vision and mission to the staff at your school site?	
	How do you set school wide and professional goals with your staff and communicate goal implementation?	

(continued)

Research Questions	Interview Questions	Literature Review
2. What communication practices are used by principals as part of their “beyond the basics” skill sets to improve teaching and student learning in a highly accountable policy context?	Developing People: How do you utilize communication to build trust while maintaining staff motivation?	Donaldson, 2001; Tschannen-Moran, 2001; Leithwood et al., 2004; Kelley et al., 2005; Kezar, 2005; Marzano, et al., 2005; Kuo, 2009; Fullan, 2010; Branch, 2011;
	How does your communication maintain a culture of collaboration, learning, and high expectations?	
	Create and Sustain a Competitive School: How do you communicate to your community that your school is the school of choice with so many competitive educational options?	Shellard, 2002; Leithwood et al., 2004; DiGaetano, 2015
	Empowering Others to Make Significant Decisions: How do you use communication to build leadership capacity in your school, and allow staff to make significant decisions?	Bridges, 1967; Bulach et al., 1994; Leithwood et al., 2004; Knapp & Feldman, 2012
	In what ways do you include parents in the decision making at your school? How is that opportunity communicated?	
	Provide Instructional Guidance: What communication do you use to provide instructional guidance to your staff? How do you communicate to your staff the importance of professional development?	Bridges, 1967; Lipman, 1981; Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2004; Goddard & Goddard, 2007; Hord & Sommers, 2008; Hallinger, 2011; Hallinger & Murphy, 2012
Develop and Implement a Strategic School Improvement Plan: How do you develop your school improvement plan (SIP)? What communication strategies do you use to implement the SIP?	McCaskey, 1974; Leithwood et al., 2004; Beach & Lindahl, 2007	

Table 2

Interview Questions for Certified Teachers

Research Questions	Interview Questions	Literature Review
1. What communication practices are used by principals as part of their basic core leadership skill sets to foster student learning?	Setting Direction: From your perspective, how might you describe the purpose of a schools vision or mission? How does your principal communicate the schools vision and mission to the staff at your school site? How are school wide and professional goals communicated and implemented by the principal?	Lipman, 1981; Burns, 1978; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood et al., 2004; Marzano et al., 2005; Kelley et al., 2005; Hord & Sommers, 2008; Halinger, 2011; Kotter, 2012)
	Developing People: How does the principal build trust while maintaining staff motivation? How does the principal maintain a culture of collaboration, learning, and high expectations?	Donaldson, 2001; Tschannen-Moran, 2001; Leithwood et al., 2004; Kelley et al., 2005; Kezar, 2005; Marzano et al., 2005; Kuo, 2009; Fullan, 2010; Branch, 2011;
	Redesigning the Organization: What communication processes, if any, are used to build leadership capacity in your school? How does the principal utilize communication to build trust and relationships with your staff?	Leithwood et al., Fullan, 2010; Sergiovanni, 2007; Hord & Sommers, 2008; Waldron & Mcleskey, 2010; Knapp & Feldman, 2012; Thomas et al., 2013;
2. What communication practices are used by principals as part of their “beyond the basics” skill sets to improve teaching and student learning in a highly accountable policy context?	Create and Sustain a Competitive School: How does the principal communicate to the community that your school is the school of choice now with so many competitive educational options?	CDE, 2002; Shellard, 2002; Leithwood et al., 2004; DiGaetano, 2015
	Provide Instructional Guidance: What forms of communication are used by the principal to provide instructional guidance to your staff? How does the principal communicate the importance of professional development?	Bridges, 1967; Lipman, 1978; Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood et al., 2006, 2010; Goddard & Goddard, 2007; Hord & Sommers, 2008; Hallinger, 2011, 2013; Hallinger & Murphy, 2012

(continued)

Research Questions	Interview Questions	Literature Review
	Develop and Implement a Strategic School Improvement Plan: How do you develop your school improvement plan (SIP)? What communication strategies do you use to implement the SIP?	McCaskey, 1974; Leithwood et al., 2004; Beach & Lindahl, 2007

Case study methodology utilizes multiple forms of data collection to ensure triangulation of data. The next instrument used by the researcher was an informal observation form to collect observable practices of the school leader around the seven variables (see Appendix H). Lastly, the research collected pertinent artifacts that were reviewed for themes (see Appendix I). The purpose of these four described instruments was to allow for triangulation of data and credibility of themes that may have emerged as the researcher coded the data.

Instrument validity. Expert reviews were solicited by the researcher to ensure the validity of the interview instruments used in this study. Expert reviewers included current principals with expertise in educational leadership. The researcher contacted the experts via email and asked for feedback in the following areas:

1. What additions or changes would you make to the protocol if you were to replicate the interview?
2. Are the interview questions in alignment with the research questions?
3. Are the questions clear and organized appropriately?
4. Is the time frame reasonable to illicit the best responses?
5. Would you add or remove any questions to improve the instrument?
6. What additions would you make to the informal observation form or the artifacts form to ensure accurate data collection?
7. Are there any other important artifacts that may be useful to the study?

After the expert reviewers submitted their responses, the researcher consulted with the dissertation chair and made adjustments where necessary to the instrument. The researcher thanked the expert participants and relayed themes that emerged in regards to the accuracy of the instrumentation.

Data Procedures

Data collection procedures. The researcher conducted semi-structured interview with one principal and three certificated teachers at School X, one principal and three certificated teachers at School Y, and one principal and five certificated teachers at School Z. The principals were contacted via email (see Appendix B) and given a week to respond with their initial interest and teacher interviewee recommendations. The participants were then emailed consent forms to sign and return (see Appendix C). Once consent was established, the researcher contacted the participants to schedule the interview dates, times and locations. Prior to each interview, the researcher requested permission to audio tape the interview and to take notes. At that point participants were reminded that their identity would remain confidential. No participants refused the audio tape; however, the researcher still recorded detailed notes to ensure clear data collection. The interviews respected contractual teaching hours. The audio taped interviews allowed for transcription by a professional transcriber and kept participants identity confidential by using a numeric code at the beginning of each interview. The interviews began with a brief introduction and overview by the researcher. The participants were reminded they could opt out of any questions or the interview, and if any identified risks occur, the participants were reminded they would be allowed a short break. Lastly, the researcher conducted all interviews with the predesigned and validated interview instrument.

The researcher observed at each school site for one school day and collected observation notes throughout the day using the observation data collection instrument. Observations included classroom walk-throughs and at two sites included observing staff meetings. The researcher requested artifacts from the school principals and used the artifact collection instrument to analyze the artifacts provided.

Data management. The researcher ensured the protection of the participants by keeping the data password protected and keeping all files locked in the home of the researcher. All data forms and potential artifacts will be destroyed no sooner than three years following the completion of the study.

Data analysis and reporting. After all of the interviews had taken place and data were collected, the researcher used a professional transcriber to transcribe all the interview responses. The researcher then provided a copy of the transcript to the participants and allowed them to review for accuracy. The researcher then analyzed the data using a six step process suggested by Creswell (2014) “organize and prepare the data, read and look at all the data, and begin coding all the data, generate themes, advance how themes will be represented in the narrative, and interpreting the findings” (p. 197). Specific to case studies Creswell (2013) reminds researchers to “describe the case, form initial codes, use categorical aggregation to establish themes and patterns and develop generalization of what was learned” (p. 190). The researcher used codebooks based on the codes that were identified through the review of the literature. These codes guided the analysis of the data and also allowed for additional codes to emerge throughout the analysis process. The codebooks were set in table format and formatted to align with the themes that emerged in the literature review. The researcher developed tables and began analyzing the coding of the interview questions, observations, and artifacts. After a thorough

review of each interview question, section of the observation forms and artifacts, the researcher reviewed the data one final time to look for emergent themes. When additional themes emerged the researcher started the process again with the new code for each instrument and participant. The researcher utilized these mentioned processes to ensure data was thoroughly reviewed and analyzed. The researcher then asked two experienced coders to review two randomly selected interviews with the codebooks for increased credibility in the data analysis. Upon completion of the study, follow-up thank you letters will be constructed and sent to the participants including a summary of the key findings.

Positionality

The role of school leader has undergone many changes throughout the past decade. The researcher intended to help define communication practices used by successful leaders in the field around both basic and advanced skill sets. The literature reviewed supported the claim that a school's principal is an important factor in student achievement. In addition, knowing important educational leadership practices and how to operationalize these skills through communication is an important piece in any future leader's knowledge base. This study intended to identify how communication can be instrumental in seven successful leadership skills.

Summary

This chapter outlined the research methodology intended for the study on communication practices around both basic and advanced skill sets of a successful leader. The study utilized a qualitative, case study approach. The instrumentation used included semi-structured interviews, observations, and artifacts. The data collection and analysis processes were described. Also included in the chapter were the population, sampling, human subject's protection, and protocol for the data procedures.

Chapter 4: Results

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore and describe the leadership practices of school principals as related to the basic leadership skill sets (a) setting directions, (b) developing people, and (c) redesigning the organization in purposely selected Southern California elementary schools that have demonstrated high levels of academic performance and were identified by the Superintendent as exemplary schools. This multiple case study also intended to explore and describe the leadership practices of school principals as related to the beyond the basics leadership skill sets (a) creating and sustaining a competitive school, (b) empowering others to make significant decisions, (c) providing instructional guidance, and (d) developing and implementing a strategic school improvement plan. More specifically, the intent of this multiple case study was to uncover the communication aspect of effective leadership related to the seven sets of practices (basic and advance skill sets) utilized by the principals that might be replicated in other schools to improve student learning and achievement.

Research Questions

The researcher examined the following two research questions: in three purposefully selected Southern California schools that demonstrated high levels of academic performance and were identified by the Superintendent as exemplary schools:

1. What communication practices are used by principals as part of their basic core leadership skill sets to foster student learning?
2. What communication practices are used by principals as part of their advanced skill sets to improve teaching and student learning in a highly accountable policy context?

Research Design Overview

This study utilized a qualitative, multiple case study design with three data collection methods: interview, observation, and review of artifacts. The three schools selected represented multiple grade levels and the principals leading the schools had held the principalship for a minimum of five years. In addition to the interviews with the three principals, there were three to five teachers interviewed at each school site, totaling eleven teacher interviews. There were 13 interview questions focused on the principals' communication practices around both the basic and advanced skill sets identified as necessary for successful school leadership. The schools also provided artifacts pertaining to communication from the principal and the researcher spent a day at each site observing and conducting interviews. The researcher designed each of the four data collection tools (principal interview instrument, teacher interview instrument, observation instrument, and artifact review instrument) to reflect the themes that emerged from the literature review in relation to the study's key variables, setting direction; developing people; redesigning the organization; creating and sustaining a competitive school; empowering others to make significant decisions; providing instructional guidance; and developing and implementing a school improvement plan.

All three schools (two elementary schools and one middle school) were located in diverse, low socioeconomic settings. School X was an elementary school with Kindergarten through sixth grade students. School Y was a middle school, educating a 7th and 8th grade population. School Z was an elementary school with preschool through 3rd grade students. Each school utilized Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS). The middle school was identified as a California school to watch and both elementary schools are Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) schools.

The first phase of data collection began with all day school site visits. Each school visit included first the observation, including classroom walk-throughs, for the researcher to observe the principal’s interactions with teachers, students, and the community and to provide an overall feel for the culture within each school. The second phase of data collection included an interview with the principal to inquire about the principal's communication practices. At this time, the researcher requested any artifacts that would represent the communication of the principal with the staff. The final phase of data collection included one-on-one interviews with certificated teachers. Table 3 below presents a breakdown of the data collected from each participating school.

Table 3

Data Collection

Data Collection Method	Participants/Items
<i>Observations</i>	
Classroom Walk Through	School X, Y, Z
Staff Meeting	School X, Y
<i>Interviews</i>	
Principal	School X, Y, Z
Certified Teachers	School X-3, School Y-3, School Z-5
<i>Artifacts</i>	
Teacher Classroom Walk-through Tool	School X, Y
District Letter	School X
District Speed of Trust Behaviors	School X, Y, Z
Staff Meeting Agenda	School Y, Z
Principal Emails	School X

Presentation of Findings

The detailed findings of the study are organized according to the research questions. The findings are presented first by each school and then according to themes that emerged from the literature review, interviews, artifacts, and observations. The findings from the interviews,

observations, and artifact reviews are then triangulated to present a more comprehensive analysis of the data for each research question for each school. Finally, all school data is triangulated for overall findings

Research question 1. Research Question 1 asked what communication practices are used by principals as part of their basic core leadership skill sets to foster student learning? Interview Questions 1-7, observation notes, and artifacts were aligned with setting direction, developing people, and redesigning an organization, the basic leadership skill sets, and research question one.

School X. The setting for the first case study was an elementary school and three certificated teachers and the school principal participated in interviews, referred to throughout the study as School X. Observation took place and included classroom walk-throughs and observing a staff meeting. Artifacts reviewed included a district parent letter, district “Speed of Trust Behaviors” handout, two emails from the principal, and the classroom walk-through data collection sheet. Table 4 shows the key variables, theme categories, frequency of teacher responses, frequency of principal responses, and total frequency of responses for each theme that resulted from an analysis of participant responses to Interview Questions 1-7.

Table 4 shows results of frequency of responses from both teacher and principal interviews at School X. Positive climate as related to communication practices was the most frequent theme throughout the interviews.

Table 4

School X-Interview Responses Related to Basic Skill Sets

Variables	Theme Categories	Teacher Interview Frequency	Principal Interview Frequency	Total Responses Frequency
Setting Direction	Leaders Personal Goals	2	1	3
	Staff Goals	4	1	5
	Prioritizing with Goals	2	0	2
	Envisioning Future	3	1	4
	Shared Vision	1	1	2
	Empowering Others	7	0	7
	Clearly & Regularly	7	0	7
Developing People	Autonomy	2	0	2
	Building on Employees Strengths	6	2	8
	Collective Efficacy	3	2	5
	Trust	8	4	12
	Positive Climate	10	5	15
Redesigning the Organization	Culture of Collaboration	2	4	6
	Interpreting Larger Educational Context	0	3	3
	Human Resources	5	3	8
	Controllable Resources	3	2	5

The principal at School X responded during the interview (March 6, 2017) about focusing on the school climate saying,

I could be the smartest person in the world at professional development but unless I had taken the time to build the culture at my staff and the climate of trust, then those things maybe they'll happen when I walk in the door part of it but not when I leave.

The principal was referring to observing teachers and the sustainability of good instructional practice being affected by the positive climate at the school. Teachers responded about the principal communicating in a way that builds positive climate saying, “She does

celebrations,” “She built relationships,” and “She communicates to us is more of a colleague communication so we don't feel in any way intimidated when we talk to her.” Teacher 3 said, “If you have a concern or anything that is bothering you, you're able to communicate that with her, and share your heart” (Teacher 3, School X, March 6, 2017). In all the interviews teachers also mention the principal has an “open door policy” as a non-verbal way of communicating to foster a positive school climate.

The second most frequent response coded from School X was communication practices that establish trust. The teachers talk about how the principal’s communication practices establish trust with the staff. Teacher 2 says, “She builds loyalty and I think it's just her sense of communication by all of the ... Face to face, one to one. She respects you as an individual.” The principal stated, “Treat people the way you would like to be treated yourself.” The principal went on to identify her communication that establishes trust, “Communication that I give to people is in a way that I would like to be told.” Other themes that were frequently coded in interviews from School X were communication practices that support human resources, build on employees’ strengths, empower others, and communicate the vision and goals clearly and regularly. The least frequent codes used were communication practices that support autonomy and communication practices that use goals for prioritizing and decision-making.

Table 5 shows the observation evidence and reviewed artifacts as related to each theme that resulted from an analysis of participants’ responses to Interview Questions 1-7 related to the basic skill sets; setting direction, developing people, and redesigning the organization.

Table 5

School X Observation and Artifacts Related to Basic Skill Sets

Collection Source	Themes
<i>Observations</i>	
Campus Walk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Controllable Resources • Culture of Collaboration • Positive Climate • Human Resources • Interpreting Larger Educational Context • Building on Employee Strengths • Collective Efficacy • Trust
Classroom Walk Through	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Controllable Resources • Positive Climate
Staff Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive Climate • Culture of Collaboration • Collective Efficacy • Align with Goals • Trust • Controllable Resources • Empowering Others
<i>Artifacts</i>	
Teacher Classroom Walk-through (DII instrument)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture of Collaboration • Controllable Resources • Collective Efficacy • Positive Climate
District Letter (regarding student enrollment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust
District Speed of Trust Behaviors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust • Positive Climate • Culture of Collaboration
Principal Emails (before/after superintendent visit)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust • Positive Climate • Empowering Others • Controllable Resources

Table 5 shows both observation notes and artifacts to identify evidence of themes from the basic skill set variables; setting direction, developing people, and redesigning the organization. A review of themes that emerged resulted in three themes evident in all aspects of the observation, positive climate, trust, and controllable resources.

Throughout the campus walk, classroom walk-throughs and staff meeting it was evident the theme of positive climate is present. In addition, when reviewing the artifacts communication practices that foster positive school climate are present in the principals' observation/walk-through tool, where the principal shares how she reinforces the professional development staff is using in the classroom and she highlights positive things she sees in the classrooms, the principal and staff call it, giving kudos and in the principal emails where she highlights the great things that are happening on campus. Communication practices that foster positive school climate were also the most frequently coded theme in observations and artifacts.

Trust is another reoccurring theme evident both in artifacts and observation at School X. During the campus walk and classroom walk-throughs the principal interacts with staff and students demonstrating her communication practices have established trust with all staff and students. Observed communication practices that showed evidence of establishing trust included redirecting student behavior, assisting with playground duty, and interactions with staff members showing relationships have been established between the staff and principal. Lastly, in the staff meeting observed, the principal incorporates into the meeting an activity with the Speed of Trust Behaviors, a district initiative that is also provided as an artifact.

Also noted was the theme controllable resources, although not evident in interviews, it was frequently coded in observation and artifacts. During the observation the principal of School X shared that she communicates importance through controllable resources, she uses controllable resources to leverage all three basic leadership skills. The principal's communication practices that communicate importance through the use of controllable resources were using grants and managing resources to allow students to be one to one with technology; this was evident in classroom walk-throughs. While walking the campus and conducting classroom walk-throughs

the principal identifies materials that have had impact on student learning that have recently been purchased at the request of teachers.

School X triangulation. When reviewing interviews, artifacts, and observations from School X, specific to the basic leadership skill sets, communication practices that foster a positive school climate was the theme most frequently coded. Communication practices that foster positive school climate had fifteen total frequency responses and was evident in all observation data and artifacts collected. The principal and all three teachers alluded to the principal's communication practices that fostered a positive climate. Examples that supported this theme included quotes reflecting positive climate, activities in the staff meeting, emails and walk-through feedback including kudos and interactions between the principal, staff, and students. In reviewing all the sources of data communication practices that helped foster a positive school climate included giving kudos, positive interactions with staff and students, emails with a positive tone, and the principal being visible and a part of the workings of the daily practices at the school. All of these pieces of evidence supported the research claims that communication practices that foster positive climate are an important for the basic leadership skill sets.

The second theme with twelve total frequency responses in interviews was communication practices that establish trust. Communication practices that establish trust were also in all data collection sources, interviews, observation and artifacts. The principal stated, she establishes trust by speaking to all people how she would want to be spoken too. The Speed of Trust Behaviors artifacts were both collected and observed during a staff meeting.

School Y. The setting for the second case study, School Y, was a middle school and three certified teachers and the school principal participated in interviews. Observation took place and

included classroom walk-throughs and observing a staff meeting. Artifacts reviewed included a school classroom walk-through data collection sheet, district Speed of Trust Behaviors handout, and the PowerPoint from the staff meeting observed. Table 6 shows the key variables, theme categories, frequency of teacher responses, frequency of principal responses, and total frequency of responses for each theme that resulted from an analysis of participant responses to Interview Questions 1-7.

Table 6

School Y Interview Responses Related to Basic Skill Sets

Variables	Theme Categories	Teacher Interview Frequency	Principal Interview Frequency	Total Responses Frequency
Setting Direction	Leaders Personal Goals	1	0	1
	Staff Goals	0	2	2
	Prioritizing with Goals	2	2	4
	Align with Goals	1	1	2
	Envisioning Future	2	2	4
	Shared Vision	2	1	3
	Empowering Others	2	3	5
	Clearly & Regularly	9	2	11
Developing People	Autonomy	3	0	3
	Building on Employees Strengths	2	1	3
	Collective Efficacy	1	1	2
	Trust	3	4	7
	Positive Climate	6	2	8
Redesigning the Organization	Culture of Collaboration	2	1	3
	Interpreting Larger Educational Context	0	1	1
	Human Resources	0	1	1
	Controllable Resources	0	0	0

Table 6 shows results of frequency of responses from both teacher and principal interviews for case study 2 at School Y. The theme that surfaced most frequently throughout the interviews was communication practices that communicate the vision and goals clearly and

regularly. During the interview with the principal she stated, “I have to repeat things a lot just so people can understand and know what's going on, so that's huge.” She also talked about clearly and regularly communicating in the quotes listed below:

What we do is every now and then, we review those with the staff and then talk about what we're doing now that directly aligns to the mission and vision and I always remind them how that connects directly to our mission and vision for our school.

Teacher interviews also supported communication practices that communicate vision and goals clearly and regularly as the most frequently occurring theme. Teacher 1 stated, “We connect what we've been working on, and how it reflects both the mission and vision.” Teacher 1 also later in the interview stated, I feel like there's a lot of communication of what our goals are and what our expectations are.” Teacher 2 said, “Every time we have our Monday morning meetings or staff meetings after school, we revisit that,” (in response to question two about communicating mission and vision). Teacher 2 also later in the interview said, “Again, anytime we have a staff meeting or a professional development meeting, we review goals and how we're implementing those goals.” Teacher 3 said, “We'll do just little activities and give people examples of what exactly we're doing at the school site to meet the mission and vision. I would say more recently, she's been more intentional about just bringing it to people's attention.”

Other reoccurring themes that emerged frequently from the teacher and principal interviews at School Y were communication practices that foster positive school climate and communication practices that establish trust with only one coded response separating the total frequency responses. Evidence in the teacher interviews were statements such as, she is very open and very approachable, from Teacher 1 and Teacher 2, anytime you need to talk to her, she's always willing to talk to you. All the interviews supported the themes that the principal

establishes trust and fosters positive school climate through relationships and using strategies to increase morale, performance, and student achievement. In addition, the principal talks about trust and positive school climate by saying, “Being really transparent when it's something difficult. It's being willing to have that vulnerability as a leader to really explain how I'm feeling at that time and why this decision is not easy for me.” Controllable resources were a theme that was not coded throughout any of the interviews.

Table 7 shows the observation evidence and reviewed artifacts as related to each theme that resulted from an analysis of participants’ responses to Interview Questions 1-7.

Table 7

School Y Observation and Artifacts Related to Basic Skill Sets

Collection Source	Themes
<i>Observations</i>	
Campus Walk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive Climate • Autonomy • Building on Employee Strengths • Controllable Resources • Leaders Professional Goals
Staff Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive Climate • Trust • Building on Employees Strengths • Human Resources • Empowering Others • Clearly and Regularly
<i>Artifacts</i>	
Teacher Classroom Walk-through Tool (Criteria QCI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture of Collaboration • Controllable Resources • Prioritizing with Goals • Staff Goals • Empowering Others

(continued)

Collection Source	Themes
Staff Meeting Agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowering Others • Controllable Resources • Collective Efficacy • • Trust • Building on Employee Strengths • Culture of Collaboration • Human Resource • Positive Climate
Staff Meeting PowerPoint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust • Culture of Collaboration • Empowering Others • Controllable Resources • Envisioning Future • Collective Efficacy • Clearly and Regularly
District Speed of Trust Behaviors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust • Positive Climate • Culture of Collaboration

Table 7 shows both artifact and observation data collected at School Y. Throughout the campus walk, classroom walk-throughs and staff meeting it is evident the theme of communication practices that foster a positive school climate is present. Other themes that were frequent in both observation and artifacts were communication practices that empower others and communication practices that communicate importance through controllable resources. The artifacts showed a theme of collaborative culture but this was not as evident in observation. Interactions between the principal and both staff and students, showed evidence of communication practices that foster a positive school climate. The principal was able to redirect a student who was violating school rules in a respectful way, ending the behavior, and getting the student to class. Also, the principal was observed empowering others by asking staff to present at the staff meeting and collaborating with staff to prepare a PowerPoint that include the vision and mission statement as well as an activity supporting the Speed of Trust Behaviors in alignment

with the district initiative. During the staff meeting the principal thanked staff, modeling the expectations for classroom positive behavior supports, and highlighted staff members who were presenting. The observation of the staff meeting reinforced the communication practices of the principal that fostered a positive school climate at the school by observing staff interactions, staff responses, and staff participation. Both artifacts and observation showed communication practices by the principal that fostered positive climate as the most frequently coded theme.

School Y triangulation. Interview data supported communication practices that communicate the vision and goals clearly and regularly and this theme was coded most frequently in total response frequency. The artifacts and observation supported communication practices that foster a positive school climate as the most frequent theme. However, in all data collection sources both were very frequently coded. Positive climate was the second most frequent theme coded in interviews with eight total frequency responses compared to eleven total frequency responses for communication practices that communicate the vision and goals clearly and regularly. Both artifacts and observations alluded to communication practices that communicate importance through controllable resources frequently, however in reviewing all interviews the theme, controllable resources, was not coded at all. Therefore, communication practices that foster positive school climate, and communicate the vision and goals clearly and regularly, are identified as the most frequent themes throughout triangulation of School Y.

School Z. The setting for School Z was an elementary school and five certificated teachers and the school principal participated in interviews. Observation took place and included classroom walk-throughs. Artifacts reviewed included four school staff meeting agendas and the district “Speed of Trust Behaviors” handout. Table 8 depicts the key variables, theme categories, frequency of teacher responses, frequency of principal responses, and total frequency of

responses for each theme that resulted from an analysis of participant responses to Interview Questions 1-7.

Table 8

School Z Interview Responses Related to Basic Skill Sets

Variables	Theme Categories	Teacher Interview Frequency	Principal Interview Frequency	Total Responses Frequency
Setting Direction	Leaders Personal Goals	0	0	0
	Staff Goals	3	0	3
	Prioritizing with Goals	0	0	0
	Align with Goals	2	1	3
	Envisioning Future	1	1	2
	Shared Vision	2	0	2
	Empowering Others	8	0	8
	Clearly & Regularly	5	0	5
Developing People	Autonomy	2	0	2
	Building on Employees Strengths	4	0	4
	Collective Efficacy	1	2	3
	Trust	5	3	8
	Positive Climate	9	2	11
Redesigning the Organization	Culture of Collaboration	3	0	3
	Interpreting Larger Educational Context	1	0	1
	Human Resources	2	1	3
	Controllable Resources	5	0	5

Table 8 shows results of frequency of responses from both teacher and principal interviews for School Z. The most frequently coded theme for School Z is communication practice that foster positive school climate. Both the principal and teacher interviews included multiple coded responses for communication practice that foster a positive school climate. Teacher 3 said, “if you have an issue or problem she will help you resolve that problem.” Teacher 2 at School Z said,

So there's a couple things I feel that the principal has; an open door policy and she makes it really clear. So we have the opportunity to go to her whenever we feel there is something of concern, a question, so we have really good communication as far as that goes.

During the interview with the principal at School Z strategies used to create a positive climate were evident in responses such as:

I'm very accessible. Teachers know if my door is open, come in. In the hallways, when I go in their classrooms I give feedback to them. It's immediate when something happens, but I do specifically try to build up the team whether they're a teacher, custodian, it doesn't matter Just trying to always give feedback on my expectations, as well as the good job that they're doing, because you want to validate them at the same time. People have different things that they go through. And I consider it a privilege if they feel that they can trust me enough to share that with me.

Other things shared during interviews that supported communication practices that fostered a positive school climate included the principal communicating through a school wide staff website, emails, and through interactions with the principal in the hallway or on the playground. Multiple teachers describe the principal as being accessible and that communicates nonverbally to foster the positive school climate as well.

Both communication practices that establish trust and empower others received an equal amount of coded responses in the interviews at School Z. Teacher 4 says the principal communicated to establish trust by, "Being really good at letting you know that whatever you talk to her in private, it's not going to be shared with anyone else" and Teacher 5 said, "Even if it's something, I think, personal, you can go and talk to her. I think it's just that availability and

the openness piece.” The principal communicates the importance of establishing trust saying, “People have different things that they go through. And I consider it a privilege if they feel that they can trust me enough to share that with me.” Teacher 1 responded to how the principal communicates to empowers others saying, “She did ask us what conferences we were interested in attending. I think that really has helped us build capacity within our team.” Teacher 3 said:

She has worked very hard on, in fostering teacher, individuality, where you know you are the expert, you are their leader in your classroom, and it's taken her quite a bit of time for us but it's like yeah that's right we can do this again.

Teacher 4 talked about when the principal communicated to empower her trying new things for professional development and in her instructional practice when she learned what to do and what not to do, saying, “I think that's the true sign of a person who's allowing you to learn on your own and then be a good leader as well.” The themes that were not coded throughout the interview responses were the leader’s personal goals and prioritizing with goals. Another finding to be noted was that the principal did not elicit as many responses as the teachers throughout interviews.

Table 9 depicts the observation evidence and reviewed artifacts as related to each theme that resulted from an analysis of participants’ responses to interview questions 1-7.

Table 9

School Z Observation and Artifacts Related to Basic Skill Sets

Collection Source	Themes
<i>Observations</i> Campus Walk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collective Efficacy • Trust • Positive Climate

(continued)

Collection Source	Themes
Classroom Walk Through	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Controllable Resources • Culture of Collaboration • Positive Climate
<i>Artifacts</i>	
Staff Meeting Agendas (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Goals • Clearly and Regularly • Culture of Collaboration • Empowering Others • Controllable Resources • Collective Efficacy • Human Resources • Building on Employee Strengths • Positive Climate
District Speed of Trust Behaviors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust • Positive Climate • Culture of Collaboration

Table 9 shows both artifact and observation data collected at School Z. Throughout the campus walk and classroom walk-throughs the theme of communication practices that foster positive school climate was evident. The only two artifacts collected at School Z were four staff meeting agendas and the district Speed of Trust Behaviors handout. However, one common theme in each of the agendas was communication practices that communicated vision and goals clearly and regularly. One theme that was present in all artifacts and observation was communication practices that foster positive school climate.

School Z triangulation. School Z had eleven total frequency responses for communication practices that foster a positive school climate in observation, artifacts and interviews. The interviews also showed frequency of the themes communication practices that empower others and communication practices that establish trust, however in reviewing observation notes and artifacts, communication practices that establish trust is noted two times

and communication practices that empower others was not coded for any observation notes or artifacts. School Z had the most interview data collection, six interviews, and the least amount of artifacts collected, four staff agendas and the district handout. All the interviews had at least one coded response supporting communication practices that foster a positive school climate. Due to the saturation of the theme communication practices that foster a positive school climate this stands out as the most evident theme for School Y. Themes from observation and artifacts for School Y did not support any themes strongly; however, evidence of communication practices that foster positive school climate were evident in all data collection sources.

Triangulation of case study data for research question one. Throughout data analysis for all three cases, School X, School Y, and School Z, communication practices that foster a positive school climate was a reoccurring theme. Both School X and School Z identified communication practices that foster a positive school climate with fifteen and eleven total frequency responses noted in interviews and observation and artifacts supported the theme as well. School Y identified communication practices that communicated vision and goals clearly and regularly as the most frequently coded interview theme, however communication practices that foster a positive school climate was the second most frequently occurring theme in interview data analysis. In all three schools communication practices that foster a positive school climate was coded in either artifacts or observation or both. Communication practices that foster a positive school climate can be a result of a leaders' attention to developing strategies to increase staff morale, staff performance, and student achievement. In reviewing all data sources, ways to operationalize the theme communication practices that foster a positive school climate include being approachable, interacting as a colleague, both verbal and non-verbal communication is positive, and highlighting positive observed instructional practice.

Communication practices that establish trust was also very frequently coded in all interviews, observations and artifacts in all three cases. School X and School Z identified communication practices that establish trust as the second most frequently coded theme and School Y was only one code that had an equal total of frequency responses for both communication practices for fostering a positive school climate and establishing trust. In addition, all three schools identified communication practices that establish trust as a frequent coded theme in observations and artifacts.

In triangulating the data the two themes that were most frequently coded across all school sites and in all data collection sources were communication practices for fostering a positive school climate and communication practices that establish trust. Although multiple themes were coded in interviews, observations, or artifacts, communication practices that foster a positive school climate and communication practices that establish trust strongly saturated the data when the data was triangulated across all schools and all data collection sources.

Research question 2. Research Question 2 asked, what communication practices are used by principals as part of their advanced skill sets to improve teaching and student learning in a highly accountable policy context? Interview questions 8-13, observation elements, and artifacts were aligned with research question two.

School X. The setting for the first case study, School X, was an elementary school and three certificated teachers and the school principal participated in interviews. Observation took place and included classroom walk-throughs and observing a staff meeting. Artifacts reviewed included a district parent letter, district Speed of Trust Behaviors handout, two e-mails from the principal, and the classroom walk-through data collection sheet. Table 10 shows the key variables, theme categories, frequency of teacher responses, frequency of principal responses,

and total frequency of responses for each theme that resulted from an analysis of participant responses to interview questions 8-13.

Table 10

School X Interview Responses Related to Advanced Skill Sets

Variable	Category	Teacher Interview Frequency	Principal Interview Frequency	Total Responses Frequency
Creating & Sustaining a Competitive School	Accountability	3	2	5
	High Performance	1	2	3
Empowering Others to Make Significant Decisions	Involve Staff	3	1	4
	Giving Voice to the Community	5	2	7
Providing Instructional Guidance	Coordinating Strategies	4	2	6
	Professional Development	5	1	6
Developing & Implementing a Strategic School Improvement Plan	Principal as Lead Learner	0	2	2
	Living Document	1	1	2
	Planning Process	0	1	1

Table 10 shows results of frequency of responses from both teacher and principal interviews for case study 1 at School X for Interview Questions 8-13 around the advanced skill sets for effective leadership. The most frequently coded theme for School X was communication practices that give voice to the community. Teacher 2 mentioned how parents have a voice through district surveys and Teacher 3 said, “When parents attend those meetings we provide time for the parents to give feedback.” The principal talks about giving voice to the community, “At the parent club, we talk about what are some suggestions that you have for the school.” Coordinating strategies and professional development were communication practices that were

coded almost as frequently and the planning process was the least frequently coded response to Interview Questions 8-13.

Table 11

School X Observation and Artifacts Related to Advanced Skill Sets

Collection Source	Themes
<i>Observations</i>	
Campus Walk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Development • High Performance • Giving voice to the Community • Coordinating Strategies • Principal as Lead Learner • Professional Development
Classroom Walk Through	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Development • Coordinating Strategies
Staff Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Development • Coordinating Strategies
<i>Artifacts</i>	
Teacher Classroom Walk-through Tool (DII instrument)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinating Strategies • Professional Development • Accountability • High Performance
District Letter (regarding student enrollment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability • High Performance
District Speed of Trust Behaviors	
Principal Emails (before/after superintendent visit)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinating Strategies • Professional Development

Table 11 depicts shows the observation evidence and reviewed artifacts as related to each theme that resulted from an analysis of responses to Interview Questions 8-13 related to the advanced skill sets; creating and sustaining a competitive school, empowering others to make significant decisions, providing instructional guidance, and developing and implementing a strategic school improvement plan. Also, Table 11 shows the most frequently coded responses for observations and artifacts at School X. Communication practices that promote professional development were evident in almost all artifacts and were observed in all the parts of the observation. Professional development was provided during the staff meeting and was

highlighted during classroom and campus walk-throughs. Another theme that was frequently coded was communication practices that coordinating strategies school wide to support student learning. The principal highlighted some of the strategies in place for instructional feedback to improve student learning by using one of the artifacts, the DII tool or Direct Interactive Instruction Implementation Tool, during the classroom walk-throughs and talking about other strategies during the campus walk.

School X triangulation. Review of interviews, observations, and artifacts for School X did not result in one theme emerging. There discrepancies between interviews and observations and artifacts. The interviews resulted in communication practices that give voice to the community as the most frequently coded response in the advanced skill sets, however, observation and artifacts identified communication practices that promote professional development and communication practices that coordinating strategies school wide to support student learning as the most frequently coded theme. One important note is when reviewing the observations communication practices that provide professional development and coordinating strategies school wide for student achievement were frequently mentioned, almost as frequent as communication practices that give voice to the community. The communication practices identified in interviews, observations, and artifacts aligned with these themes included the DII feedback tool, emails, classroom walk-throughs and staff meeting observed with a focus on professional development.

School Y. The setting for School Y, was a middle school and three certified teachers and the school principal participated in interviews. Observation took place and included classroom walk-throughs and observing a staff meeting. Artifacts reviewed included a school classroom walk-through data collection sheet, district Speed of Trust Behaviors handout, and the

PowerPoint from the staff meeting observed. Table 12 depicts the key variables, theme categories, frequency of teacher responses, frequency of principal responses, and total frequency of responses for each theme that resulted from an analysis of participant responses to Interview Questions 8-13.

Table 12

School Y Interview Responses Related to Advanced Skill Sets

Variable	Category	Teacher Interview Frequency	Principal Interview Frequency	Total Response Frequency
Creating & Sustaining a Competitive School	Accountability	2	1	3
	High Performance	2	1	3
Empowering Others to Make Significant Decisions	Involve Staff	3	2	5
	Giving Voice to the Community	2	1	3
Providing Instructional Guidance	Coordinating Strategies	5	1	6
	Professional Development	1	3	4
	Principal as Lead Learner	2	3	5
Developing & Implementing a Strategic School Improvement Plan	Living Document	0	0	0
	Planning Process	1	1	2

Table 12 shows results of frequency of responses from both teacher and principal interviews at School Y for Interview Questions 8-13 around the advanced skill sets for effective leadership. Communication practices that coordinating strategies school wide to support student learning is the theme that was most frequently coded throughout the interviews. Teacher 1 commented on the way the leader communicates instructional feedback as a part of the school wide strategies saying, “We get walk-throughs fairly often. For some younger staff members that

are new into this, it's probably about once a week we can see some feedback, or something as simple as a sticky note. It's very positive.” Teacher 2 talks about a strategy the principal coordinates to improve instruction, “She tries to make sure at least one time of the year, every single person on the staff gets to participate in those instructional rounds.” The principal talked about ways she communicated through coordinating strategies,

We also get some of that instructional guidance through our instructional rounds process. We do that about four or five times a year where we do that big instructional rounds. The results we get from that are published via email and on our Google classroom that we have. Those are always there. Then, that final level is, of course, through our walkthroughs and then through the evaluation systems.

Other themes that were frequently coded were principal as lead learner and involving staff. The theme of the communicating the school improvement plan as a living document was not coded in any interviews.

Table 13 shows the observation evidence and reviewed artifacts as related to each theme that resulted from an analysis of participants’ responses to Interview Questions 8-13 related to the advanced skill sets; creating and sustaining a competitive school, empowering others to make significant decisions, providing instructional guidance, and developing and implementing a strategic school improvement plan.

Table 13

School Y Observation and Artifacts Related to Advanced Skill Sets

Collection Source	Themes
<i>Observations</i>	
Campus Walk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional Development

(continued)

Collection Source	Themes
Classroom Walk Through	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinating Strategies • Professional Development
Staff Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal as Lead Learner • Professional Development
<i>Artifacts</i>	
Teacher Classroom Walk-through Tool (Criteria QCI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability • High Performance • Coordinating Strategies • Professional Development
Staff Meeting Agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Development • Principal as Lead Learner
Staff Meeting PowerPoint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involving Staff • Coordinating Strategies • Professional Development

Table 13 presented a review of the observation and artifact data collected in reviewing School Y. The themes that were frequently coded in both observation and artifacts were communication practices that provide professional development and coordinating strategies school wide to support student learning. During classroom walk-throughs the principal uses her laptop to provide instructional feedback to a teacher based on a recent professional development and the staff meeting agenda and PowerPoint highlighted the professional development for the observed staff meeting.

School Y triangulation. Review of interviews, observations, and artifacts for School Y resulted in two themes emerging as most frequently coded, communication practices that coordinate strategies school wide to support student learning and communication practices that provide professional development. Both were frequently coded in all three data collection sources. Professional development received four total frequency responses and coordinating strategies six total frequency responses. Communication practices to promote professional development and the principal communicating to coordinate strategies to provide instructional

feedback to improve student learning were strong themes evident in the staff meeting observed, artifacts collected, and in teacher and principal interviews when they identified how they organize instructional rounds. All three data collection sources provided triangulation of these important themes at School Y. It is also important to note that the principal used email, staff meetings, and classroom walk-throughs as practices for communicating the importance of professional development and the principal had very specific practices in place to coordinate conversations around instructional feedback.

School Z. The setting for School Z, was an elementary school and 5 certificated teachers and the school principal participated in interviews. Observation took place and included classroom walk-throughs. Artifacts reviewed included school staff meeting agendas (4) and the district Speed of Trust Behaviors handout. Table 14 shows the key variables, theme categories, frequency of teacher responses, frequency of principal responses, and total frequency of responses for each theme that resulted from an analysis of participant responses to Interview Questions 8-13.

Table 14

School Z Interview Responses Related to Advanced Skill Sets

Variable	Category	Teacher Interview Frequency	Principal Interview Frequency	Total Response Frequency
Creating & Sustaining a Competitive School	Accountability	0	0	0
	High Performance	2	1	3
Empowering Others to Make Significant Decisions	Involve Staff	2	1	3
	Giving Voice to the Community	4	3	7

(continued)

Variable	Category	Teacher Interview Frequency	Principal Interview Frequency	Total Response Frequency
Providing Instructional Guidance	Coordinating Strategies	3	1	4
	Professional Development	4	1	5
Developing & Implementing a Strategic School Improvement Plan	Principal as Lead Learner	0	0	0
	Living Document	1	0	1
	Planning Process	4	2	6

Table 14 reports results of frequency of responses from both teacher and principal interviews at School Z for Interview Questions 8-13 around the advanced skill sets for effective leadership. The theme that was most frequently coded throughout interviews for School Z was communication practices that give voice to the community. During the interview the principal stated she hired a parent liaison to ensure community involvement at the school site, “She is a direct link for parents and community. I believe if parents are involved your school success rate will be that much larger.” Teacher 3 said:

The principal is very big on parent involvement, and so she actually pays out of her budget for parent liaison, we have a parent liaison that is full time. And she, you know runs our volunteer program, she runs our PTO; she brings all of our parents in, our community members in. We have a whole lot of relationships with different community members. And the PTO is very big and very involved here at the school they do a lot of fundraising, they pay for a lot of the things that go on for the school, they make a lot of decisions of what's going to happen here in the school.

Teacher 4 talks about the communication practices that give voice to the community saying:

If teachers plan something, then we run it through the PTO, and then we kind of brainstorm together or tweak things together, and then vice versa. There's also, like I said, Facebook, so parents can communicate through Facebook back and forth. It's an open-door policy, so parents are usually here all the time.

Examples show evidence of how the principal has given voice to the community and that is communicated through the PTO and community liaison. Communication practices for coordinating strategies school wide to support learning, communication practices that promote professional development, and communication practices around the planning process were themes that were noted frequently as well. Themes that did not appear in any review of the interviews were communication practices that identify the principal as lead learner and communication practices that provide accountability.

Table 15 shows the observation evidence and reviewed artifacts as related to each theme that resulted from an analysis of participants' responses to Interview Questions 8-13 related to the advanced skill sets; creating and sustaining a competitive school, empowering others to make significant decisions, providing instructional guidance, and developing and implementing a strategic school improvement plan.

Table 15

School Y Observation and Artifacts Related to Advanced Skill Sets

Collection Source	Themes
<i>Observations</i>	
Campus Walk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Development • Coordinating Strategies • Giving Voice to the Community • Involving Staff
Classroom Walk Through	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Development • Coordinating Strategies
<i>Artifacts</i>	
Staff Meeting Agendas (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability • High Performance • Involving Staff • Coordinating Strategies • Professional Development

Table 15 presented a review of the observation and artifact data collected in reviewing School Z. The two main themes for both observations and artifacts were communication practices that provide professional development and communication practices that coordinate strategies school wide to improve student learning. The artifacts included four staff meeting agendas and the Speed of Trust Behaviors handout. Both provided evidence of how the principal uses the agenda to communicate about professional development and how the principal coordinates strategies to improve student learning. The observations both through a walk of the school campus and walk-throughs in classrooms yielded evidence of school wide strategies for communication like Classroom Dojo, a communication application used for parent/teacher communication about student behavior and also evident was the guidelines for being an AVID school, a professional development focus for the staff.

School Z triangulation. Review of interviews, observations, and artifacts for School Z did not find evidence of overlap in themes. Communication practices that gave voice to the

community were mentioned frequently in interviews but were not supported with evidence during the observation or in artifacts that were collected. Communication practices that coordinate strategies school wide to improve student learning and communication practices that provide professional development were frequently coded themes in artifacts and observations and were frequently coded in the interviews but were not the most frequently coded in the interviews. The interviews yielded communication practices that give voice to the community but observation and artifacts did not support this theme.

Triangulation of case study data for research question two. Throughout data analysis of interviews, observation, and artifacts there was not one theme that was coded most frequently. However, in all three cases, the most frequently coded themes for artifacts and observations were communication practices that provide professional development and communication practices that coordinate strategies school wide for improving student learning. Also noted, at School X and Z, was communication practices that give voice to the community as the most frequently coded interview theme, however both observation and artifacts did not support the theme. School Y was the only case study that had alignment between interviews, artifacts, and observations. Commonalities in communication that emerged from a review of themes from advanced skill sets included providing instructional feedback to promote professional development with a tool or emails and ensuring professional development at staff meetings. Also common among all cases was coordinating strategies for school wide feedback to improve student learning and providing instructional feedback through communication through email, staff meetings, and classroom walk-through feedback.

Summary

A review of the data findings resulted in category themes that emerged to support communication practices of a principal at a school site. Research Question 1 asked what communication practices are used by principals as part of their basic skill sets to foster student learning. The interviews, observations, and artifacts obtained from three cases identified one most frequently occurring theme communication practices that foster positive school climate at the school sites. A positive climate is the result of leaders' attention to developing strategies to increase staff morale, staff performance, and student achievement. Leadership communication that sustained a positive school climate included verbal and non-verbal positive communication such as being approachable, interacting as a colleague with all staff, and highlighting good instructional practices. Another non-verbal communication practice that reoccurred in almost every interview was the principal having an open door policy.

The second most frequently coded theme was communication practices that establish trust. This theme was coded at all three sites and saturated most of the data in interviews, observation, and collected artifacts as well. One major finding from the theme of communication practices that establish trust was the alignment at all three sites and the common responses about how the district has supported establishing trust. This theme may be a reflection of the district initiative and how leadership communication has supported the theme at the district and school levels.

Research Question 2 asked what communication practices are used by principals as part of their advanced skill sets to improve teaching and student learning in a highly accountable policy context. A review of the collective school triangulation data did not identify one category theme that was coded most frequently in total response frequency, however, observation data

from two of the case studies identified communication practices that give voice to the community as coded most frequently. School X and School Z, identified giving voice to the community in their interviews, there were not specific communication practices that stood out for supporting this category theme and the triangulation of interview, observation and artifact did not support this category theme. Communication practices that give voice to the community were mentioned in interviews, it was not supported with triangulation of artifacts and observation. However, the observation and artifact data provided support across all three cases for communication practices that promote professional development and coordinating strategies school wide to improve student learning. In addition, these themes were coded frequently in interviews at all schools. This finding aligned with the most frequently coded theme from School Y interviews. Communication practices identified for providing professional development included the principal attending and modeling professional development and providing instructional feedback aligned to professional development. Communication practices for coordinating strategies school wide to support student learning included feedback provided through walk-through tools, e-mails, staff meetings, and meeting agendas.

Chapter 5: Findings, Conclusion, and Recommendations

The Problem

New learning skills will be required in order to best prepare students for the 21st century economy and competition with other industrialized nations. The U.S. education system is undergoing great reform with Common Core State Standards to address college and career readiness while incorporating 21st century skills. Leading a reform, such as CCSS, takes sophisticated leadership, leaders with purpose and direction and knowledge about shifting practice. Leadership is an important part of successful reform. Leithwood et al. (2004) identify three basic leadership skill sets that must be present for successful leadership; setting direction, developing people, and redesigning an organization. In addition to these three basic leadership skills there are four leadership practices that are also important, especially in time of educational reform; creating and sustaining a competitive school, empowering others to make significant decisions, providing instructional guidance, and developing and implementing strategic school improvement plans (Leithwood et al., 2004). These additional four skill sets or advanced skill sets aid in implementing change at a school, especially around high accountability policy and diverse student populations. Communication is an important part of all of these leadership skill sets.

There is a plethora of literature on the importance of communication in regards to educational leadership, however, literature regarding best practices and competency in communication remain vague. Therefore, an opportunity existed to look more in-depth at how successful leaders operationalize communication in respect to both the basic and advanced leadership skill sets.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore and describe the leadership practices of school principals as related to the basic leadership skill sets (a) setting directions, (b) developing people, and (c) redesigning the organization in purposely selected Southern California elementary schools that have demonstrated high levels of academic performance and were identified by the Superintendent as exemplary schools. This multiple case study also intended to explore and describe the leadership practices of school principals as related to the beyond the basics leadership skill sets (a) creating and sustaining a competitive school, (b) empowering others to make significant decisions, (c) providing instructional guidance, and (d) developing and implementing a strategic school improvement plan. More specifically, the intent of this multiple case study was to uncover the communication aspect of effective leadership related to the seven sets of practices (basic and advance skill sets) utilized by the principals that might be replicated in other schools to improve student learning and achievement.

Research Questions

The researcher examined the following two research questions in three purposefully selected Southern California schools that demonstrated high levels of academic performance and were identified by the Superintendent as exemplary schools:

1. What communication practices are used by principals as part of their basic core leadership skill sets to foster student learning?
3. What communication practices are used by principals as part of their advanced skill sets to improve teaching and student learning in a highly accountable policy context?

Research Design Overview

This study utilized a qualitative, multiple case study design with three data collection

methods: interview, observation, and review of artifacts. The three schools selected represented multiple grade levels and the principals leading the schools had held the principalship for a minimum of five years. In addition to the interviews with the three principals, there were three to five teachers interviewed at each school site, totaling eleven teacher interviews. There were thirteen interview questions focused on the principals' communication practices around both the basic and advanced skill sets identified as necessary for successful school leadership. The schools also provided artifacts pertaining to communication from the principal and the researcher spent a day at each site observing and conducting interviews. The researcher designed each of the four data collection tools (principal interview instrument, teacher interview instrument, observation instrument, and artifact review instrument) to reflect the themes that emerged from the literature review in relation to the study's seven key variables, setting direction; developing people; redesigning the organization; creating and sustaining a competitive school; empowering others to make significant decisions; providing instructional guidance; and developing and implementing a school improvement plan.

All three schools (two elementary schools and one middle school) were located in diverse, low socioeconomic settings. School X was an elementary school with kindergarten through sixth grade students. School Y was a middle school, educating a seventh and eighth grade population. School Z was an elementary school with preschool through third grade students. Each school utilized Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS). The middle school was identified as a California school to watch. Both elementary schools are Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) schools.

The first phase of data collection began with all day school site visits. Each school visit included first the observation, including classroom walk-throughs, for the researcher to observe

the principal's interactions with teachers, students, and the community and to provide an overall feel for the culture within each school. The second phase of data collection included an interview with the principal to inquire about the principal's communication practices. At this time, the researcher requested any artifacts that would represent the communication of the principal with the staff. The final phase of data collection included one-on-one interviews with certificated teachers.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1. Research Question 1 asked, what communication practices are used by principals as part of their basic core leadership skill sets to foster student learning? Key themes that resulted from triangulation data analysis were communication practices that foster positive school climate and communication practices that establish trust. These themes were most frequently coded in all three areas of data collection: interview, observation, and artifacts. Both themes relate to the basic skill, developing people, identified in the conceptual framework.

Fostering positive school climate. Throughout data analysis, for all three schools, communication practices that foster a positive school climate was the most reoccurring theme. School X and School Z identified communication practices that foster positive school climate as the most frequently coded theme in all interviews. The total frequency for coded interview responses for communication practices that foster positive school climate at School X was 15 and at School Z was 11. At School X all three teachers interviewed stated the principal had an open door policy and at School Z three out of the five teachers said the principal has an open door policy. Teachers at School Z referred to communication practices that foster positive school climate saying, because of the open door policy we have the opportunity to go to her whenever we feel like there is a concern. Another teacher stated, the principal says here are the

expectations, it's never like a 'you better', it always comes out positive. School Y identified communication practices that foster positive school climate as the second most frequently coded theme in interviews, with a total response frequency of eight. One teacher stated, "The principal has a good balance of being direct but staying positive at the same time." Another teacher stated, "the principal is always willing to talk to you." A third teacher said, "the principal is very approachable." In two out of the three teacher interviews at School Y the teachers stated the principal had an open door policy. Interviews revealed positive e-mails, approachability, visibility, and an open door policy as the communication practices used by principals to foster a positive school climate.

All three schools also showed evidence of communication practices that foster positive school climate in either artifacts and/or observations. Artifacts collected included agendas, e-mails, and a PowerPoint that supported a positive climate including communication about recent successes at the schools and highlighting staff members. One artifact from School X had a note from the principal to a teacher noting two suggestions for instructional improvement and a positive statement that read, "Good student engagement, students feel safe to be able to ask and answer questions." During a classroom walkthrough at School Z, the principal sends a brief email during a classroom walkthrough that includes encouragement for a new teacher who is using the positive behavior intervention support strategies. At both School X and School Y a time for celebrations was noted on the school agenda and was observed by the researcher during staff meetings at both schools.

The conceptual framework supports the importance of positive climate. Leithwood et al. (2004) say principals set direction by establishing and understanding group goals, creating mission and vision statements that are rooted in the schools actions and practices, and

establishing a positive school climate. Kelley et al. (2005) also state that positive school climate has been linked to higher morale, staff performance and even student achievement. Observation data collection helped to identify positive climate as an overall feel at all three schools and both verbal and non-verbal interactions between the principal and staff, students, and stakeholders represented a positive school climate.

Establishing trust. The theme of trust was identified as strategies for the school principal to build relationships and credibility among staff. In all interviews, at all three schools, communication practices that establish trust were coded frequently. Total frequency of interview responses for communication practices that establish trust at School X was 12, School Y was seven, and School Z was eight. Communication practices that establish trust were identified in the interviews as establishing relationships, utilizing the district identified Speed of Trust Behaviors, keeping shared information between the principal and a staff member private, being transparent, and respecting teachers as the expert. Examples of these communication practices that establish trust surfaced in interviews at each school. The principal at School Y stated, “A big thing is just being transparent and give as much information as possible.” During the interviews with all three principals they discussed in length the Speed of Trust Behaviors that were developed and modeled by the superintendent and have become a part of the district and school cultures. In seven of the eleven teacher interviews the Speed of Trust Behaviors was mentioned. A teacher at School Y said, every week at our meetings we look at our Speed of Trust Behaviors. One teacher at School X noted the following, “Developing trust is something she did when she came on our campus, you can share your heart with her, she develops trust by listening first, [and] one of the things for the speed of trust is being transparent.” A teacher at School Z refers to the principal establishing trust saying, “She doesn’t talk to you about things that are not related

to you.” The teacher also said, “she is transparent, you do not have to read between the lines.” Another teacher at School Z says the principal establishes trust by “being open and honest.” A third teacher at School Z stated, “she is good at letting you know whatever you talk about with her in private it not going to be shared with anyone else.”

In triangulating the data communication practices that establish trust were also coded at School X and School Y frequently in observation and artifacts. All three schools also provided the researcher a copy of the Speed of Trust Behaviors as an artifact. At Schools X and Z communication practices that established trust were noted during campus walks based primarily on evidence of established relationships between the principal and staff members. Also during observed staff meetings at both School X and School Y the principals included Speed of Trust Behaviors in a portion of the meeting.

Tschannen-Moran (2001) says that a climate of trust in a school organization can have multiple benefits. Lencioni (2002) looks at trust as the foundation for a successful team or organization and goes on to say trust is a key factor and that the leader must take action to show vulnerability to ensure trust is established. Perhaps one of the reasons this theme was coded so frequently can be identified in an artifact that was collected at each of the three schools. The district utilized Covey’s (2006) the *Speed of Trust* to create trust behaviors that were used during staff meetings, discussed in ten out of fourteen interviews, noted in school site observations, and seen in artifacts like staff meeting agendas and the district artifact Speed of Trust Behaviors.

Research Question 2. Research Question 2 asked what communication practices are used by principals as part of their advanced skill sets to improve teaching and student learning in a highly accountable policy context. Key themes that resulted from triangulation data analysis were communication practices that promote professional development and communication

practices that coordinating strategies school wide to improve student learning. These themes were most frequently coded in all three areas of data collection: interview, observation, and artifacts. Both themes relate to the advanced skill set, providing instructional feedback, identified in the conceptual framework.

Promoting professional development. The theme of communication practices that promote professional development refers to the leader's responsibility to provide and support continuous professional learning on the part of faculty and staff. Examples of communication practices that promote professional development were the principal attending professional development, modeling expectations from professional development and including instructional feedback aligned to professional development. Communication practices that promote professional development were coded frequently at all three schools within interviews, observations, and artifacts. Total frequency response during interviews for promoting professional development at School X was six, School Y was four, and School Z was five. A teacher at School X stated, "she provides trainings during staff meetings and gets everyone back on track with a gentle reminder." At School Y a teacher says, "There was a particular strategy, close reading, she was in the staff development and she modeled it." A teacher at School Z says, "we did not use to go to many trainings but now we are well-rounded in the different areas we implement here and she provides feedback related to professional development objectives after classroom walk-throughs."

Communication practices that promoted professional development were observed by the researcher during observations at School X and School Y during staff meetings where professional development was provided. At School X the principal participated and at School Y the principal participated and modeled previous professional development. At all three schools

the staff meeting agendas included notes or information about professional development. School X provided emails that highlighted professional development focus and expectation for classroom walk-throughs and at School Y the researcher observed the principal generating emails with reference to professional development.

Knapp and Feldman (2012) say principals are positioned as lead learners and are required to know what is being taught and support the learning with external resources. The leaders demonstrated the communication practices of attending, modeling, and providing instructional feedback during classroom walk-throughs, staff meetings, and emails with a focus on instructional practice. Observations and artifacts at all three schools supported the importance of professional development at all three schools.

Coordinating strategies school wide to improve student learning. The leader is responsible for coordinating school wide strategies and instructional feedback to improve student learning. Coordinating strategies can also be viewed through the lens of instructional leadership, connected with the advanced leadership skill set of providing instructional guidance. Hallinger and Murphy (2012) define instructional leadership as identifying direction for the school, motivating staff, and coordinating school and classroom strategies. Evidence collected from interviews, observations, and artifacts support this claim in all three schools studied.

Coordinating strategies school wide to improve student learning was the second most frequently coded theme for research question two and was evident throughout all data collection sources. Communication practices to coordinate strategies school wide to improve student learning stood out in interviews, observation, and collected artifacts. One teacher talked about a strategy the principal coordinates to improve instruction, “she tries to make sure at least one time of the year, every single person on the staff gets to participate in those instructional rounds.” Another teacher

said at their school, “We get walk-throughs fairly often, it's very non-threatening and you'll get an email later on, or a post through the technology platform.”

Hord and Sommers (2008) advise that principals that communicate about instruction and learning create more professional dialogue at their schools. At all school sites there were specific tools used for providing feedback to teachers about practice and two of the schools provided these strategies as an artifact. Noted in interviews were also strategies for teachers to observe one another to identify best practices. All three principals alluded to these strategies to improve instructional practice and as a means to provide instructional guidance to their staff members.

Conclusions

Five conclusions resulted from the multiple case study findings.

Conclusion one. Communication practices that matter most to principals and teachers in this study are those practices that foster positive school climate in support of individual and collective learning. Communication practices that foster positive school climate included positive interactions between the principal and staff such as interacting as colleagues around instructional practice or feedback, approachability, visibility, and an open door policy.

Communication practices that foster positive school climate were coded in every one of the fourteen interviews that were conducted. Teacher responses included communication practices like open door policy saying, because of the open door policy we have the opportunity to go to her whenever we feel like there is a concern. Another teacher supported positive interactions stating, the principal says here are the expectations, it's never like a 'you better', and it always comes out positive. Other interview responses highlight interactions, the principal has a good balance of being direct but staying positive at the same time. One teacher response

emphasized approachability stating, the principal is always willing to talk to you. Positive climate was coded for every artifact and observation.

Positive school climate is defined by the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (2017) with a model that highlights engagement, strong relationships with all stakeholders; safety, students are safe from violence, bullying harassment, and controlled substance use; and environment, appropriate facilities, well managed classrooms, and available health support. Kuo (2009) supports the need for principals to understand relationships and how they are constructed between academic staff to reflect characteristics of the culture in a building. This study found approachability, interacting as a colleague and building relationships as communication practices that foster a positive school climate. Practices such as open door policy, interacting as a colleague, and positives in emails, agendas, and interactions were also noted throughout data sources. These communication practices are evident in the literature and data collection, therefore it might be concluded that attention to relationships through approachability, open door policy, positive interactions and an overall positive feel aid in fostering a positive school climate.

Conclusion two. Communication practices that were identified in this study that establish trust include interactions on the school campus, the ability to be vulnerable, and sharing important communication with all stakeholders. Interviews revealed communication practices of the principal that establish trust. One principal stated, “A big thing is just being transparent and give as much information as possible” (Principal, School Y, personal communication, March 7, 2017). During the interviews with all three principals and seven of the eleven teachers, the Speed of Trust Behaviors, implemented district wide were mentioned, explained, and provided. One teacher stated the principal establishes trust saying, “She is transparent, you do not have to read

between the lines.” Another teacher says the principal communicates to establish trust by being open and honest. This substantiates the growing body of literature on trust being an integral part of leadership.

Brown (2009) identifies communication practices that could support establishing trust as communicating things that are happening and preventing rumors this provides transparency, credibility, and builds trust. Lencioni (2002) looks at trust as the foundation for a successful team or organization and identifies ways it is non-verbally communicated when the leader takes action to show vulnerability. Covey (2006) identifies Speed of Trust Behaviors as talk straight, demonstrate respect, create transparency, right wrongs, show loyalty, deliver results, get better, confront reality, clarify expectations, practice accountability, listen first, keep commitments, extend trust. These behaviors are aligned with the communication practices seen throughout interviews, observation and artifacts at all three schools studied by the researcher. The alignment between all data collection sources and the information shared about the district wide use of the Speed of Trust Behaviors are a result of the district initiative started by the superintendent and provided a framework at the school sites. Therefore, it may indicate that these trust behaviors, when integrated into the schools culture, can provide a guide for communication practices that establish trust and that a framework for building trust may enhance the ability for the leader to establish trust at the school.

Conclusion three. This study concluded that leaders communicate a focus on professional practice and provide instructional guidance by providing meaningful professional development. Professional development communication practices included, providing meaningful professional development during staff meetings, organizing on or off site professional development, and attending professional development in order to follow up in

teacher conferencing or provide feedback after classroom walk-throughs. Throughout interviews with both teachers and principals, professional development was coded frequently and artifacts and observations highlighted the focus on professional development at each of the school sites in the study.

Observation at two of the school site included staff meetings, at both sites professional development was observed during the staff meeting. Artifacts collected at all three school sites included agendas from staff meetings and all agendas highlighted professional development. Teacher 1 from School Y stated, “We get walk-throughs fairly often.” Teacher 2, School Y, talked about instructional rounds supporting the development of all staff and specifically provided additional support to new staff members. At School X the principal and teachers talked about how professional development was provided weekly during time set aside by the district and was focused on supporting goals of the school. At School Z teachers talked about all the different professional development they engage in saying, “We are very well-rounded in the different areas that we implement here.” Principals are positioned as lead learners and are required to know what is being taught as well as support the learning with external resources (Knapp & Feldman, 2012). Rosenholtz (as cited in Goddard & Goddard, 2007) says, “teachers who find challenge and personal accomplishment, often through continued professional development, are more likely to remain in the teaching profession and to work hard to help their students succeed” (p. 883).

Conclusion four. According to teachers and principals in this study, regular instructional feedback from the principal via school wide feedback tools and/or technology platforms is one of the most effective communication practices for enhancing student learning. Interviews revealed some of these practices. The principal at School X shared the instructional feedback tool as an

artifact and demonstrated how it is used during the observation at the school site. At School Y, the principal used her laptop to demonstrate giving instructional feedback to a teacher and discussed during observation the support teachers provided one another through a process called instructional rounds. All three teachers at School Y mentioned this process in their interview responses.

Teachers at School Z talked about a website the principal shares with the teachers that provides resources and opportunities to communicate both individually with the principal and whole staff. Hord and Sommers (2008) say that principals that communicate about instruction and learning create more professional dialogue at their school sites. Hallinger (2011) says instructional leadership, that improves student learning, is successful when leaders, “identify direction for the school, motivate staff, and coordinate school and classroom strategies” (p.7).

Conclusion five. This study concluded that communication practices around all basic and advanced skill sets need to be clear and consistent from the school leader and are an important part of effective leadership. The leader needs to ensure these skill sets become expectations to increase student performance. The findings supported developing people and providing instructional guidance skill sets from the conceptual framework, however, responses supporting communication practices around the other key skill sets were not as strongly supported. This may indicate that teachers are not as aware of the other practices that are in place or they do not have full understanding of the other skill sets. Therefore, a conclusion might be made that the communication practices around the other five skill sets could be strengthened to support teacher understanding. This may result in better teacher support of school initiatives and the vision set by the principal.

The triangulation around research question two identified that School X and School Z did not have one emerging theme that was coded. There was also discrepancy between what was said in the interviews and what was found during observation and artifacts at School X. This data triangulation may identify an area where communication is lacking due to the complexity of the advanced skill sets. When reflecting on practice around professional development and coordinating strategies the themes were easily discussed by both principals and teachers, however, more complex concepts maybe harder to communicate and identify. Research questions two referred to the advanced skill sets and this data may support that the advanced skill sets are more challenging to communicate and require skills for second order change.

Leithwood et al. (2004) used evidence from district, school, and non-educational organizations to identify the necessary pieces for successful leadership, the basic skill sets. They also identified advanced skill sets that are necessary in leading schools with high stakes accountability and political implications. Both advanced and basic skill sets identified support a conceptual framework for successful leadership. Thomas et al., (2013) believes being a true leader involves regular, persistent, human communication in expressing vision and encouraging organizational participation. Lencioni (2012) says cohesiveness and clarity in formal communication at the top of an organization will go a long way. He goes on to say that “when it comes to reinforcing clarity, there is no such thing as too much communication” (p. 15). Therefore, it might be concluded that communication practices around all the skill sets, both basic and advanced need to be overly communicated. To strengthen teacher understanding of the basic and advanced skill sets regular, persistent, and clear human communication may be the key to leadership communication practice.

Recommendations

Recommendations for policy and practice. The findings and conclusions from this study support five policy and practice recommendations. Through data analysis and triangulation of the data themes emerged as important to the communication practices of a leader.

Recommendation one. First, state, district and school leaders are encouraged to include communication strategies that foster positive school climate in support of student learning as a part of leadership preparation courses. Thomas, Herring, Redmond, & Smaldino (2011) say leadership involves regular, persistent human communication in expressing vision and encouraging participation in any organization. In the following study communication practices that foster positive school climate in support of student learning that emerged from triangulation of the data included open door policy, approachability, positive interactions and an overall positive feel aid in fostering a positive school climate.

Recommendation two. Second, it is advised that school administrators remain aware of the importance of building trust with all stakeholders. Leithwood et al. (2004) identified the leader as second only to teachers in effective student achievement. Hallinger (2003), Schoen and Fusarelli (2008), and Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) all discuss the need for focus on effective school leadership. A policy for professional learning for future leaders in effective strategies for building trust may be necessary. Currently, professional learning for school administrators is broad and the position already requires a vast amount of knowledge. Covey's (2006) Speed of Trust Behaviors may provide an effective outline for communication practices for a leader to communicate to establish trust.

Recommendation three. Third, it is recommended that school administrators communicate the importance of professional practice through meaningful professional

development. McEwan (2003) says effective instructional leaders are able to always willing to learn and can articulate their strengths. Findings from this study support leaders' ability to provide meaningful professional development through participating in and modeling expectations for improving professional practice.

Recommendation four. Four, it is recommended that school administrators use consistent strategies and tools school wide for providing instructional feedback to ensure a focus on student achievement. Shellard (2002) found that high achieving schools have similar factors that include challenging experiences for students, principals as instructional leaders, data driven decision making, alignment of curriculum, and a shared belief that all students can achieve. Knapp & Feldman (2012) state a requirement of principals is that they are positioned as lead learners and principals are aware of what is taught in regards to professional development.

Recommendation five. Fifth, it is recommended that school administrators ensure communication practices around key leadership basic and advanced skill sets provide clarity to staff members so that staff can support the school wide vision and mission. Dowling and Sayles, (as cited in Pomroy, 2005) say that in order for communication to be effective it must be “understood, believes, and accepted.” School administrators may know how to implement the skill sets but need to ensure the staff is also aware of all the components of the basic and advanced skill sets to improve teacher practice resulting in improvements to student learning. Bridges (1967) argues that teachers prefer principals who involve their staff in decision-making and principals have a responsibility to make participation a possibility.

Recommendations for further study. Four recommendations for future research emerged from the study. The recommendations are not listed in a particular order of importance

as all recommendations would assist in better identifying communication practices that can be applied for increasing leaders' effectiveness.

First, employ mixed methods and/or quantitative methodology. This study utilized a qualitative, multiple case study approach which allowed for capturing an overall picture of the communication practices of a principal to their staff and stakeholders. However, due to the small sample size and nature of a multiple case study, generalizability of effective communication practices is limited. A similar study of principals communication practices with a more narrow lens of exact practices and number of occurrences may result in the ability to identify specific communication practices that are in place.

Second, explore the differences in communication at multiple levels of academia. The study intended to look at elementary schools specifically but due to sampling and recommendations of the superintendent the sample population allowed for data collection at elementary and middle school sites. Repeating the study with specific focus on either one level or across all levels may identify differences of communication practices and lead to specific skill sets for principals.

Third, conduct a longitudinal study of one or more principals as they transition to different school sites and identify if any of the practices transfer to new settings. The principals in this study were selected because they were identified as leaders who were successful at improving student achievement. However, if replicated over a longer time period and longitudinally across multiple sites, key themes specific to successful leaders may be identified.

Fourth, create a more specific interview tool for teachers. The studies interview tools identified broad communication practices of a school principal as related to the conceptual framework that established seven key variables. Due to the nature of the tool, the language may

not have been specific enough to teacher experiences with leadership practices. Additional questions may elicit fuller responses. A more specific instrument may result in more direct responses from teachers as to how the communication is done by the principal.

Summary

This multiple case study examined the communication practices of school principals around seven key variables related to basic and advanced skill sets of a successful leader. Through purposive sampling principals and teachers at three school sites, identified as successful by the superintendent, provided insight into communication practices of the school leaders. Data collection for the study included principal and teacher interviews, observation at each of the three school sites, and collection of relevant artifacts. After data collection the data were coded and triangulated for recurring themes.

The findings of the study confirmed and narrowed communication practice specific to two of the seven successful leadership skill sets, one basic and one advanced, identified in a study completed by Leithwood et al. in 2004. Positive climate, trust, professional development, and coordinating strategies were all themes emerging from literature that were confirmed as important to communication by the school leader. Furthermore, this highlighted developing people in relation to the basic skill sets and providing instructional guidance in relation to the advanced skill sets. Within each of the themes, commonalities and differences in practices highlighted how principals operationalize communication.

These findings help identify the need for further study and exploration of communication practices of a school leader. To ensure quality leadership, principals must be able to use communication practices to foster positive school climate and establish trust. In addition, school leaders need to be proficient at communicating the importance and focus of student achievement

through communication practices that promote professional development and coordinated strategies school wide for professional practice.

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APPENDIX A

Request for District Permission to Conduct Research Study

Date

Title, Name

School District

Address

City, State Zip code

Phone/Fax

Dear Superintendent__ (Name)_____,

My name is Leslie Minger. I am currently a dissertation student in Pepperdine University's Educational Leadership, Administration, and Policy (ELAP) Ed.D. program. My dissertation chair is Linda Purrington, Ed.D., Senior Lecturer, ELAP Program. I would like to request permission to conduct my study in (name of district).

The purpose of my study is to explore and describe the leadership practices of school principals as related to the basic leadership skill sets a) setting directions, b) developing people, and c) redesigning the organization in purposely selected Southern California elementary schools that have demonstrated high levels of academic performance as measured by their API scores from the school years between 2011 and 2015. This multiple case study will also explore and describe the leadership practices of school principals as related to the "beyond the basics" leadership skill sets; a) creating and sustaining a competitive school, b) empowering others to make significant decisions, c) providing instructional guidance, and d) developing and implementing a strategic school improvement plan. More specifically, the intent of this multiple case study is to uncover the communication aspect of effective leadership related to the seven sets of practices utilized by the principals that might be replicated in other elementary schools to improve student learning and achievement.

The questions guiding my study are in purposely selected Southern California elementary schools that have demonstrated high levels of academic performance over the past three years:

1. What communication practices are used by principals as part of their basic core leadership skill sets to foster student learning?

2. What communication practices are used by principals as part of their “beyond the basics” skill sets to improve teaching and student learning in a highly accountable policy context?

I would like to interview principals and 3 certified teachers at 3-5 schools in the district who have maintained an API of above 800 for the past 3 consecutive years. In addition I would like schools where the principal has held their position for the past 5 consecutive years.

The methodology for the study would be data collection through interviews, observations, and collection of applicable artifacts. The interviews will be audio taped (identification kept confidential by alpha coding) and transcribed for clarity. I will keep all data password protected and locked so that confidentiality of the district, schools, and participants is protected throughout the process. The participants will be provided a copy of the transcription and one week to respond with edits to the transcription. I would ask that participants complete a 60minute maximum interview in person or via phone or skype. I would request a 1-2 hour visit to the school to observe and collect artifacts as well. All participants may request a copy of the study as well upon completion. To indicate your response to this request for permission please either respond on district letterhead and return response via enclosed self-addressed and stamped envelope or you may email your response. If you email, please include district official logo in you communication.

Sample Response:

(Must be on district letterhead and must include district logo if emailed)

To Whom It May Concern:

I have read Leslie Minger’s request for permission to conduct her dissertation study in (district name) and I grant permission for study as proposed in her request letter.

Sincerely,

Name Title Date

Thank you for your information and time,

Kindest Regards,

Leslie Minger

APPENDIX B

Request for Principal and Teachers Participation in the Research Study

Title, Name

School Principal

School Name

Address

City, State zip code

Phone/Fax

Dear (Name of principal)_____,

My name is Leslie Minger. I am currently a dissertation student in Pepperdine University's Educational Leadership, Administration, and Policy (ELAP) Ed.D. program. My dissertation chair is Linda Purrington, Ed.D., Senior Lecturer, ELAP Program. I would like to request permission to conduct my study in (name of district).

The purpose of my study is to explore and describe the leadership practices of school principals as related to the basic leadership skill sets a) setting directions, b) developing people, and c) redesigning the organization in purposely selected Southern California elementary schools that have demonstrated high levels of academic performance.. This multiple case study will also explore and describe the leadership practices of school principals as related to the "beyond the basics" leadership skill sets; a) creating and sustaining a competitive school, b) empowering others to make significant decisions, c) providing instructional guidance, and d) developing and implementing a strategic school improvement plan. More specifically, the intent of this multiple case study is to uncover the communication aspect of effective leadership related to the seven sets of practices utilized by the principals that might be replicated in other elementary schools to improve student learning and achievement.

The questions guiding my study are in purposely selected Southern California elementary schools that have demonstrated high levels of academic performance over the past three years:

1. What communication practices are used by principals as part of their basic core leadership skill sets to foster student learning?
2. What communication practices are used by principals as part of their "beyond the basics" skill sets to improve teaching and student learning in a highly accountable policy context?

I would like to interview you in addition to 3 certified teachers at your school.

The methodology for the study would be data collection through interviews, observations, and collection of applicable artifacts. The interviews will be audio taped (identification kept confidential by alpha coding) and transcribed for clarity. I will keep all data password protected and locked so that confidentiality of the district, schools, and participants is protected throughout the process. The participants will be provided a copy of the transcription and one week to respond with edits to the transcription. I would ask that you and each participant complete a 60minute maximum interview in person or via phone or skype. I would request a 1-2 hour visit to the school to observe and collect artifacts as well. All participants may request a copy of the study as well upon completion.

To indicate your response to this request for permission please either respond on school letterhead and return response via enclosed self-addressed and stamped envelope or you may email your response. If you email, please include your school's official logo in you communication.

Sample Response:

(Must be on school letterhead and must include school logo if emailed)

To Whom It May Concern:

I have read Leslie Minger's request for permission to conduct her dissertation study at (school's name) and I grant permission for study as proposed in her request letter.

Sincerely,

Name Title Date

Thank you for your time and considering participation in the study.

Respectfully,

Leslie Minger

Pepperdine University

Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities

Participant: _____

Principal Investigator: Leslie Minger

Title of Project: Examining Educational Leadership Communication Practices Around Basic and Advanced Skill Sets: A Multiple Case Study

I, _____, agree to participate in the research study under the direction of Leslie Minger. I understand that the study will be under the supervision of Dr. Linda Purrington

The overall purpose of this research is to identify the way communication is operationalized in regards to two skill sets necessary for successful leadership. I have been asked to participate in this study because the school I am assigned to has shown consistency in the high academic achievement.

I understand that my participation will involve a 60 minute interview about my communication practices around basic and advanced skill sets. The researcher will audio tape the interview but my identity will be confidential. The researcher will send me the transcribed interview for review and validation of my statements before it is published.

I know the researcher will ensure minimal risk to participants throughout the study and the benefits will not be direct to myself but do include adding to the knowledge base for future educational leaders. Some potential risks include boredom or fatigue and I may be provided short breaks to minimize these risks.

I will be informed of the key findings at the conclusion of the study and I grant permission for the data to be used in the process for completing an Ed. D. degree and any potential future publications.

I understand I may choose not to participate in this research.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and I may refuse to participate and/or withdraw my consent and discontinue participation in the interview or study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.

I understand the investigator will take reasonable measures to protect the confidentiality of my records and my identity will not be revealed in any publication that may result from this project.

I understand that the investigator is willing to answer my inquiries I may have concerning the research herein described. I understand that I may contact Linda Purrington.

I understand to my satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have received a copy of this informed consent for which I have read and understand. I hereby consent to participate in the research described above.

Participant's Signature

Date

I have explained and defined in detail the research procedures in which the subject has consented to participate.

Having explained this and answered any questions. I am cosigning this form and accepting this person's consent.

Principal Investigator

Date

APPENDIX D

CITI Training

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM) COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS REPORT*

* NOTE: Scores on this Requirements Report reflect quiz completions at the time all requirements for the course were met. See list below for details. See separate Transcript Report for more recent quiz scores, including those on optional (supplemental) course elements.

- **Name:** Leslie Minger (ID: 4065024)
- **Email:** Leslie.Minger@pepperdine.edu
- **Institution Affiliation:** Pepperdine University (ID: 1729)
- **Institution Unit:** Educational Leadership
- **Curriculum Group:** Graduate Students conducting no more than minimal risk research (INACTIVE)
- **Course Learner Group:** Students - Class projects (INACTIVE)
- **Stage:** Stage 1 - Basic Course

APPENDIX E

IRB Approval



Pepperdine University
24255 Pacific Coast Highway
Malibu, CA 90263
TEL: 310-506-4000

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: September 26, 2016

Protocol Investigator Name: Leslie Minger

Protocol #: 16-02-211

Project Title: Examining Educational Leadership Communication Practices Around Basic and Advanced Skill Sets: A Multiple Case Study.

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Leslie Minger:

[EXEMPT]

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at community.pepperdine.edu/irb.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

[EXEMPT]

[EXPEDITED]

Thank you for submitting your application for expedited review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. As the nature of the research met the requirements for expedited review under provision Title 45 CFR 46.110 of the federal Protection of Human Subjects Act, the IRB conducted a formal, but expedited, review of your application materials.



Pepperdine University
24255 Pacific Coast Highway
Malibu, CA 90263
TEL: 310-506-4000

Based upon review, your IRB application has been approved. The IRB approval begins today September 26, 2016, and expires on December 31, 2016.

Your final consent form has been stamped by the IRB to indicate the expiration date of study approval. You can only use copies of the consent that have been stamped with the IRB expiration date to obtain consent from your participants.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for expedited review and will require a submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB. If contact with subjects will extend beyond December 31, 2016, a continuing review must be submitted at least one month prior to the expiration date of study approval to avoid a lapse in approval.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at community.pepperdine.edu/irb.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

[EXPEDITED]

[FULLBOARD]

Thank you for submitting your application for full board review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Based upon review, your IRB application has been approved.

The IRB approval begins today September 26, 2016, and expires on December 31, 2016.

Your final consent form has been stamped by the IRB to indicate the expiration date of study approval. You can only use copies of the consent that have been stamped with the IRB expiration date to obtain consent from your participants.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for expedited review and will require a submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB. If contact with subjects will extend beyond December 31, 2016, a continuing review must be submitted at least one month prior to the expiration date of study approval to avoid a lapse in approval.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in*



Pepperdine University
24255 Pacific Coast Highway
Malibu, CA 90263
TEL: 310-506-4000

Research: Policies and Procedures Manual at community.pepperdine.edu/irb.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

[FULLBOARD]

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chairperson

cc: Dr. Lee Kats, Vice Provost for Research and Strategic Initiatives

Mr. Brett Leach, Regulatory Affairs Specialist

APPENDIX F

Interview Protocol and Questions for Principals

Interviewer: Leslie Minger

Filename: Interviewee No: <numeric code>-<date>

Topic: Communication practices around basic and advanced skill sets

Date: _____

Location: _____

Start time: _____

End time: _____

The researcher will review the following information before beginning the interview.

- The purpose of this interview is to explore your perceptions regarding your communication practices that contribute to 7 variables that have been identified as basic and advanced skill sets needed for successful school leadership.
- You are one of 12-15 participants to agree to be interviewed for this study
- I will be conducting a thirteen question interview with you today. The interview will be audio recorded, with your permission, and will allow me to transcribe and analyze the data at a later time. The transcription will be provided to you for review for accuracy of representation. I will ask that you reply within one week from the date that the transcription is sent to you for revisions. If you do not have any transcription revisions you do not need to reply.
- I assure you that your identity and you responses will remain confidential. The aggregated data collected from all participants will be used for the overall purpose of the study and no identifying information will be attached or provided. All information collected is stored in password protected files known only to me. The interview protocol requires an identification process to assist in the confidentiality. Two expertly trained coders will review the interview findings to ensure trustworthiness of the data findings. All documents will be securely stored for three years and no later than five. The documents will then be destroyed.
- The participation is voluntary and your decision to participate will in no way affect your profession. Please review your signed consent form one more time before we begin.
- Do you have any questions for me before we being? Thank you for your participation.

Interview Questions

Basics

Setting Direction:

1. From your perspective, how might you describe the purpose of a schools vision or mission?
2. How do you communicate the schools vision and mission to the staff at your school site?
3. How do you set schoolwide and professional goals with your staff and communicate goal implementation?

Developing People:

4. How do you utilize communication to build trust while maintaining staff motivation?
5. How does your communication maintain a culture of collaboration, learning, and high expectations?

Redesigning the Organization:

6. Please recall how the communication process(es) you use help to build capacity in your school?
7. How do you utilize communication to build trust and relationships with your staff?

Advanced

Create and Sustain a Competitive School:

8. How do you communicate to your community that your school is the school of choice with so many competitive educational options?

Empowering Others to Make Significant Decisions:

9. How do you use communication to build leadership capacity in your school, and allow staff to make significant decisions?
10. In what ways do you include parents in the decision making at your school? How is that opportunity communicated?

Provide Instructional Guidance:

11. What forms of communication do you use to provide instructional guidance to your staff?
12. How do you communicate to your staff the importance of professional development?

Develop and Implement a Strategic School Improvement Plan:

13. How do you develop your school improvement plan and what communication strategies do you use to implement the plan?

APPENDIX G

Interview Protocol and Questions for Certified Teachers

Interviewer: Leslie Minger

Filename: Interviewee No: <numeric code>-<date>

Topic: Communication practices around basic and advanced skill sets

Date: _____

Location: _____

Start time: _____

End time: _____

The researcher will review the following information before beginning the interview.

- The purpose of this interview is to explore your perceptions regarding your communication practices that contribute to 7 variables that have been identified as basic and advanced skill sets needed for successful school leadership.
- You are one of 12-15 participants to agree to be interviewed for this study
- I will be conducting a fourteen question interview with you today. The interview will be audio recorded, with your permission, and will allow me to transcribe and analyze the data at a later time. The transcription will be provided to you for review for accuracy of representation. I will ask that you reply within one week from the date that the transcription is sent to you for revisions. If you do not have any transcription revisions you do not need to reply.
- I assure you that your identity and you responses will remain confidential. The aggregated data collected from all participants will be used for the overall purpose of the study and no identifying information will be attached or provided. All information collected is stored in password protected files known only to me. The interview protocol requires an identification process to assist in the confidentiality. Two expertly trained coders will review the interview findings to ensure trustworthiness of the data findings. All documents will be securely stored for three years and no later than five. The documents will then be destroyed.
- The participation is voluntary and your decision to participate will in no way affect your profession. Please review your signed consent form one more time before we begin.
- Do you have any questions for me before we being? Thank you for your participation.

Interview Questions

Basics

Setting Direction:

14. From your perspective, how might you describe the purpose of a schools vision or mission?
15. How does your principal communicate the schools vision and mission to the staff at your school site?
16. How are school wide and professional goals and goal implementation communicated by the principal?

Developing People:

17. How does the principal utilize communication to build trust while maintaining staff motivation?
18. How does the principal communicate to maintain a culture of collaboration, learning, and high expectations?

Redesigning the Organization:

19. What communication processes, if any, are used by the principal to help build leadership capacity in your school?
20. How does the principal utilize communication to build trust and relationships with your staff?

Advanced

Create and Sustain a Competitive School:

21. How does the principal communicate to the community that your school is the school of choice with so many competitive educational options?

Empowering Others to Make Significant Decisions:

22. How does the principal use communication to build leadership capacity in your school, and allow staff to make significant decisions?
23. In what ways are parents included in the decision making at your school? How is that opportunity communicated?

Provide Instructional Guidance:

24. What forms of communication are used by the principal to provide instructional guidance to your staff?
25. How does the principal communicate the importance of professional development?

Develop and Implement a Strategic School Improvement Plan:

26. How do you develop your school improvement plan (SIP) and what communication strategies do you use to implement the plan?

APPENDIX H

Leadership Basics and Advanced Skill Sets - Informal Observation Form

Basic Skill Sets: (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004)	Date	Location	Observed Evidence
Setting Direction			
Developing People			
Redesigning the Organization			
Advanced Skill Sets: (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004)			
Creating and Sustaining a Competitive School			
Empowering Others to Make Important Decisions			
Providing Instructional Guidance			
Developing and Implementing Strategic School Improvement Plan			

Notes:

APPENDIX I

Leadership Basic and Advanced Skill Sets - Artifacts Collection Form

Basic Skill Sets: (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004)	Date	Location	Observed Evidence
Setting Direction			
Developing People			
Redesigning the Organization			
Advanced Skill Sets: (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004)			
Creating and Sustaining a Competitive School			
Empowering Others to Make Important Decisions			
Providing Instructional Guidance			
Developing and Implementing Strategic School Improvement Plan			

Notes: