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Pepperdine University
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

LEADERS OF CHARTER SCHOOLS WHO CLOSE
ACHIEVEMENT GAPS IN URBAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Eliza Kim

July, 2018

Shreyas Gandhi, Ed.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Eliza G. Kim

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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DEDICATION

To my 할머니, *Halmoni* – The smartest woman I know.

To my 엄마, *Umma* – Who didn't have the privilege to go to school.

To 아리, *Elonia* – Your future awaits.

From the distinguished women before you,
The present holds the brightest future with the most possibilities.

*Learn everything you can. Don't just study.
Learn.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Education was an expectation for me in my household. There was no question as to how far I should go. All that mattered was there was a will, as my parents would do anything to ensure I got the opportunities war, poverty, gender and having multiple siblings took away from them growing up in a war-torn, colonized, divided and detrimentally prejudicial country: South Korea. America and its free education system is the reason why my mother married my father—to come to the states, since he was already here. So to my parents, thank you for believing in me and sacrificing in order to lay the pathway for me to achieve my goals.

My school and district. My life's work has been the production of my soul, my ideas, my passions. They are intertwined and synonymous with the last sixteen years of my adulthood trying to affect the achievement gap in public education. It is due to my stakeholders who drive me to the highest version of myself. *Integridad*. And the reason why I constantly seek to better who I am and what I do. This study would not exist had it not been for my staff and students who deserve more.

The Slippery Six and honorary member, Dr. Juarez. We started this journey together. Because of you, I was able to finish. As my top Strength's Finder revealed, I am a Learner. That is the main motivation for me in anything I pursue. Learning came joyfully. When it came time to contribute back with this research, I needed my own super support group to help me to the finish line. Those members also include the following.

My committee and editor, Ardell, and honorary editor Raj: Thank you, thank you. I had the thought, and you showed me how...literally, even though I was sloppy, panting, and spent along the way.

Dr. Gandhi, you selected me as your student. It took me so long to find a chair. You started this process. Your response time is like the speed of light no matter the time zone. I am indebted to you.

Dr. Pack, one can argue this began before Pepperdine, at LMU, or when you found me at 98th Street promoting ISLA. I was your student first nearly a decade ago. You *Modeled the Way* for me and gave me *Four* new lenses to live by. Thank you for being my lifelong $\hat{\text{스}}\hat{\text{승}}$, an honorific term for teacher that does not exist in the English language—only in cultures like Korea where education and educators are venerated.

Dr. Leigh, thank you for pushing me and simply being interested and available to my topic. Your authentic curiosity alone has elevated my contribution to this field. And in so doing, helped my 고향 *kohyang* (community) rise.

Lastly, I'm reminded of Kim Basinger's Oscar Speech in 1998, when she thanked everyone she ever met. This is not trivial to me. I deeply understand what it takes to achieve big goals. One cannot do it alone. To my dear friends, encouraging family and unwavering colleagues, I am the amalgamation of you, all who came before me, influenced me, and who will continue to add to my identity. I am literally nothing without all these parts. And it is because of these elements, I continue to push myself. *Ubuntu* means "I am, because we are." Whether it is a supernatural being, or my ancestral predecessors that is accountable for my reflection or my fortunes. I am so grateful. And finally, to the identifiable patrons who gave me the time to write without guilt, when I have so little of it with my ridiculously demanding positions...Scott, Mom, and Dad, I love you.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation studies 7 high-performing middle school principals' leadership styles and programs as measured by their student achievement on the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress or CAASPP. The qualitative research includes interviews of these identified school leaders about their self-reported strengths that account for their students' success. While Kouzes and Posner's set of leadership practices is the theoretical framework behind this study, the primary investigator developed two themes evident in both the high-achieving schools and its highly effective principals: strong people skills, and the ability to create and implement programs that affect a group who have been prejudicially described as low-income and low-performing. The participants' lived experiences as charter school leaders who work with underserved communities add to a very limited body of research of urban education and how charter schools bridge the proverbial academic achievement gap.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Education in the United States has been a topic of debate, budgets, and innovation. Although America is a model for free schooling, capitalism has created a culture in which education is not the only pathway to financial stability or wealth. The advent of the Internet has augmented this possibility of attaining the American dream without a college degree. Nevertheless, the increasing number of avenues for success is not the reason American education is falling behind.

When parents search for good schools, where can they go? Beyond word of mouth, the options are limited. Parents search their local district website, and other digital sources. Most parents would not know where to begin researching for effective charter schools. Currently, the question of whether a school qualifies as “good” is determined by parent feedback, according to GreatSchools.com. According to the site, parents review teachers, student achievement, and the environment at large. Some reviews include safety of the school, are multiple learning opportunities present; how are the facilities; and do specific programming such as after school, special education, or student discipline exist? Further, parents also search for an academic emphasis or a particular learning modality—STEM, or the performing arts. As parents, how would they be certain that they chose the best school for their youngster? With charters in the mix, it doesn’t necessarily make the process easier. This is partly why scrutiny of the education system is a long tradition, with criticism from all stakeholders.

The right of individual states to manage their schools supersedes federal law, resulting in further discrepancies amongst schools across the nation. American educators have spent the last decade attempting to align the incongruous policies regarding student achievement, teacher credentials, and classroom settings—particularly after the enactment of the No Child Left Behind

(NCLB) Act of 2001. Although there are different bodies that regulate schools, NCLB and common assessments enable us to identify which schools are achieving and which are not. Similar state exams also reveal how America ranks based on literacy and math compared to other countries. Based on these and other data sources, the notion of America again becoming the hegemon of education is deteriorating. There are studies that show the United States trails countries such as Finland, South Korea, Singapore, and China, leaving America in the 10th or beyond in educational stature (Shepard, 2010). Although common assessments demonstrate how schools and states are doing, the problems with low performing schools and the social divide it creates continues to be perpetuated.

Background and Recent History

There are significant gains from other countries that are scoring higher than the United States in math and other subjects (Statistical Research Center, 2011). The disparities between high achieving and low performing U.S. schools are also becoming more apparent as evidenced by state mandated exams that grew out of NCLB (Associated Press, 2010). This is where the role of charter schools comes to light. This study examined how charter schools attempt to educate the public, specifically in California, and what the leaders of these institutions are doing to bridge the academic achievement gap within low-income, low-performing, or even low-information (students that do not have access to readily available technology) urban public schools.

In 1992 California became the third state to pass the Charter School Act (CCSA, 2012). This law gave petitioners access to publically-funded schools that were independent and operated autonomously from a local school district. This further meant that school leaders could make decisions on the hire and fire of teachers, curriculum, the school day, budgets—essentially

everything. Most importantly, they could do whatever they felt necessary to bridge the academic achievement gap, as charters are held to a higher standard than district schools. For some rural school districts and extremely low-performing schools, charters seem to be the only hope for lifting communities out of poverty and educating youth. As an example, take New Orleans School District that was obliterated after Hurricane Katrina. Now in its former stead, are mostly charter schools that have sprouted quickly enough out of the debris to continue to educate youth that have remained in those wards. Almost 90% of schools in New Orleans are charter schools (NAPCS, 2014).

In 2009-2010, more than 1.6 million students attended one out of 5,000 charter schools across 40 states and the District of Columbia (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2012). California ranks top, with the most charter schools. As of 2012, 982 charter school petitions had come to fruition, serving 412,000 students (CCSA, 2012). Reports on their progress are mixed; charter school performances represent both the top and bottom 5% of student test scores (CCSA, 2012). Charters schools can be independent from inception, or are established by conversion from a traditional public school. Conversion schools can be either independent or dependent of the local school district. The data show encouraging results.

California Charter Schools Association (CCSA), founded in 2003, reported:

1. Charter schools are breaking the link between poverty and low performance, with charters serving low-income students more likely to be high-performing than traditional schools serving the same socioeconomic demographics.
2. California charter schools serving a predominantly African American student population consistently outperform similar schools with the same student demographics and traditional public schools.
3. California's charter middle schools consistently demonstrate higher academic performance than non-charter schools.
4. Overall, charter schools in Los Angeles and Oakland outperform district schools.
5. More than 10,000 students are on waitlists for Los Angeles charter schools. (¶ 3)

These are specific and evidence-supported areas of growth in the urban sector of public education. From a macro national lens to a micro standpoint of Los Angeles, high performing charter schools for the last two decades have done what all schools should be doing. California Charter Schools Association (2016) reported that LAUSD Charters are outperforming traditional public schools on recent state exams. Both local district and charter schools reveal that it is not an easy job educating youth, let alone bridging the achievement gap, yet charter schools are making more notable progress. Stetson (2013) wrote in “Common traits of successful charter schools” that high expectations, extended school days, innovative instructional techniques, intense teacher training, and responsive school leadership yield better student achievement. This study focused more on the leadership aspect.

Statement of the Problem

Charter schools have emerged as one of the possible solutions to the growing epidemic of low performing schools, dissatisfied stakeholders, and a diminishing skilled and prepared workforce. Not all charter schools are doing well, but most are performing beyond expectation, and in a short amount of time. To understand why charter school students are achieving well on state tests, this case study focused on the schools’ leadership.

As traditional district schools continue on, best practices of charters should be shared. Because charters have more flexibility to create and modify school programs, and there are a growing number of charter schools and educators in operation, it is only natural for charter school leaders to be studied. This is a growing phenomenon, and yet there are limited studies on charter school leadership. There is still limited understanding of why charters outperform traditional district schools (CCSA, 2016). Within the 20-year span that charters have operated in California, how have some charter schools been able to do this while serving a disproportionate

number of low income and traditionally low-performing students, while the surrounding traditional public schools have not been able to make such gains? Stetson (2013) wrote, “In a recent comprehensive report for the Progressive Policy Institute Though controversy rages about the overall contribution of charter schools to U.S. education reform, few doubt that a subset of charter schools has achieved extraordinary results with disadvantaged students” (p. 1). Best practices of the best schools should be shared, so all students and educators can benefit.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study was to discover the commonalities and variances of the leaders at top performing charter middle schools in California. At this stage in the research, the similarities and differences were generally defined as educational beliefs, leadership traits and styles, and reactions to challenges in the workplace that result in academic and instructional programming.

Leaders were tested by approved methods: the Leadership Practices Inventory (Kouzes & Posner, 2003) followed by an interview. This study was a qualitative case-study with interviews of a selected group of high achieving charter school leaders in Los Angeles that serve middle school students. Middle school was the focus of study, since this age range is the only time that students are consecutively tested on state exams.

Recent Statistics

The success of the education system in America is a complicated and ongoing issue. According to the Associated Press (2010) the United States has lost its high ranking in math and other subject areas on a global scale. In addition, the Statistical Research Center (2011) reported California ranks below average in math and science nationally.

In the 2009 Charter Schools Accountability Report (as cited in Rizzo, 2010, p. 51) the Center for Education Reform [CER] stated:

Since the first charter school opened, individual state data indicates that charter schools are outpacing their conventional [traditional] public school peers with fewer resources and tremendous obstacles. The data also proves charter schools are being held accountable for these results. (p. 3)

Moreover, Buddin and Zimmer (as cited in Rizzo, 2009, p. 51) wrote that the CER also wrote:

Students spending 2 to 3 years in charter schools outperformed conventional public school students. The study also shows that some students do poorly in their first year in charter schools, which the authors suggest may be a mobility effect rather than a charter effect. Over time, students tend to perform better as they increase their tenure in charter schools. (p. 355)

Charters are collectively striving to break hackneyed educational stereotypes for impoverished, minority, immigrant, and inner-city students (CCSA, 2009). Leaders of charter schools attest that given the right environment, discipline, and teaching, students from these demographics can learn at the same pace as a traditional student from a middle- to high-income family where English is the primary language spoken at home (CCSA, 2012). The flexibility that charter schools provide the education system is necessary to ensure a healthy educational environment of choice to better serve a diverse community.

The most recent student achievement data available based on the Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium (SBAC) exams through the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) reveal that charter schools outperform traditional district schools (CCSA, 2016). Back in 2012, with the previous state exams California State Tests (CSTs) through the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR), CCSA announced that charters make up the top 5% of achieving schools in California. The data is clear with students that attend charter schools.

Research Question

The research question was: Are there any leadership commonalities between successful charter school leaders? This study examined identified leaders and their skills in an in-depth qualitative study with approved methods such as the Leadership Practices Inventory (Kouzes & Posner, 2001). It further defined “successful” charter schools, and “student achievement” as measured by state exams. The idea behind this study is that leaders of successful charter schools as measured by state academic performance measures have more educational philosophies and leadership traits in common than not.

Importance of the Topic

Charter schools are sprouting up across the country, primarily in low-performing, low-socioeconomic status, and disaster-stricken areas. They aim to outperform local district schools and to provide more opportunities to the same population of students. Furthermore, charter schools are collectively striving to bridge academic gaps, and debunk stereotypes for poor, ethnic, immigrant, and inner-city students. How are they doing this? And why are some of them successful in such a short amount of time?

This case study critically examined the leadership behind these successful schools, in order to identify any commonalities or significant differences among the school leaders. The purpose of such an analysis is to discover a basic structure for leadership, school programs, and a cultural framework that is replicable for other emerging academic leaders. This research may further define why charter schools are at both the bottom and top 5% of student performance (CCSA, 2012), by highlighting leadership practices that are evident at top performing schools.

This is significant because great programs for youth should be studied, and replicated if possible. As charter schools are making the most gains across the country, this study can benefit

more and other charter schools, school leaders, as well as students. In so doing, communities will be uplifted and more futures for disadvantaged populations will be brightened.

Qualitative Methods

With a goal of a minimum of 5 to a maximum of 10, for this study 7 successful charter school leaders were identified and interviewed from Los Angeles, California. Their basic leadership styles and traits were further assessed by established tests such as the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) by Kouzes and Posner (2003). The interviews further helped distinguish and explain the general leadership traits according to the LPI that resulted in their successful student achievement with regard to their leadership practices and programs.

Key Definitions

Types of schools. The following types of schools are referred to:

- Charter school – public school, independent of the local school district, tuition free.
- Traditional school – local public school associated with a larger school district.
- CMO – Charter Management Organization, the charter school back office of administrators who support the charter school(s) in the network. Some charter schools are managed under a CMO and some are not.

Leader titles. School leadership is not limited to the principal but may also include the Head of Schools, Founders, CEO of the organization, Chief Academic Officer, Chief Culture Officer, Assistant Principal, Director of Instruction & Curriculum, Dean of Intervention, et cetera. The main criterion is that the school leader has worked with the teaching staff and makes decisions on how and what the students learn.

Standardized tests. The degree of success of a charter school was measured by student test scores according to the California state-mandated exams. The leadership dataset on the

participants was collected through interviews and existing leadership tests. The Academic Performance Index (API) score of the school was also considered; however, the recent results from the Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) was the determining factor since a 2-year dataset has been observed from California Common Core Standards.

The adoption of Common Core Standards changed the testing regimen for all public schools. California transferred to Common Core from the California Standards Test (CSTs) sponsored by California Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR), under which students from Grades 2 through 11 were tested on standards in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and history and social science based on the grade level. Students received results from the California Department of Education such as are shown in Figure 1.

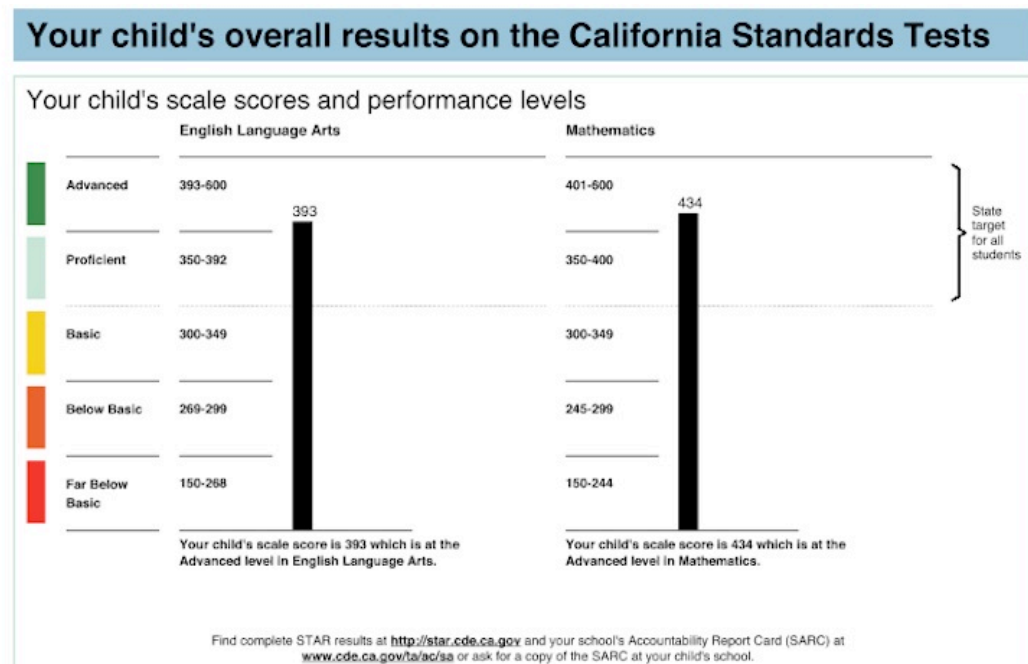


Figure 1. California Standards Tests (the prior testing system) output for parents. From “School Accountability Report Card,” by California Department of Education, 2017 (www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/sa). Copyright 2017 by CDE. Reprinted with permission.

The results were criterion-referenced, and students were rated as *advanced*, *proficient*, *basic*, *below basic*, or *far below basic*. California considered advanced and proficient students as “passing,” meaning these students demonstrated sufficient understanding of the state standards.

Presently with Common Core, public school students take a Computer Adaptive Test (CAT) from the Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium (SBAC). California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP), like the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR), is a secure browser that documents a student’s progress on common core standards based on the SBAC assessments. The goal of Common Core for California is for high school graduates to be ready for college and life. Therefore, each state’s common core standards are backwards-aligned with *college and career readiness* standards.

The SBAC is different from the STAR in several respects. First, it is all online, students have to mark the deduction of some of their answers (math), wrote out short answers, and complete a performance task with an essay. For the time being, it is only for math and ELA. It is criterion-referenced as well. Students went from eliminating answer choices with a multiple-choice test on the CSTs, to a demonstration assessment of their knowledge, writing skills, and critical thought processes on the SBAC. The metric changed from five STAR categories to four: *exceeded standards*, *met standards*, *nearly met standards*, and *not met standards*. Students need to be in the first two categories to be considered passing. Figure 2 shows sample results for CAASPP.

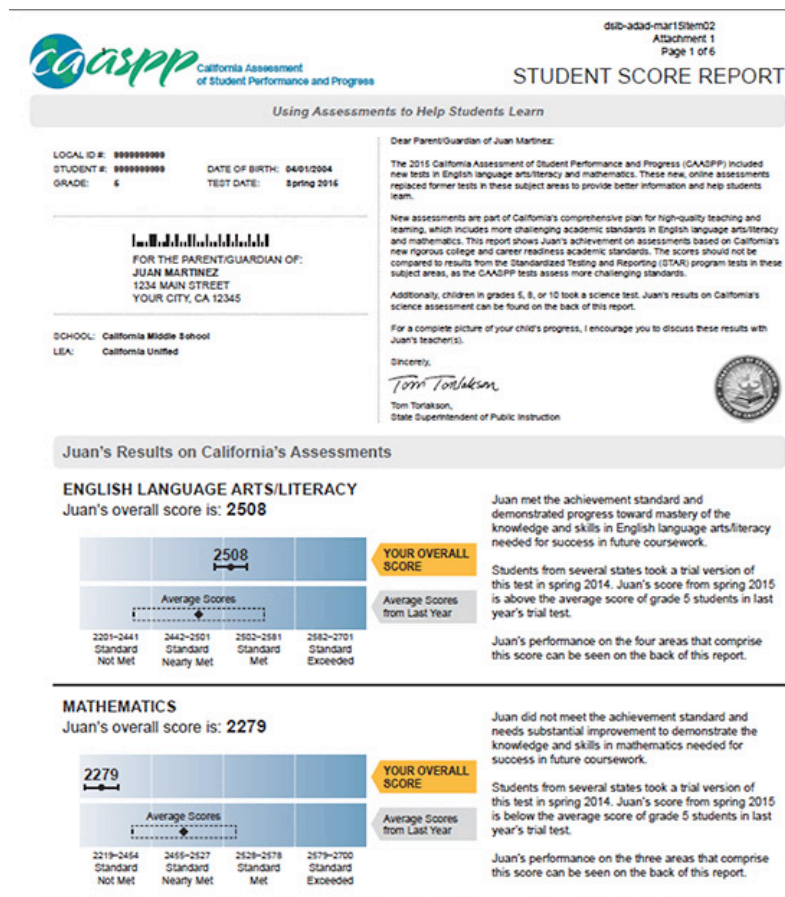


Figure 2. CAASPP output for parents in the current testing system. From “California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress,” by California Department of Education, 2017 (www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/sa). Copyright 2017 by CDE. Reprinted with permission.

Based on this new accountability system, successful charter schools and their leaders were identified. According to the scope of the study, schools that performed 50% or higher on either math or ELA were considered “successful.”

Scope of the Study

This study explored whether successful charter school leaders have similar leadership styles, philosophies, and characteristics. Selection criteria were intended to further narrow down programs that have been implemented that account for their student achievement. Firstly, to narrow the scope of the study, “successful” charter schools were carefully defined. For

comparative analyses, this study focused on schools with similar demographics and backgrounds.

For this reason, the schools selected are within Los Angeles. They are charter schools that serve low-income populations, or are Title 1 schools. The schools serve students mainly of Latino background and minority races. For the CAASPP, schools with a significant margin of students who performed exceedingly well or met the Common Core Standards were identified.

Key Assumptions and Limitations

The key assumption is that these top performing schools' leadership shares fundamental educational beliefs about urban education, students, learning, and management. Additionally, there might be important factors other than the principal's leadership that were most influential in school success, such as outstanding teachers who are involved in the school's academic gains, a program of teacher leaders, and possibly even specific professional development and trainings. School principals understand that charters are a vector for more immediate change and are more innovative in educational reform than are traditional schools. Site leaders are also the main proponents for school programs, data analyses, and intervention supports. A limitation to the study is that the schools were identified through one measurement of California standardized exams, the CAASPP. There are other measures of success, but this study used only one.

Summary

Charter schools have been in existence for a few decades, and some are relatively young. Irrespective of the school's age, there are comparative data available for charter schools and district schools' achievements. High-achieving charter schools were largely sought after as a research subject for educational scholars. As the charter movement continues to ignite communities, take over public schools, and transform lives as education is supposed to do, it will

be a key area of study and comparison. Charter schools, charter school leaders, and student achievement will be relevant educational topics for years to come.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Charter Schools Background

Across 42 states in the country, there are over 6,800 charter public schools educating around 3 million students according to the National Alliance of Public Charter Schools (NAPCS, 2014). From 2009-2014, charter school enrollment grew by 70% across the nation, and it now comprises a total of more than 5% of all students in public schools (NAPCS, 2014). Districts in Flint, Detroit, and New Orleans have more than 40%, 50, and 90% enrollment in charter schools respectively (NAPCS, 2014). A Phi Delta Kappa Gallup Poll shows that 70% of Americans favor charter schools (NAPCS, 2014), since schools of choice provide more options for parents and students, and there is higher accountability for all stakeholders resulting in more competency.

Of all the states, California has the “highest number of students enrolled in public charter schools” as of 2014 (NAPCS, 2014). Not only are California Charter Schools a phenomenon, but interest in other options for schools is also evident due to the popularity and exponential growth of these educational agencies. California Charter Schools Association (2012) reported that charters in California comprise the top 5% of schools based on student state performances as well as the bottom 5% of public schools. California also houses more charter schools than any other state in America. CCSA (2015, 2016) wrote that in this Golden State alone there are 1,253 charter schools with over 603,000 students enrolled and almost 160,000 students still on the waitlist. Greater Los Angeles has the highest growth of new charter schools that were approved by a local school district. Fifteen new charter schools opened doors in 2016 in Southern California out of 56 new charters that were granted in California as a whole (CCSA, 2016). With California birthing the most charter schools, it is fertile for review and research.

Conclusively, this paper explored the leadership behind top performing charter schools in Southern California to determine if there were any similar leadership traits and characteristic among top performing school leaders.

Historical Background

The idea of public schools of choice is credited to Ray Budde (Cobb & Garn, as cited in Ike, 2012), who coined the term *charter school* in the 1970s while serving as a professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. The *New York Times* also credited Budde with a published article about his use of the term during the 1970s (Ike, 2012). The idea of independent public schools picked up more steam in the 1980s when Budde called for educational reform by states offering more schools of choice. Local schools are based on home addresses that inevitably continue the cycle of poverty and ignorance in low-income and low-performing regions.

Based on this notion of charter schools that are both public and autonomous, Minnesota was the first state that passed the charter school law in 1991 (Schroeder, 2004). City Academy opened in 1992 as the first charter school in the country (Ike, 2012; Schroeder, 2004). California followed suit as the second state with a similar law in 1992. With a growing need for quality schools in urban areas, the Charter School Act of 1992 that included a mega waiver from Ed Code in its language was the beginning of the public school reform in the West Coast. The mega waiver essentially gave charter schools free rein, because this law meant that the approved charter school mainly operated within the laws of its own charter: “47610. A charter school shall comply with all of the provisions set forth in its charter petition, but is otherwise exempt from the laws governing school districts except as specified in Sections 47611 and 41365” (California Charter School Act, 1992, ¶ 68).

Charter school petitions are also temporary. In California, petitions have a 5-year lifetime before they need to be renewed. This keeps these independent institutions accountable, yet it also allows the governing body the opportunity to insert other policies onto the school (California Charter School Act, 1992). Another foundation to the operations of a charter school is the agency that approves the school. It begins with the local District School Board, followed by the County Department of Education (Premack, as cited in Postell, 2012) and finally the state board in this ascension. This means if a charter petition is denied, the petitioner has 2 more opportunities to open a school of choice in California.

LAUSD and charters. Los Angeles Unified District (LAUSD) plays a significant role in the charter movement as it is the largest charter authorizing agency. It passed its first charter in 1993 and its 100th in March of 2006, becoming the first state to have authorized 100 charter schools at the time (LAUSD, 2008). The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS) reported in 2014 that LAUSD was the highest ranking single district in charter school enrollment, with almost 140,000 out of 655,400 total students enrolled. This figure represented a 15% increase from the year before.

CCSA (2016) found charter students in California equally encompass the number of public school students enrolled in LAUSD altogether with over 600,000 students. This means that all of California's charter school enrollees mirror the size of the nation's largest school district. California's LAUSD has the greatest number of students attending charter schools per district, almost double the second ranking state, New York, where New York City district has approximately 70,000 charter students (NAPCS, 2014).

The explosion of charter school interest in Los Angeles also means LAUSD's charter application is the most tedious, consisting of 16 elements, mandated budget and enrollment

figures, and boilerplate language according to LAUSD (LAUSD Charter Schools Division, 2016). The charter application is easily hundreds of pages long. The boilerplate language has enabled LAUSD to insert bylaws per enrollment, outreach, suspension and expulsion, testing, and closing that ultimately makes the mega waiver pertinent only to academic programs.

NCLB, API, AYP, R2T, ESSA. Charter schools are one solution to the need for educational reform. When President George W. Bush called for the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, every public school student had to take a standardized test, and the goal was for every child to be proficient in both English language arts and math within 10 years (CDE, 2016; Wynder, 2013). An additional benchmark, called the *adequate yearly progress* (AYP) for reading proficiency, was imposed for schools that received Title 1 funding due to a significant demographic of students who received the Free or Reduced Lunch Program and were considered low income (Kim, 2010; Porter & Polikoff, as cited in Wynder, 2013). Schools' failure to meet the set guidelines would trigger other interventions from the district and/or the state such as entering program improvement (PI) status.

If a school did not meet its AYP for 2 consecutive years, it was labeled as a PI school according to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. AYP benchmarks included student achievement for specific minority subgroups, students with learning disabilities, and English Learners; for secondary schools it also examined high school graduation rates. If a school was in PI for 4 consecutive years, it was labeled as being in need of "corrective action" (CDE, 2016; Kim, 2010).

Former Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's initiative to radically change LAUSD's lowest performing schools or PI 4-5 schools through his program of Partnership for Los Angeles Schools (PLAS) was based on such low performing schools from the AYP matrix

(Skeels, 2013). This program ultimately floundered, but the missions of PLAS and charter schools are similar in that they seek to better urban education based on student achievement data. Even LAUSD passed a measure to remedy school overcrowding with a charter policy in 2002 (Kerchner, as cited in Ike, 2012).

There are many critics to standardized tests, including Rafe Esquith, whose accomplishments include being named Disney Teacher of the Year, winning Oprah Winfrey's Educator award for \$100,000, and authoring two New York Times bestsellers. Esquith famously urged his audiences "to burn all standardized tests," as it is an "absurd notion that these exams have anything to do with educating a child and preparing him or her for life" (Folsom, 2009, ¶ 6). Yet, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) allowed for comparable data by state, and some measurable student outcomes for teacher performances. With the change of Common Core Standards, educational frameworks have become more rigorous, yet testing has not gone away for this very reason.

By the first decade of the 21st century, partly as a result of the provisions set forth by NCLB, school districts were chafing under the pressure to reach the coveted score of 800 on the Academic Performance Index (API). Then the Obama Administration released the Race to the Top (R2T) program. This was a \$4.35 billion grant from the U.S. Department of Education that funded states based on a specific number of points from a rubric of metrics (Manna & McGuinn, 2013). Arne Duncan, Secretary of Education at the time, said this type of funding was the first of its kind at the federal level to support states (Ike, 2012). NCLB and R2T "helped move the nation from a 'categorical federalism,' focused on redistribution of funds, to new phases of 'performance-based federalism' that now are designed to promote accountability for improved

outcomes and institutional innovation as well as redistribution” (Manna & McGuinn, 2013, p. 13).

The R2T program included four main points:

adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy; building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction; recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; and turning around our lowest-achieving schools. (U.S. Department of Education, 2016, p. 2)

The noteworthy element of R2T, beyond the adoption of common standards and testing, is the inclusive language regarding charter schools whereby states cannot prohibit the expansion of high-performing charters (White, as cited in Postell, 2012). Postell (2012) described that the Obama Administration favored innovative charter schools. Charter schools are presently recognized by local and state laws, and even by national funding programs like R2T. Secretary of Education, John B. King, Jr. later wrote that “much progress has been made in the past 8 years (under Barack Obama), but much work remains to ensure all children enjoy equitable access to excellence in American education” (as cited in U.S. Department of Education, 2016, para. 4).

Along with NCLB from the second Bush Era, and R2T from the Obama administration, the Every Student Succeeds Act 2015 (ESSA) took No Child Left Behind from 2002 to the modern era. NCLB clearly sheds light on schools where students were not achieving across all the states; ESSA adds further protections to socially disadvantaged and high-needs students. This latest law, which is the second federal educational law, invests more money in pre-school,

supports local innovation for interventions and adds accountability to schools that continue to have low graduating rates and student test scores (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

The lasting effect of NCLB in California has been student achievement through the California State Tests or CSTs. Schools were ranked based on the Academic Performance Index or API. Although California's Department of Education does not rank schools or even continue to use API and/or AYP for Title 1 schools, student testing continues to drive evaluations of schools, teacher effectiveness, and even school leadership. The transition to Common Core testing in California through the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) further revealed how well- or ill-prepared students are for higher education since California Common Core State Standards (CCCSS) are based on College and Career Readiness Standards (C&CR). The percentage levels of student knowledge of the standards in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics according to SBAC are all public educators have at the moment to rank students and schools.

California State Benchmarks Then and Now

CSTs vs. SBAC. Students in California take the SBAC exams from April to June annually after 66% of the instructional year is complete for Grades 3 and 8, or at 80% of the school year for Grade 11 (CDE, 2016). The SBAC first began in 2014. Recent 2016 scores are the most supported data since 2015 is considered a pilot year. The testing window is usually near the end of third quarter for schools as teachers and administrators want as much time as possible to teach and reteach students all the relevant standards. Since they are online, unofficial scores are shared with testing coordinators if the majority of the student body has completed and submitted the assessments within a few weeks' time. Official scores are available in the early summer for schools. Traditionally, STAR results for the CSTs took months to be delivered.

Having this information more readily and earlier has helped schools better prepare and organize their curricula for the following school year.

In California, schools were rated according to several standards, one of which was the Academic Performance Index (API). Based on No Child Left Behind, schools had to score at or above 800 to meet the standard of the law. Another measure used to evaluate schools was the Adequate Yearly Progress, or the AYP. Students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, Latinos, African Americans, and students who received Special Education services were monitored for their progress in English and mathematics, along with high school graduation rates (CDE, 2016; Kim, 2010; Porter & Polikoff, as cited in Wynder; 2013).

CAT and CC&R. The Department of Education in California computed student scores on the California Standards Test or CSTs after NCLB. Grades 3, 8, and 11 all had to take this annual exam on scantron until 2013. It is no different with SBAC; however, with the advent of the Common Core Standards that California adopted, testing for public school students is now conducted online with the Computer Adaptive Test (CAT) (CDE, 2016). CAT exams can be “customized for each student for a more accurate measurement” (Regents of University of California—SBAC, Testing Technology, n.d., para. 1). Much like the computer entrance exams for graduate programs or the GRE General Test, “the computer-based test adjusts the difficulty of questions throughout the assessment based on the student’s response. If a student answers a question correctly, the next question will be harder; if a student answers incorrectly, the next question will be easier” (Regents of University of California—SBAC, Testing Technology, n.d., para. 1). Therefore, it is imperative that a student answers the first set of questions correctly in order to score highly on the exam. Therefore, if students do not have basic computer literacy skills, teachers must also prepare them technologically in urban, low-information settings. Low-

information described students who do not have access to technology, whereby their knowledge is limited.

California was the third state in the country to adopt the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) regardless of the controversy and politics (Edsource, 2004). The controversy is the amount of rigor present in Common Core standards versus previous state standards that do not require schools to teach higher-level thinking, problem solving, or analytical writing skills. As common core standards are aligned with College and Career Readiness standards (Regents of University of California—SBAC, High-Ed Approved, n.d.), critics say that they are more challenging and rigorous. Over 250 colleges within 10 participating states now use SBAC end-of-year summative tests in high school to determine whether students can be exempt from developmental classes. More than 30% of incoming college students need to take remediation classes, and SBAC assessments along with other measures help determine whether students are ready for credit-bearing or non-remediation courses instead (Regents of University of California—SBAC, High-Ed Approved, n.d.).

Over 4700 educators collaborated to create the assessment for students along with a teacher's instructional development in mind (Regents of University of California—SBAC, Educator Approved, n.d.). In addition to questions relating to literacy and math, each test includes a writing component as well as performance tasks that require students to apply critical problem-solving skills to real-life situations. Such an assessment was created using pre-existing tests that teachers already believed to be the best of the best in order to more clearly identify a successful pathway to college (Regents of the University of California—SBAC, Educator Approved, n.d.). This means that questions in the SBAC are considered more reliable and valid compared to past CSTs. In fact, Higher Education Leaders in California state, "We believe California's

implementation of the Common Core standards and aligned assessments has the potential to dramatically improve college readiness and help close the preparation gap that exists for California students” (Regents of University of California—SBAC, Educator Approved, n.d., para. 3).

Comparing CST to Common Core Standards

As SBAC was created by educators for entry preparedness to higher-education facilities, CCSs call upon critical thinking, analytical, problem solving and writing skills. This contrasts with the former California State standards that measured recall and basic reading and math skills.

Take a former standard in 8th grade math with regard to Functions:

Algebra: Students add, subtract, multiply, and divide rational expressions and functions. Students solve both computationally and conceptually challenging problems by using these techniques. (CDE, 1997, p. 48)

Compare this to a Common Core Standard in Functions:

8.F Functions - 2. Compare properties of two functions each represented in a different way (algebraically, graphically, numerically in tables, or by verbal descriptions). For example, given a linear function represented by a table of values and a linear function represented by an algebraic expression, determine which function has the greater rate of change. (CDE, 2010, p. 55)

This example illustrates the increased rigor of the standards of higher analytical skill imposed on teachers and students by the state.

Instead of the CSTs that were tested by the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) exam, California now has the SBAC through CAASPP. State standards from past to present, present being Common Core State standards vastly differ from previous standards. Current standards are skills-based and more rigorous since they are aligned to College and Career Readiness Standards. Additionally, students are tested by way of technology, and not paper and pencil. Instead of using paper and pencil, students now take tests on the computer. The first

official testing cycle began in 2015 with the Pilot test where all California public school students had to take the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) exam produced by the CAASPP (Regent of University of California—SBAC, n.d.). The Field Test for SBAC was conducted in 2016. Further, students now have to take this assessment on a computer that calls upon another set of technology skills. Due to the higher content levels and the way that it is tested, schools with a low-income and low-technology base that demonstrate high academic achievement are considered even more noteworthy.

Because of the new assessment system, California has not released API scores yet ranking schools according to NCLB. Schools now share the percentage of students who reached the passing mark on the SBAC for English language arts and mathematics. Previously, the CSTs measured standards achievement based on the following ascension: *far below basic*, *below basic*, *basic*, *proficient*, and *advanced*. The SBAC only has four levels: *not met standards*, *standards nearly met*, *standards met*, and *standards exceeded*. Each state has their own descriptor, yet the four categories remain consistent. This scale and achievement level was likewise created by educators in K-12 and college backgrounds through a series of panels and activities with groups of students (Regents of University of California—SBAC, Reporting Scores, n.d.). Moreover, the SBAC is a Computer Adaptive Test or CAT. Taking exams on the computer, calls upon 21st Century digital literacy skills. Thus, schools would not only have to ensure all students understand how to navigate an internet browser and use a computer, but also have the budget to have the bandwidth and network to support such a technological infrastructure.

A benefit with the new exams being computer-based is the student scores are calculated and scored more rapidly. With the California State Tests, reports would not be available until August, or the start of the next school year. CAASPP issues reports indicating whether the

student basically met, nearly met or exceeded the Common Core State Standards. ELA and math both have domains or claims within their content. Within the claims for English language arts, achievement is based on reading, writing, listening, and research (inquiry). For mathematics, the claims include concepts and procedures, problem solving and modeling and data analysis, and communicating reasoning. See Figure 3.

AREA	Below Standard	Near Standard	Above Standard
Reading How well does your child understand stories and information that he or she reads?			✓
Writing How well does your child communicate in writing?		✓	
Listening How well does your child understand spoken information?		✓	
Research/Inquiry How well can your child find and present information about a topic?	✓		

AREA	Below Standard	Near Standard	Above Standard
Concepts & Procedures How well does your child use mathematical rules and ideas?	✓		
Problem Solving and Modeling & Data Analysis How well can your child show and apply their problem solving skills?	✓		
Communicating Reasoning How well can your child think logically and express their thoughts in order to solve a problem?	✓		

Figure 3. Student's performance within a claim (area) of the Common Core State Standards.

Now that California has had 2 consecutive years of SBAC, the existing data on student performances are more reliable than the first year's pilot scores. Although California still does not have API or AYP numbers, the schools are ranked by the percentage of students that have Met or Exceeded standards in ELA and math.

For low-income or low-information schools, the barriers to high student achievement on the CAASPP are even greater. Not only do teachers and students have to masterfully comprehend harder, college-aligned standards based largely on teacher-created curricula as textbooks aligned to Common Core standards are new themselves, schools have to upgrade their infrastructure to support the amount of Internet use and number of computers necessary to implement the SBAC tests. Schools that largely have higher-income families do not have the technology literacy deficit or equipment shortage that Title One or Free and Reduced Lunch based schools have. Therefore, the leadership from low-income schools with high student achievement is more notable for purposes of this study.

School Leadership

Teachers are the main constituents for school leaders. In order for a principal to be successful, he or she must understand the skills necessary in order for a teacher to be effective in the classroom. The following section compares the traditional and charter school standards and evaluation systems for teachers and administrators: where they are alike, where they differ, and ultimately what sets charter school leaders apart.

California Public Standards for Administrators CPSELs and Teachers CSTPs

With the increasingly diverse needs of schools, the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) performed research on skills necessary for principals. It identified morality, good judgment, problem solving, organization, focus, dexterity, inspiration, decision making, values, and written and oral communication skills as essential for school leaders (Portin et al. as cited in Ike, 2012). Lane wrote in 1998 that charter founder profiles included strong organizational vision, clear organizational structure, evident political ties to the community and environmental, and accountability systems for all departments ranging from fiscal to academics. In 2010, the Professional Services Committee of the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) created standards for administrators as a product of Assembly Bill 148 from 2009 (as cited in Ike, 2012).

In California, administrators and teachers are held to standards just like the students. Standards for teachers are set forth in the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP). There are six main “buckets,” and within each bucket are sub-standards. Although charter school leaders might not need to have a California Administrative Credential to be a principal, they are evaluated by standards conducted by new leaders that are more directly related to the entrepreneurial aspects of charter school leadership versus a school district leader

model. See Appendix A for a complete set of CSTP standards. The primary standards are as follows:

- Standard 1: Engaging and Supporting
- Standard 2: Creating and Maintaining Effective Environments for Student Learning
- Standard 3: Understanding and Organizing Subject Matter for Student Learning
- Standard 4: Planning Instruction and Designing Learning Experiences for All Students
- Standard 5: Assessing Students for Learning
- Standard 6: Developing as a Professional Educator-Teachers reflect on their teaching practice to support student learning. (CSTP, 2009, pp. 2-44)

It is the charge of the school principal to hold teachers accountable to these standards; provide opportunities in these areas for them to grow, make observations, and share feedback consistently. Accordingly, the California standards for administrators are specified in the California Professional Standards for Educational Leadership (CPSEL). The standards are similar to the CSTPs respective to student achievement and accountability with outside stakeholders. They have been in existence since 2001 (CTC, 2014).

STANDARD 1: DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A SHARED VISION. Education leaders facilitate the development and implementation of a shared vision of learning and growth of all students. Element 1A: Student-Centered Vision

STANDARD 2: INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP. Education leaders shape a collaborative culture of teaching and learning informed by professional standards and focused on student and professional growth.

STANDARD 3: MANAGEMENT AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT. Education leaders manage the organization to cultivate a safe and productive learning and working environment.

STANDARD 4: FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT. Education leaders collaborate with families and other stakeholders to address diverse student and community interests and mobilize community resources.

STANDARD 5: ETHICS AND INTEGRITY. Education leaders make decisions, model, and behave in ways that demonstrate professionalism, ethics, integrity, justice, and equity and hold staff to the same standard.

STANDARD 6: EXTERNAL CONTEXT AND POLICY. Education leaders influence political, social, economic, legal and cultural contexts affecting education to improve education policies and practices. (CTC, 2014, pp. 4-10)

One could not be a school site administrator without a credential based on the CPSELs at a traditional public school. California teachers have a two-tier credentialing system from a Preliminary to a Clear credential. A credential cannot be cleared without demonstration of work with students at a school. The system is similar for school leaders, from Tier 1 to a Tier 2 credential. For charter schools, although teachers all must have a state credential, not all charter school principals must have an administrative credential. Most Charter Management Organizations (CMOs) highly desire site leaders to have one, but it is not necessary (CCSA, 2017).

Beyond the California standards for teachers, most charter schools employ a rigorous standard for teacher evaluations. In a study of 90,000 teachers across four large geographically different areas, The New Teacher Project (TNTP) concluded that consistent and positive feedback from principals was the number one out of eight strategies that could lead to retention of a school's most valuable teachers (TNTP, 2012, p. 16). Unlike traditional public schools where a teacher reaches tenure after a few years with moderate performance levels, charter school teachers must demonstrate student achievement and growth for merit based bonuses, and for the school itself to stay in existence. This higher standard for recognition and frequent observations from the school leader could be one of the reasons some urban schools are performing at accelerating rates.

The KIPP School network is the largest national CMO opening its 200th school in 2016 (Dobbie & Fryer, 2015; KIPP, 2016). KIPP utilizes the Charlotte Danielson Framework as its teacher evaluation tool in schools where it is appropriate. At the CCSA convention, Mr. Scott

Pearson (2016) said in his remarks that a surprising number of [charter] schools reported used Danielson as their teacher evaluation system. Charlotte Danielson's Framework for teaching is largely utilized by charter schools. Beyond the six standards of the CSTPs that traditional public schools might use, the more rigorous standards for classroom educators could be further related to higher student achievement.

Analysis of CSTPs and the Framework

There are four main domains in the Charlotte Danielson framework: planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction and professional responsibilities. These domains are researched-based components for effective instruction and learning, based on Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) standards (Danielson Group, 2013). The elements of teaching are broken down into 22 components, with 76 smaller elements with full rubrics for scoring. See Appendix C for Danielson standards and a partial rubric example. The primary domains and standards are listed below (Danielson Group, 2013):

Domain 1: Planning and Preparation

- 1a Demonstrating Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy
- 1b Demonstrating Knowledge of Students
- 1c Setting Instructional Outcomes
- 1d Demonstrating Knowledge of Resources
- 1e Designing Coherent Instruction
- 1f Designing Student Assessments

Domain 2: Classroom Environment

- 2a Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport
- 2b Establishing a Culture for Learning
- 2c Managing Classroom Procedures
- 2d Managing Student Behavior
- 2e Organizing Physical Space

Domain 3: Instruction

- 3a Communicating with Students
- 3b Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques
- 3c Engaging Students in Learning

- 3d Using Assessment in Instruction
- 3e Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness

Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities

- 4a Reflecting on Teaching
- 4b Maintaining Accurate Records
- 4c Communicating with Families
- 4d Participating in the Professional Community
- 4e Growing and Developing Professionally
- 4f Showing Professionalism (p. 5)

Standard 4 for the CSTPs Planning Instruction and Designing Learning Experiences for All Students is lumped into one framework for traditional school teachers. By contrast, in Danielson, planning pedagogy is its own domain with sub-standards, indicators and a rubric. It is also the first domain, recognizing it as a precursor to instruction versus CSTP Standard 1 Engaging and Supporting. See Table 1.

The CSTP has five sub-standards in relation to Danielson's planning and designing learning experiences. The Danielson framework has six standards in that one domain, with more sub-standards and moreover, indicators of sub-standard taking the knowledge of teacher practice and pedagogy along with observable activities to a far more detailed and accurate level. Subsequently, Danielson offers researched-based rubrics for scoring and accountability (Danielson, 2013). See Table 2 and 3.

Table 1

Comparison of California Standards and Danielson's Planning Pedagogy

Standard 4: Planning Instruction and Designing Learning Experiences for All Students, California Standard for the Teaching Profession (2009)	Domain 1: Danielson Group (2013) Planning and Preparation
<p>4.1 Using knowledge of students' academic readiness, language proficiency, cultural background, and individual development to plan instruction</p> <p>4.2 Establishing and articulating goals for student learning</p> <p>4.3 Developing and sequencing long-term and short-term instructional plans to support student learning</p> <p>4.4 Planning instruction that incorporates appropriate strategies to meet the learning needs of all students</p> <p>4.5 Adapting instructional plans and curricular materials to meet the assessed learning needs of all students</p>	<p>1a Demonstrating Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy</p> <p>1a.1 Knowledge of content and the structure of the discipline</p> <p>1a.2 Knowledge of prerequisite relationships</p> <p>1a.3 Knowledge of content-related pedagogy</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson and unit plans that reflect important concepts in the discipline • Lesson and unit plans that accommodate prerequisite relationships among concepts and skills • Clear and accurate classroom explanations • Accurate answers to student questions • Feedback to students that furthers learning • Interdisciplinary connections in plans and practice <p>1b Demonstrating Knowledge of Students</p> <p>1c Setting Instructional Outcomes</p> <p>1d Demonstrating Knowledge of Resources</p> <p>1e Designing Coherent Instruction</p> <p>1f Designing Student Assessments</p>

The following is a description and rubric for 1a Knowledge of Content Pedagogy

(Danielson, 2013):

In order to guide student learning, accomplished teachers have command of the subjects they teach. They must know which concepts and skills are central to a discipline, and which are peripheral; they must know how the discipline has evolved into the 21st century, incorporating such issues as global awareness and cultural diversity, as appropriate. Accomplished teachers understand the internal relationships within the disciplines they teach, knowing which concepts and skills are prerequisite to the understanding of others. They are also aware of typical student misconceptions in the discipline and work to dispel them. But knowledge of the content is not sufficient; in

advancing student understanding, teachers are familiar with the particularly pedagogical approaches best suited to each discipline. (p. 2)

Table 2

CSTP Five Sub-standards Compared to Danielson's Planning and Designing

Categories	CSTPs (2009)	Danielson (2013)
Domains	6 (Standards)	4 (Domains)
Standards within domains	37 (Sub-standards)	22 (Components)
Sub-standards	0	76 (Smaller elements)
Indicators	0	109
Rubrics	0	22 by Standard/component

The full purpose of the Danielson Framework is to help teachers grow. Its ultimate “value is realized as the foundation for professional conversations among practitioners as they seek to enhance their skill in the complex task of teaching” (Danielson Group, 2013, para. 4). It is used for mentoring, coaching, professional development, and district teacher evaluation processes. Based on the amount of specificity and possible feedback according to the rubrics, the Danielson Framework far exceeds the CSTPs. The Framework is taken to the next level for human capacity building with all the indicators, rubrics, and key communication that follows an evaluation and/or observation. Furthermore, this can be conducted in 360-degree fashion—from supervisor to employee; from colleague to colleague; and even from student to teacher given appropriate student friendly language.

Table 3

Danielson's Knowledge of Content Pedagogy Level Descriptors

Unsatisfactory Level 1	Basic Level 2	Proficient Level 3	Distinguished Level 4
<p>In planning and practice, teacher makes content errors or does not correct errors made by students.</p> <p>Teacher's plans and practice display little understanding of prerequisite relationships important to student's learning of the content.</p> <p>Teacher displays little or no understanding of the range of pedagogical approaches suitable to student's learning of the content.</p>	<p>Teacher is familiar with the important concepts in the discipline but displays lack of awareness of how these concepts relate to one another.</p> <p>Teacher's plans and practice indicate some awareness of prerequisite relationships, although such knowledge may be inaccurate or incomplete.</p> <p>Teacher's plans and practice reflect a limited range of pedagogical approaches to the discipline or to the students.</p>	<p>Teacher displays solid knowledge of the important concepts in the discipline and the ways they relate to one another.</p> <p>Teacher's plans and practice reflect accurate understanding of prerequisite relationships among topics and concepts. Teacher's plans and practice reflect familiarity with a wide range of effective pedagogical approaches in the discipline.</p>	<p>Teacher displays extensive knowledge of the important concepts in the discipline and the ways they relate both to one another and to other disciplines.</p> <p>Teacher's plans and practice reflect understanding of prerequisite relationships among topics and concepts and provide a link to necessary cognitive structures needed by students to ensure understanding. Teacher's plans and practice reflect familiarity with a wide range of effective pedagogical approaches in the discipline, anticipating student misconceptions.</p>

For charter school administrators particularly, being knowledgeable of the Danielson standards makes them more highly qualified to develop and sustain more effective teachers. Accordingly, charter schools may have more skilled teachers at large based on a comprehensive, researched-based accountability system such as the Danielson framework versus a similar traditional public school where evaluations are conducted or based on the CSTPs. Since many

charter school networks implement merit-based bonuses or salaries, performing well on teaching evaluations and having a record of student achievement are motivating on multiple fronts. Due to Teacher Unions for traditional schools, both professional development and merit-based pay are minimal to non-existent.

The Professional Learning and Leadership Development Office (2016) of LAUSD recommends that at least 25% of the school's personnel get evaluated. This includes both permanent and non-permanent staff members, not just the teaching faculty. Permanent personnel are evaluated every other year; for first year teachers, evaluation can be deferred to year 2 at the discretion of the principal. From the onset, traditional school teachers have less opportunity for supported growth based on measureable goals.

There is a deferral process for teachers with 10 or more years of experience as well:

Highly qualified permanent employees who have been employed by the district as a fulltime teacher for at least 10 years may, at the joint discretion of the evaluator and the employee, extend the frequency of evaluation beyond the 2-year period for up to 5 years. (LAUSD, 2016, para. 3)

Based on this structure, it is evident that charter school teachers receive much more feedback than their district counterparts as they are evaluated on more rigorous Danielson standards and more frequently. Additionally, charter schools do not distinguish between non-permanent and permanent personnel as the school itself is also based on a high-stakes accountability system as its charter is renewed every 5 years. Charter school teacher observation cycles and evaluation systems must be clear and consistently engage all of its staff members annually.

As previously mentioned, district public school teachers must only adhere to the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTPs). As seen in Appendix C the Danielson Framework is far more specific, researched-based, and rigorous than the CSTPS. The

CSTPs are also scored on a 4-point scale by LAUSD’s (2013) Teaching and Learning Framework. See Table 4.

Table 4

CSTP 1a 1 Knowledge of Content and Structure of the Discipline

Elements	Ineffective	Developing	Effective	Highly effective
1a1. Knowledge of Content and the Structure of the Discipline Knows the discipline and how the subjects within the discipline relate and integrate with one another [e.g., understanding how algebra, geometry, and trigonometry are related in the discipline of mathematics].	Teacher makes content errors or the teacher’s plan does not articulate sufficient knowledge of the content standards.	Teacher articulates a basic knowledge of the grade level concepts in the discipline. Teacher demonstrates limited connections across grade levels.	Teacher articulates a solid knowledge of the concepts in the discipline through the development of essential understandings and big ideas that are aligned to the standards. Teacher demonstrates knowledge of the progression of the content standards within and across adjacent grade levels.	Teacher articulates extensive knowledge of the concepts in the discipline through the development of essential understandings and big ideas that are aligned to standards across disciplines. Teacher demonstrates knowledge of the progression of the content standards within and across multiple grade levels and disciplines

Note. See the partial rubric example in Appendix D for LAUSD’s rubric on the CSTPs.

In comparison of Danielson to LAUSD, it is even more arduous to score a Level 2.

Under LAUSD’s (2013) Teaching and Learning division, a developing teacher needs to have basic knowledge of the content and simply make connections across the grade level. Whereas for LAUSD (2014), the teacher must be able to “articulate extensive knowledge of the concepts” in the main content area through “essential understandings and big ideas that are aligned to

standards across disciplines” (Danielson, 2013, p. 7). Further, the teacher needs to “demonstrate knowledge of the progression of the content standards within and across multiple grade levels and disciplines” (p. 28).

Based on this difference alone, not only do charter school teachers in Los Angeles have to adhere to a more comprehensive and demanding evaluation system, but charter school leaders must be much more aware of the nuances of teaching and instructional disciplines, and must have a strong accountability program for their faculty in order to provide feedback and professional development for their teams. This leads to the measurement system of the school leaders themselves because there must be high standards for all stakeholders in discussion of student achievement.

Principal Evaluations

In 2015, LAUSD reached a milestone with the Associated Administrators of Los Angeles (AALA) to include student achievement data in principal evaluations for a one-time process based on the lawsuit *Doe v. Deasy*. This arrangement was the first of its kind; previous principal evaluations in Los Angeles did not include student test scores, and the effectiveness of traditional school teachers was not measured this way either according to teacher union agreements. Under the agreement between LAUSD and AALA, student achievement data were set to include several different measures such as the California State Tests (CSTs), Academic Growth over Time (AGT), attendance rates, English acquisition, enrollment and passage for high school principals, as well as suspension rates (LAUSD, 2012; Tribune News Service, 2012).

After 2012, the CSTs were no longer administered and Superintendent John Deasy was ousted from his position in 2016. AALA announced in 2015 that for the 2015-16 school year it would begin a similar evaluation process to include all the same metrics based on the School

Leader Growth and Development Program (Clough, 2015). AALA delineated that the school leadership evaluation would include: observation of practice; deliberate practice; contribution to student outcomes, and staff feedback surveys (AALA, 2015). Yet, true student achievement data have yet to be reconciled as Common Core testing just began in 2015. This process is still very much in its induction stage and is yet to be widely accepted by not only the district but also traditional school principals themselves, as the accuracy and effect of the evaluation is still not fully known. Each of the four elements according to AALA still need to be further defined, practiced, and redefined.

However, charter school leaders have to undergo performance analyses and background checks from the school's inception. There are the exceptionally laborious steps to opening a charter school: new school leaders must first complete the charter petition approval process; then apply for start-up grants; and finally attain facility space or else complete the Proposition 39 application. Every one of these steps completely vets and investigates the school leader and the team that starts up the new school. Further, when the school actually opens there are the annual LAUSD oversight visits that review and score student achievement; governance, organizational management, and operations; and fiscal operations.

Moreover, every 5 years the school must prove that it deserves to stay open and service the community. During this process student achievement data are considered by the governing board in addition to all the topics AALA announced for its evaluation of traditional public school principals and assistant principals. Charter school leaders and teachers are certainly assessed using a more complex and high-stakes system. It is no wonder why some charter schools are achieving at the rate they are doing.

Performance analyses of a team and its leader should be studied when determining why one body does better than another. Charter schools outperform their district counterparts (CCSA, 2012, 2015). This chapter has reviewed the differences of more rigorous state standards for students and teacher outcomes and evaluation systems, and now it turns to the same review of differences for school leaders. Beyond district oversight visits and the renewal process every 5 years for charter school leaders, established charter management organizations (CMOs) have a set principal evaluation process that is usually conducted every year at least once, if not two times. It is usually conducted by the charter superintendent or similar official, and it is even reviewed by the charter governing board.

New Leaders Rubric vs. CPSELs

Similar to the Danielson Framework, beyond the California standards for administrators or CPSELs, some CMO leaders also conduct the New Leaders metric on their site principals. It suggests:

1. Make student outcomes and teacher effectiveness outcomes 70% of a principal's evaluation, and base the remaining 30% on the leadership actions shown to drive better results.
2. Base the evaluation of principal managers and other central office staff primarily on student outcomes and principal effectiveness, and give principal managers the tools and skills they need to effectively balance principal accountability with professional support and development.
3. Make the expectations of principal performance universally high and differentiated in ways that drive continuous improvement.
4. Ensure that the evaluation system is informed by principals and other experts and is adapted over time to reflect new understandings of the practices that contribute to increased student achievement. (Swaminathan, 2013, para. 2)

New Leaders has also published a researched-based rubric for evaluating principals.

New Leaders is a non-profit organization based in New York whose aim is to train and develop school leaders who can bridge the achievement gap in underserved communities of color. It is also a research group that uses student academic and urban leadership data to influence

educational policies. In 2001, it began with 14 members, to 2,400 participants in over 20 cities nationwide and six leadership programs today impacting over 7 million students (New Leaders, 2000-2016). Rand Corporation cited New Leaders as the principal preparation program with the strongest evidence of positive impact (New Leaders, 2016).

The principal evaluation form from New Leaders is used across CMOs as it is most comprehensive. It is aligned to the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards and is appropriately set to a 4-point system based on core competencies set between leadership practice and student outcomes with the intention for continuous growth (New Leaders Principal Evaluation Rubric, 2012). Similar to the Danielson Framework for teaching, New Leaders' Principal rubric is based on evidence collection, reflection, and feedback given at least two times a year based on the five domains: learning and teaching; shared vision, school culture, and family engagement; strategic planning and systems; talent management; personal leadership and growth. See Appendix E for a partial rubric example from New Leaders Principal Evaluation.

For the purposes of this paper, similar standards were dissected accordingly. New Leaders, Domain 2 includes shared vision, culture and family engagement. According to the California Professional Standards for Educational Leadership (CPSEL), this one domain encompasses three out of six standards:

STANDARD 1: DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A SHARED VISION Education leaders facilitate the development and implementation of a shared vision of learning and growth of all students. Element 1A: Student-Centered Vision

STANDARD 3: MANAGEMENT AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT Education leaders manage the organization to cultivate a safe and productive learning and working environment.

STANDARD 4: FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT Education leaders collaborate with families and other stakeholders to address diverse student and community interests and mobilize community resources. (CTC, 2014, pp. 4, 6-7)

When traditional public schools are just beginning their evaluation on site leaders and rubrics are still being created, the New Leaders program proposes the following in the same criteria.

Domain 2 is broken down into nine sub-standards with possible examples of evidence: develops shared vision; implements a shared vision; implements a code of conduct aligned with school values; maintains a supportive, secure, and respectful learning environment; implements routines and smooth transition; models equity; engages in courageous conversations about diversity; welcomes families and community members in to the school; and openly communicates about student learning.

Within shared vision alone, there are two sub-standards with a clear rubric for exemplary leadership, where AALA and LAUSD have none for their own principals. See Table 5. Based on this rubric, it is evident that it would take a principal years at the same site with a consistent staff to reach the exemplary level for one sub-standard, as having a vision alone is considered unsatisfactory. Every school member must show evidence of infusing the school vision in the day-to-day workings to be considered exemplary according to New Leaders. The amount of professional development, time, and coaching necessary to build the capacity of principals to advanced levels is grand.

Table 5

Sub-standards of Shared Vision

Sub-standards	Exemplary	Proficient	Basic	Un-satisfactory	Examples of evidence
Develops a shared vision	Engages stakeholders in the collaborative development of a vision for high student achievement, college readiness and effective adult practice.	Engages stakeholders in developing a vision for high student achievement and college readiness.	Develops a school vision for high student achievement and provides some opportunities for staff and students to provide input on the school vision.	Adopts a vision that lacks a focus on student achievement or college readiness.	Written values and beliefs reflect high expectations for all students. School vision is clearly articulated and understood by all staff. School vision includes a focus on student academic achievement and health/social/emotional development.
Implements a shared vision	Inspires all adults and students in the school and community to adopt and enact the vision; builds capacity of the staff to implement effective instructional strategies to achieve the vision; ensures all decisions are aligned to and support the vision.	Supports adults and students in the school and community in taking ownership of the vision; works with the leadership team to implement effective instructional strategies to achieve the vision; makes decisions aligned to and in support of the vision.	Broadly communicates the vision to adults and students in the school community; identifies instructional strategies that may align to the vision; may consider the vision when making decisions	Makes limited attempts to implement the vision; makes decisions without considering alignment with the vision	There is visible alignment between school goals, the instructional program, and the vision. (New Leaders, 2012).

From state standards to the rubric from New Leaders, having multiple points of assessment is vital to providing a full examination of a principal's effect. Hentschke,

Wohlstetter, Hirman, and Zeehandelaar (2011) argued more metrics to measure principals are needed. Charter school leaders, by default, are observed more often and evaluated more thoroughly on varying points as charters must be renewed every 5 years. Within LAUSD, the oversight committee reviews charter schools annually on four domains: academic performance, fiscal, governance, and organizational management. CMOs most likely also conduct evaluations on site administrators using Danielson for the teachers and New Leaders for leaders.

In summary, at every level of increased rigor from students with Common Core standards; teachers with the Danielson Framework regarding feedback for their pedagogy; and measurements of site leader effect based on district oversight visits, the renewal process every 5 years along with the principal rubrics of New Leaders combined, support charter school students, teachers, and school administrators to be more effective than its traditional equivalents at every level. With such demanding metrics for all the main stakeholders, how could charter schools not outperform their district competition?

Linking Student Achievement

School leadership has been a long extant topic. With educational reform, and in the wake of charter schools whose essential mission is to turn around the status quo for youth regarding their Local Educational Agency (LEAs), school leadership is now even more relevant. Wynder (2013) shares how principals, as the leaders of their schools, have a major impact on student achievement and school success (Bloomfield, 2013; Bolman & Deal, 1993; Dobbie & Fryer, 2015; Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2011; Williams, Haertel, & Kirst, 2011). In a case study regarding student achievement to leadership frameworks according to Bolman and Deal (2008), the frames largely behind the research of successful charter school leaders were strongest in Structure and Human Resource according to Kullar (2011). The leadership style behind the

Structural frame is centered on organization, rules, roles, goals, policy, technology and environment (Kullar, 2011). The Human Resource frame is centered on people and works toward gaining loyalty and commitment; emphasizes communication and support through mutual respect and dialogue (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Both these frames contributed to positive school climate that correlated with higher student achievement (Kullar, 2011). “The findings indicate that the most effective principal leadership framework for student achievement is primarily structural and secondly, human resources” (Kullar, 2011, p. 113).

Dobbie and Fryer (2015) studied the impact of high-achieving charter schools in Harlem Promise Zone (HPZ) and found that academic achievement outcomes and on-time benchmarks were higher among charter school students. Moreover, female students were 10% less likely to become pregnant teenagers, and males were 4.4% less likely to be incarcerated (Dobbie & Fryer, 2015). HPZ included over 20 programs, and the sampling size of this study included 501 students where one-on-one interviews were conducted on entering sixth graders. The study lasted almost 10 years, and surveys were collected back from students when they became seniors in high school. Although charters are a relatively new phenomenon within educational institutions, both older and more current research reveal the link between principals and student scores. Further, charter school students slightly do better respectively,

In another study of executive directors (ED) within four achieving charter schools, Bloomfield (2013) found three common themes: (a) the EDs all felt ultimate responsibility if the school failed or succeeded even though they were indirectly related to the school’s daily functions and instruction; (b) the ED was the main change agent; and (c) all leaders in the study exhibited contingent leadership or situational leadership, calling upon the type of leadership needed at the time. Another characteristic that linked achievement with charter school leaders

was follow through. In Gile's (2011) exploration of principals, she found that "programmatic reforms such as RTI do not necessarily lead to improved results, but focus and the ability to sustain an effective practice over time does have the potential to lead to improved results for students" (p. iii). School priorities have shifted with the times where bilingualism is more evident with the influx of immigration (Garcia, 2002) and diversity from all sectors of religion, gender identification and sexual orientation. This is why culture is another important aspect of leadership as there is a change from the old management view to the new conceptions of organizational management (Wynder, 2013). It is no longer a simple system with minimal staffing to educate youth, where the head teacher also played a partial principal role during the 19th and 20th centuries as the "principal teacher" (Kafka, as cited in Ike, 2012). The principal now has highly stressful roles in managing people and implementing successful programs that transform schools, all the while working on a very limited budget (Gililand de Jesus 2009; Goldberg & Morrison, as cited in Wynder, 2013; Little, 2012; Onorato, 2013).

Manna and McGuinn (2013) compared America's school operations to layers of a cake: "One major cause is our flawed, archaic, and inefficient system for organizing and operating public schools. Our current approach to school management is a Rube Goldberg-esque construct, sometimes a marble cake, involving multiple, overlapping layers" (p. 21). It is due to this outdated system, some critics blame failing schools, where there are too many conflicting interests and each has poorly-defined responsibilities (Manna & McGuinn, 2013). However, Sarason declared that distributed leadership worked at the schools she studied, because the principal as the sole leader would no longer be effective in managing alone the educational reform and change in the 21st century (as cited in O'Conner, 2009).

Although both NCLB and R2T gave billions to states to better LEAs, student achievement is still low. Manna and McGuinn (2013) noted, “millions of children still cannot read satisfactorily, do math at an acceptable level, or perform other skills needed to obtain jobs in the modern world economy” (p. 21). The academic gaps continue to widen, but the need for effective site leaders remains or increases, as the responsibility of the job gets more arduous and insurmountable. The job of the principal, especially in urban non-traditional public schools, is more convoluted than before as it includes a myriad of skills and oversight not seen before or fully evaluated.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), where they select random schools to take tests on different content in varying grade levels, reported that a large number of students fail to meet basic standards in reading and mathematics: 33% of fourth graders and 26% of eighth graders were below basic in reading (Lee, Grigg, & Donahue, as cited in Kim, 2010). Additionally, 18% and 29% of the same grade level students scored similarly in math (Lee, Grigg, & Dion, as cited in Kim, 2010). The data are even more dismal for students who live at or below the poverty line: 50% and 42% of students in the same grade levels again scored below basic in reading (Lee, Grigg, & Donahue, as cited in Kim, 2010). Again the charge for urban school leaders is pivotal given the state of student outcomes.

Little’s (2012) comparative study illustrates similarities between charter school leaders and small business leaders. Both need relentless passion, community engagement skills, and team building tenacity to succeed (Little, 2012). Charter school leaders are entrepreneurial in nature which is why they do not fit the traditional principal mold. Starting up a new school or converting an existing one is similar to opening a new business. The leader in either setting is responsible for everything: budget, staff, accountability of goals, operations, work environment,

etc. Additionally, like small businesses, charter schools are customer driven. Finally, Little (2012) found a key trait common to prosperous small business leaders and successful charter school leaders: flexibility. When leaders in both charter and business settings had an open mind, they were more likely to flourish (Little, 2012).

In his research of the principal's influence over school culture and instructional improvement, Wynder (2013) wrote of a 3-tiered system. Similar to how other cultural researchers have shared cultural elements (i.e., Schein's work in 1983 in dimensions), Gallimore and Goldenberg (2001) analyzed based on cultural models to provide more context of the action according to the setting. Similarly, Wynder (2013) wrote for his research of principal cultural norms that Tier 1 included vision and collaboration; Tier 2 was about culture and involved beliefs held by the stakeholders, teacher recruitment and professional development, and common meaning behind specific instructional topics. Tier 3 included how this culture influenced teachers' willingness to improve their own teaching practices that clarified expectations, responsibilities and an accountability system that held it altogether (Wynder, 2013). He found not only that individual teacher responsibility is significant in the improvement of the school's student achievement, but also that the principal's "belief system played a major role in the development of school culture" (Wynder, 2013, p. 142). Culture is affected by the leader, and when staff needs were met safely, positive change was possible.

Ike (2012) wrote that the Educational Research Services study on principal shortage indicated that the candidate pool for filling principal positions is getting smaller, because fewer principals are motivated to do the difficult job with more duties and more diverse students (Garcia, 2002; NASSP 2011) and more non-traditional schools (Ike, 2012). The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) reported in 2010 that within the decade,

40% of principals would retire and there would not be enough qualified people to replace those positions. Ike (2012) further discovered in his research that the principals in his study found it difficult to acquire collaboration and decision-making skills, and there was an alarming 50% turnover rate for site leaders. From state to state, the process to acquire administrative licensure also varies (Matthews & Crow, as cited in Ike, 2012). Further, some California charter school networks do not mandate state administrative credentials. Principal influence over staff culture and student achievement are directly linked and pivotal, yet there are not enough school leaders to fill the necessary positions. “Approximately 25% of student achievement relates directly to school leadership actions, and specifically principals contribute 5%” (Kafka, as cited in Ike, 2012).

Researchers Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, and Gundlach determined that the three main frameworks that leaders need to administer schools are instructional development, a meaningful accountability system and the school management process (as cited in Ike, 2012). Skills that are necessary for principals were identified as instructional, cultural, managerial, human resources, strategic, external development, and micropolitical (Portin et al., as cited in Ike, 2012). If principals demonstrated strength in these capacities, the school would be effective and students would achieve. The Institute of Educational Leadership (2000) categorizes the principal into three areas: instructional, visionary, and community leaders. There is consistent research that confirms the large extent to which a site leader has over all the constituents both directly and indirectly.

Fullen wrote, “The role of the principal has become dramatically more complex, overloaded, and unclear over the past decade” (as cited in Ike, 2012, p. 144). Beyond the difficulty and intricacy of the job, as Garcia was referenced above, the diversity of the students

are also a withstanding factor (Alvy & Robbins, 2005). Moreover, the job of the principal has become more managerial including budgets, personnel like CEOs of large businesses (Onorato, 2013). As early as 1884, the superintendent of Chicago public schools deemed “no amount of spontaneous supervision could substitute for a principal position” (Pierce, as cited in Ike, 2012). Ike (2012) notes, “Principals should be the main factor in school reform, and inheriting a shared culture approach is the basis of symbolic interactionism, as well as school improvement” (p. 27). It is up to the site leader to have a vision for the school and a clear mindset to get there. Bolman and Deal (2008) share the four constructs of how any organization can frame or reframe its practices in consideration of the human resource, political, symbolic, and structural frameworks. Each of these four domains that Bolman and Deal mention are constructs for review when conducting a needs assessment, reflection, or set-up examination for any type of organization, even schools. In her study of high-performing charter leaders, Kullar (2011) found the Structural and Human Resource frame was engaged the most. Sergiovanni, Kelleher, McCarthy, and Wirt (2004) credit high performance theory to decentralization, shared decision-making, and collaboration. As charter school leaders are more autonomous than traditional school principals, such a set up according to Sergiovanni and analysis according to Bolman and Deal can be realized leading to higher student test scores. Concerning instructional gains, Alizor (2012) and Simpson’s (2011) study of two achieving charter schools in California, data-driven decision making was at the core of student performances for the site leaders.

Postell (2012) covered the importance of job satisfaction. Her study with both traditional and charter school individuals alike revealed that expressed job satisfaction was a motivating factor in service, the work itself and achievement. The school leaders had a sense of responsibility toward the students and community. Some of her research participants stated that

the school community had become their family (Postell, 2012). Moreover what was dissatisfying for both groups were policy, salary and job security. The New Teacher Project (2012) also revealed in their extensive study of urban teachers that changing working environments and salaries alone do not aid in retaining the best teachers, but instead the weak teacher.

Manna and McGuinn (2013) wrote that charters have popped up all over the landscape and more vouchers are available than before. However, the U.S. Department of Education released in 2008 that only 1% of those eligible partook in this program where public schools were federally mandated to offer a school-transfer option during the 2004-2005 school year (Kim, 2010). Subsequently, in Kim's (2010) study of two California Charter schools, she found programs the leadership implemented had an indirect effect on student achievement such as teacher leadership opportunities and teacher mentoring. "Charter schools carry the potential to reverse long-standing trends in education" (Kim, 2010, p. 3) since similar traditional schools score lower than charter school students (Hoxby, as cited in Kim, 2010).

"Charter schools have the potential to improve educational equity by providing school choice opportunities to parents where promising practices are designed to improve student achievement based upon local community needs" (Kim, 2010, p. 5). This is palpable because charter school leaders have more freedom to make long-standing decisions for their schools, added by the dual pressure to succeed in order to stay open and get their charters renewed every 5 years. Charter schools are higher stakes automatically than district public schools. A study conducted in the state of California found that 78% of the charter schools were implementing new institutional practices, compared to 3% of traditional public schools; 72% of charters had their own site-based governance, versus 16% of their counterparts; and almost two-thirds of the

charter schools elicited practices with more parent engagement compared to 14% of conventional public schools (Corwin & Flaherty, as cited in Kim, 2010).

Because charter schools have more at risk, it is no wonder to that the principal role is as vital as it is. “Strong school leadership is essential for better student academic achievement since the school leader holds the most important role in the school system” (Kim, 2010, p. 8). Leadership affects student learning, and districts that are most exemplary with the most improved levels of achievement have visionary school leaders who developed district policies focusing on adult learning and student learning (National Conference of State Legislatures, as cited in Kim, 2010). There is a link between school leaders and student achievement (Bloomfield, 2013; Kullar, 2011; Simpson, 2011). In Kullar’s (2011) multi-site case study, she found a relationship from the principal to school climate; climate to student achievement, and finally from principal to student achievement. School leaders have to be passionate and decisive in order to mobilize a team of adults to bridge the achievement gap. Kim asserted that they must possess key leadership capacities, citing Lambert of being able to develop reciprocal relationships, inspiring a shared purpose, including all in the decision making process, and ultimately keeping the shared vision alive. Thirdly, Kim (2010) said that effective school leaders “respond productively to challenges and opportunities created by the accountability-oriented policy context in which they worked” (p. 9). Visionary school leaders not only lead, but develop, mold, and hold accountable the programs they created.

Leadership

Within principal leadership, instructional leadership is a top priority since teachers and student achievement are part of the job. They must lead bifocally, with both school operations and student learning in mind (Alvy & Robbins, 2005; Leithwood & Louis, 2012). Ouchi (2003)

asserted that school leaders do what it takes and money is not the issue; whatever the school budget, effective leaders find a way to make programs work. Similar to the elements of change theory based on Kotter (2012), where the first step to institute change is through a sense of urgency, Leithwood, Harris, and Strauss (2010) wrote that leaders turn around schools with a shared sense of direction and develop capacity in the personnel since one person cannot do it alone. In Alizer (2012) and Simpson's (2011) study of two achieving charter schools in California, data-driven decision making was at the core of student performances for the site leaders.

New Leaders is a non-profit organization whose aim is to prepare the best principals for urban education. In a study of programs implemented by New Leaders graduates by the RAND Corporation, 10 districts were studied regarding the link between principalship to student achievement (Gates et al., 2014). Over 400 New Leaders principals that serve 160,000 students were part of this research that found principals that participated in New Leaders programs had a slight increase in student achievement 0.7 to 1.3 percentile points in literacy and numeracy; and were slightly more likely to stay in the role of principal longer. Principals that were in tenured positions for 3 or more years had the most gains with a difference of 3 percentile points in reading, but no variation was evident in math (Gates et al., 2014). What the study also pointed was the need for more principal training programs.

One such program beyond administrative credentialing platforms by universities as aforementioned is New Leaders. Even though graduates of the New Leaders program receive relevant training and exposure to diverse public schools, less than 50% of the first graduating class from Chicago had jobs upon completion (Russo, 2004). A large proportion of these new leaders from New Leaders ended up at charter schools (Russo, 2004). Gililand de Jesus (2009)

discussed principal induction among conversion charter school leaders. She reinforces the need for more types of training for site leaders in this current climate of diversity and broad academic gaps as she found four common themes among these leaders who needed: (a) support in prioritization; (b) creating meaningful teacher professional development series; (c) having sustainable systems and processes; and (d) fostering positive work culture that proved to be the most challenging of all.

Within the research of changing schools, this notion of developing teachers and leaders within the school is repeated. Leithwood et al. (2012) wrote that when principals practice shared leadership with their teachers, the relationships become stronger and student achievement rises. This is due to the working dynamic between the main players. When people work more closely together with a deliberate focus in mind, the outcomes are positive. Hence, when teachers and the site leader are part of the Professional Learning Community (PLC) striving to improve instruction (Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Hord, 2009), student achievement is a result (Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Kim, 2010; Leithwood et al., 2012).

PLCs and Teacher Leaders

With regard to leadership that improves student scores, studies from Dufour (1998) and Leithwood et al. (2010, 2012) attributed this to a strong leadership formation, or core group. This is also consistent within education studies as Dufour (1998) claimed, “Rarely has research given school practitioners such a consistent message and clear sense of direction” (p. 25). PLCs based on Dufour’s (1998) model have: a shared mission/values; engage in collective inquiry; have collaborative teams; is action orientated and experiments; strives for continuous improvement; and is results oriented. According to Leithwood et al. (2010), beyond the first common norm, he calls one of the steps to turn around schools “redesign,” with steps to improve

instruction specifically next. From leadership of the principal, both also speak to teachers and their function with regard to leadership. In today's educational structure, PLCs could also account for teacher leaders.

Schools that engage in PLCs and have teacher leaders are part the school's achievement model. LaForgia, Pauling, and Sheley (2016) reveal that this type of leadership is necessary and vital in schools to define instructional practices and student learning. There are separate standards for teacher leaders called the Teacher Leader Model Standards, created in 2011 by the Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium. Essentially these standards show, "how to facilitate the learning of their peers,' work collaboratively with their principals to elicit meaningful change, and gain strategies for creating safe and trusting environments where others aren't afraid to take risks" (LaForgia et al., 2016). The standards are also an extension of Charlotte Danielson's Framework of an effective teacher. Yet with teacher leaders too, are only as successful as the principal who also supports their growth as they are an extension of the main site leader.

Based on this consistency, this research asked questions about the existence and effect of teacher leaders at the school site, along with how PLCs are viewed and practiced, if any. See Appendix K. Appendix K is a table that compares an effective, *distinguished* teacher such as Danielson, to a teacher leader. An effective teacher implements best practices regularly, while the teacher leader openly shares and demonstrates best practices, resources, and materials to colleagues. Another example is where an effective teacher continuously works to improve oneself, whereas the teacher leader works to improve others and most likely team members in the same department or grade level.

Beyond PLCs, DuFour (1998) also mentioned that the environment or culture also plays a role in the success of a school as that affects teachers and teachers influence student achievement. In another research study by the New Teacher Project (TNTP) in 2014, it studied 23 high performing charter schools in Boston to see why they were outperforming all other exceeding charter across the country, although traditional Boston public schools are already successful. Albeit these schools had strong teachers that highly understood their content, TNTP discovered that their environment, especially those that were cultivated and supported by the site leaders exceeded even more. Culturally, Boston charters felt there was consistent expectations and consequences for student behavior; almost 100% of them believed that their school implemented rigorous academic curricula, and almost 90% had an agreed upon set of challenging interim common assessments that prepared students for college (TNTP, 2014). Moreover, teachers at high performing Boston charter schools received over 20 observations and feedback annually—some even 40 observations; the principal had leadership roles three times more available; and it also had a hiring process that was more selective and occurred as early as January (TNTP, 2014).

It is noteworthy here that East Coast schools do have more money available per pupil expenditures. New York has the most budget per student at over \$20,000 and Massachusetts comes in a little over \$15,000 according to the Census report from 2014. Even though the cultural stakes above contributed to outstanding student achievement, Boston charter school teachers' turnover was the same as other charters (TCTP, 2014). In this instance, Boston does have significantly more money contrary to Ouchi's (2008) assertion that money does not matter. Yet, it suffers the same epidemic as other charter schools—leading or not, when it comes to teacher retention. Multi-year averages confirm that teacher turnover in charter schools is around 20% to 25% nationally and in various state contexts (Gross & DeArmond, 2010; Miron &

Applegate, 2007; Silverman, 2012, 2013; Stuit & Smith, as cited in TNTP, 2012), is almost twice as high as the national average at traditional urban public schools (Stuit & Smith, as cited in TNTP, 2012). While teacher turn over in charter schools seem to be an epidemic, achieving non-traditional public schools continue to rise and draw national attention.

Summary

Charter schools are one type of educational reform and one answer to the need for better and more equitable education for urban youth. Within the last few decades, charters across the country have made such notable gains in such a short amount of time, they are suitable for research and analysis. With normed state testing as a result of No Child Left Behind, comparable data is what clearly helped make charter schools a national and debatable topic. Currently, with Common Core the discussion of student achievement continues.

Granted with more difficult standards, charters still to outperform and outrank their local district competition. Could it be due to the rigorous standards set on teachers with the utilization of the Danielson framework of highly effective teachers that traditional public school instructors certainly do not withstand? From the classroom to the principal's office, the accountability is higher at every level for charter schools that could justify their accomplishments. Research at large and presented hereto consistently report the link of administrators to student achievement. If there is one formidable person, beyond the multiple teachers a student is influenced by that affects state test scores, it is the principal.

Charter principals by and large receive more feedback compared to traditional public school leaders. Albeit the standards of NCLB with API and AYP stand for both parties, charter leaders additionally have to have annual reviews from their governing LEA, prove their doors should remain open to serve their communities every 5 years, and their CMOs could also

respond with leadership feedback based on faculty and staff surveys, student and parent surveys, as well as the rigorous rubric based on New Leaders Principal Evaluation. Beyond the state standards for teachers and administrators, along with the aforementioned tenets make charter school leaders that much more highly qualified and highly skilled as they must manage schools like a business that adheres to their constituents in order to remain open. Further, charter schools must demonstrate their impact by doing the demanding job of serving their underrepresented families by bridging their academic achievement gaps, which is no simple or quick task. It's basically asking someone to show in varying, high-stakes ways how impactful one is given the most dire of situations with the most challenging of players. Businesses wouldn't set themselves up this way as the odds are against them. But, why do charters?

For this reason, this study explored charter school leaders and their leadership characteristics to review if there is a common thread that might explain their resilience, resolve, and ultimately their triumph and desire to do such demanding and outstanding work.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter outlines the research methods chosen to determine whether there are common leadership traits in effective charter schools in the Los Angeles area.

Restatement of Research Questions

The research question that guided the qualitative process was this: Are there any leadership commonalities between successful charter school leaders that serve low-income middle school students? Kumar states (2011) this research objective should include elements of the four *Ps*: people, problem, program, and phenomenon.

Description of the Research Methodology

Charter schools in Los Angeles are growing, expanding, and achieving. Some LEAs are conversion schools or were once a traditional local district school, but most are independent from the district. CCSA reported that out of 282 total charter schools in Los Angeles, 228 of them are autonomous, and 54 are non-autonomous, wherein most of their board members are selected by LAUSD, adopted the collective bargaining unit, and are indirectly funded without non-profit status (CCSA, 2015).

California, moreover Los Angeles, has the most charter schools of any other state or city in the nation (CCSA, 2015). In a “2016 Fact Sheet,” CCSA reported that there are 1,228 charter schools in the state, and of these 359 are in the greater Los Angeles area. There are 572,752 students who are enrolled statewide in charter schools, and of them 199,863 are also in Los Angeles County. Regarding those within LAUSD specifically, there are 292 charter schools, and 156,263 students enrolled, comprising 24% of LAUSD students. There is an estimated almost 42,000 students on the waitlist according to 2015-2016 summaries (CCSA, 2016).

When it comes to student achievement, the California Charter Schools Association reported in 2012 that in terms of student achievement, charter schools are the top 5% of high-performing public schools as well as the bottom 5% of low-performing schools. In the most recent report and with the advent of CAASPP, CCSA (2016) states that charter students overall score higher than non-charter students, according to the SBAC, having a status of 23% standards met and 10% standards exceeded, versus LAUSD's 19% standards met and 8% standards exceeded. In 2014, CCSA also released a report that directly gauged the academic gap closures for college-readiness within charter high schools: "Charter schools enroll only 19% of LA high school students, yet they deliver 37% of LA's college-ready graduates" (p. 1). Latino and African American charter high school students had equivalent A-G course completion as compared to White and Asian student counterparts (CCSA, 2014). The researcher intended to see if these top performing charter school leaders have principals with similar leadership traits that have led to these outstanding gains.

The researcher chose to conduct a qualitative study. Based on Creswell (2013), qualitative research "situates the observer in the real world" (p. 43), where then in this natural setting, the researcher makes sense of the practices and representations of the studied items. Charter school leaders were regarded in their area of expertise, with questions that would help them reflect on their day-to-day lives, running schools and managing people successfully to have the student achievement that is currently recorded.

The qualitative research was expected to find trends in the self-reported leadership practices. School leaders were chosen based on most recent data of student performances on the SBAC within LAUSD charter schools, in particular schools that receive Title 1 funding for having a majority of low-income students. These principals faced additional challenges to

achieve assessment gains, yet were still able to do so in the face of their students' poverty and all that entails. Moreover, the researcher narrowed the scope to middle schools as there are more charter middle schools versus elementary schools. Additionally, academic gains are more noteworthy at this stage as content is more difficult compared to elementary standards, and it is further compounded by growing hormonal adolescents in the young teenage years. Both elementary and high schools are not considered for this study as testing begins in third grade and only 11th graders take both ELA and math CAASPP assessments, compared to middle schools that must take the SBAC 6th, 7th, and 8th grades.

Principals were identified according to an aggregated list based on both ELA and math SBAC results where 50% or more students scored Standards Met or Exceeded on either subtest. For full transparency, the researcher's school is third on this list. Schools within the KIPP network are within the top four schools, yet are their own Local Education Agency (LEA). Thus, each school leader is considered independent and autonomous of other schools, although three of the four school leaders are part of the same larger charter management organization (CMO). To have a more reliable database, schools with either notable achievement in math or ELA were asked to be part of the study, to include more schools and differing CMOs.

A phenomenological approach to the study was used. Creswell (2013) adds that this method "describes a common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon" (p. 76). This study defines the phenomenon as the shared experiences between these leaders who are closing the achievement gap within poor, urban students. Subsequently, the primary researcher made a universal conclusion based on any commonalities amongst the participating school leaders. As recommended by Moustakas' (1994) human science perspectives and model of phenomenology, themes were derived from

their responses. Kouzes and Posner's (2012) leadership practices was the referenced theoretical framework.

First-hand accounts through interviews were conducted. Husserl said that phenomenon is a suitable place for reflection (Moustakas, 1994). Yet the difficult part is extracting the meaning behind the experiences and breaking down the reflection to its main points or constituents (Moustakas, 1994). The primary investigator looked at all the interview responses and derived meaning through coding and analyses of the participants' reflections, or both the *noema* and the *noesis* of the common experience and the way the students' achievement came to be for the school leaders.

In French's (2006) research titled "The alignment between personal meaning and organizational mission among music executives," she mentioned why the phenomenological approach was appropriate because of two main reasons. This study shares the same logic. Reason one, there is little research on the said topic of charter schools, their principals, and the correlation of their leadership to student test scores. As French (2006) references Creswell, "Qualitative studies are often conducted in these types of situations because qualitative methods allow continued exploration of topics that have not been fully researched or about which there is limited literature" (p. 86). Secondly, through the interview process of self-reported leadership strengths, which leveraged programs that contributed to some of the state test gains, are largely subjective and theoretical on the assumptions and connections of the participating principals.

A qualitative design also allows for in-depth interview questions that can more accurately describe the lives, work, and leadership practices based on this shared goal of educating urban middle school youth. It further provides the opportunity to build relationships with the leader and probe further for more meaning in order to better determine the commonality. This is an

inductive style and focus on individual meaning based on the complexity of the situation (Creswell, 2009).

Population and the Process for Selection of Data Sources

Selection of data sources involved first identifying high-achieving Los Angeles charter schools. Appendix B is a graph of the top performing charter schools in Los Angeles based on the percentage of students that met or Exceeded the California Common Core State Standards (CCCSS) in 2016 within the low-socioeconomic subgroup (Feinberg, 2016). This data was aggregated from students that took the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) in 2016 and reported to the California Department of Education. The charts in Appendix B show the highest scores in English language arts and math.

Based on this data, the study included interviews with school leaders from this list to review the research question. The scope of the list has been narrowed down to low-income schools. As noted, beyond poverty amongst its constituents, low-information schools have had more to overcome in order to achieve their current school status, because technology literacy skills are also required for SBAC testing. The schools would have had to undergo technological infrastructure upgrades as well, for every student to test on computers and be online, because testing large groups of students at a time means the necessity of enough computers and network bandwidth. For interests of this study, the leadership required for high student achievement, defined as closing the academic achievement gap, is the shared phenomenon. As cited in Creswell (2013), “identify interviewees who can best answer [the] questions” (p. 164) that are “focused on understanding [the] central phenomenon in the study” (p. 163). Based on this set of criteria, the sample population was further delineated.

Sample

The researcher conducted the study after the International Review Board confirmed the appropriate protections for human subjects. Principals of the KIPP CMO in Los Angeles were interviewed, along with Bright Star Schools, and New Los Angeles Charter Schools. KIPP Sol Academy, KIPP Academy of Innovation, and KIPP LA College Preparatory School (KIPP LA Prep) were the three highest performing middle schools of low-SES students according to SBAC 2016 results.

Rise Kohyang Middle School, a Bright Star School, is the actual top third school in the area, but due to the affiliation of the researcher with this school, other top performing charter schools were included in the study. Within the LA region, the KIPP network holds six middle schools. Of them, the three mentioned above are highly performing. These leaders are in schools in southeast Los Angeles. The other Bright Star Schools, which are part of a small-to-medium-sized CMO, are based mainly in Los Angeles and serve the San Fernando Valley and the Mid-City communities. New Los Angeles Charter School also serves Mid-City Los Angeles.

Inclusion Criteria

The sample is criterion based, where all cases meet criteria useful for quality assurance (Miles & Huberman; as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 158). In this case the following criteria had to be met: (a) student achievement factor of 50% or above for either English language arts or mathematics; (b) autonomous charter origins; (c) middle school; and lastly (d) service students that predominantly receive free and reduced lunch, meaning they are considered low-income. Based on this set of criteria, the sample size for this study was limited to seven potential school participants.

The primary researcher decided on 50% as the threshold for the criterion for academic achievement, because 50% or higher means at least half or the majority of students are performing at a level of meeting standards or exceeding the standards per the CAASPP. CAASPP performance bands are as follows: *below standards*, *approaching standards*, *meeting standards*, and *exceeding standards*. The California Department of Education also considers the top two bands for student achievement regarding a school's progress as standards that should be met. Therefore, schools that have at least 50% of their students within these two bands were eligible for this study.

Table 6 shows between the seven eligible schools, how many students were on average in each band of standards met and standards exceeded. For context, based on all of California's 300,000 socio-economically disadvantaged students who were tested, the average percentage of students who scored as *standards exceeded* in fifth through eighth grade was 8%, and standards met was 27% in ELA. Respectively, in math students scored 8% as standards exceeded, and 14% as standards met.

Table 6

Breakdown of Standards Met and Exceeded on Average for Eligible Schools

Schools	Subject	Standards met	Standards exceeded
Scores of students in schools in the present study	English language arts	41%	19%
	Mathematics	33%	32%
Scores of all of California's 300,000 socio-economically disadvantaged students	English language arts	27%	8%
	Mathematics	14%	8%

Based on the table percentages and the comparative results from California's economically disadvantaged students, there is a clear difference between these scores and the norm for economically disadvantaged students: more than double the amount of achievement in math, and more than 10 percentage points higher in ELA. The schools and administrators who are eligible for this study are part of a distinguished phenomenon, as they are not only bridging, but closing the achievement gap. The primary investigator found these school leaders necessary to study for urban public education and educational reform.

Data Gathering Procedures

The data collection was at the school site of the respective principals in Los Angeles or over the phone. The Informed Consent statement (Appendix H) was attached to an email to selective school leaders based on the inquiry script in Appendix I. Once the school leader accepted the interview, the questionnaire was sent to the participants. The questions were emailed to participants 1 to 2 weeks beforehand for their review.

Interviews were done in person or over the phone. Recordings were an option for quality purposes, and the researcher also took notes by hand during the process and shared the notes with the participants through Google Docs to ensure their accuracy. The recordings were available for purposes of this study to accurately quote the participants. However, the shared notes were enough for quotable phrases and thoughts.

Expert Review of Interview Questionnaire for Validity

To increase the validity of the interview instrument, a charter school leader reviewed the questions on February 21, 2017. The leader has a doctorate degree in education from Pepperdine University's Graduate School of Education and Psychology. Moreover, the identified expert has been a principal before at a very high performing high school and held higher positions within

the charter network. Most significantly, the expert has worked with low-socioeconomic status (SES) families, and understands the work it takes to raise student achievement. To safeguard that the questions help answer the research question, the expert asked further questions and provided suggestions to make the questions more clear and understandable.

Pilot Test of Interview Questionnaire

To further add to the validity of the interview questions, the researcher conducted a pilot test. Due to the association of the researcher and her charter network, she was able to conduct the pilot interview on a school principal who served low-income students. The pilot was a true test run of the interview questions.

The principal had access to the questions before the interview on a shared Google document. Notes were added to this document for full transparency. The interview contained eight main questions that directly addressed the research question. After the pilot, the researcher added some background questions and more programmatic questions to better and more specifically answer the research question. A comprehensive list of the questions is in Appendix G.

Validity and Reliability of the LPI Instrument

As a pre-cursor to the interview, the researcher spoke about the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI), a survey instrument that was developed by Kouzes and Posner (2003), to help the participant understand some relevant leadership theory before the interview questions were asked. The survey has 30 questions about leadership practices that are demonstrated according to the following five categories: model the way, challenge the process, inspire a shared vision, enable others to act, and encourage the heart. The survey asks participants to score on intensely

surveyed observable activities based on these categories from a 10-point Likert scale of 1 being *almost never*, to 10 *almost always* (Kouzes & Posner, 2003). See Appendix J.

The researcher offered access to the survey results as a gesture of appreciation for participating in the research. The survey tool can also be used as a 360-evaluation and feedback tool wherein to discover results of the supervisor's leadership practices are aligned as reported by those who work directly under the supervisor. This survey has been considered valid and reliable based on over 40 decades of use worldwide. Results are compiled over 4,000 cases, more than 3 million surveys, and cited in more than 500 dissertations (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Based on their international research, Kouzes and Posner (2012) assert that the four main characteristics of admired leaders are honesty, forward thinking, competence, and inspiration. Within the four major continents of America, Europe, Asia, and South America—the leadership actions that are most engaging are commitment, loyalty, motivation, pride, and productivity (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Further, Kouzes and Posner share that leaders with clear philosophies are 30% more likely to be trusted, and considered 40% more effective than leaders who do not have clear philosophies.

The LPI practices aim to provide leaders' feedback on their practices based on the highly researched areas of the following leadership traits. Encourage the heart is the practice of recognizing contributions of the constituents by showing appreciation for individual excellence by expecting the best, personalizing recognition, showing them that one believes in them, and providing regular feedback in conjunction with clear goals. Goals and feedback increase motivation up to 60%, versus goals alone that increase motivation by 25% (Kouzes & Posner, 2012).

Enabling others to act fosters collaboration by building trust and facilitating relationships. Leaders create and invest in a climate of trust. The leader is the first to trust in others and shows genuine concern by doing something that is meaningful for someone else. The other part of this practice is to increase self-determination and develop competence in others. Kouzes and Posner (2012) wrote that in order to do this, one must share information and knowledge, develop cooperative goals and roles, norm reciprocity, structure projects to promote joint effort, and have more face-to-face interactions.

Despite the way the practice sounds, *challenge the process* is more about the search for opportunities, seizing the initiative, and looking outward for innovative ways to improve. One can do this in several ways: making something happen, having others take initiatives with the observer, looking “outside the box” for different experiences, and promoting external and internal communication. Similar to Kotter’s change theory (2012), Kouzes and Posner (2012) state that challenging the process is to experiment and take risks by constantly generating small wins and learning from experience. As a result, this innovative thinking will lead to more effective ways to achieve goals, highlighting leadership along the way.

The fourth practice, inspire a shared vision, described leaders who can animate the future, appeal to common ideals, and have a symbolic framework for it (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Through this, the leader’s passion is clearly showcased (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). This is done by listening deeply to others, corralling a rooted cause for commitment, and looking forward for rapid change (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Leaders who are strong in this characteristic envision the future by imaging exciting and ennobling possibilities, by enlisting others in a common vision with an appeal for shared aspirations.

Modeling the way is an obvious leadership practice, by way of its title. Leaders have clear values and can find shared ones with constituents. Activities that are aligned to shared values create a clear image for what an organization is and can become. To better this practice, leaders can spend time and prioritize their attention wisely, watch their language, ask purposeful questions, seek feedback, confront critical incidents, tell stories, and reinforce through systems and processes (Kouzes & Posner, 2012).

The Leadership Practices Inventory is not prescriptive. The results are general enough, but still isolate specific leadership traits that guided the interviews. Responses to the interview questions were analyzed and documented for commonalities in terms of strongest leadership practices and programs that led to student success. The participants were given an opportunity to reflect on how their leadership strengths manifested into programs, structures, and symbols that yielded such strong student achievement scores on the state exams. The interview questionnaire created by the researcher was administered to all participants. The questionnaire is further explained in this chapter.

Interview Questionnaire

The interviews were conducted based on school leaders that meet the criterion sampling requirements. The questions helped the principals expand on their self-reported thoughts as to why their schools were able to close the academic achievement gap (Appendix G).

1. How long have you been a principal?
2. What are your leadership traits that have ultimately helped your school be successful?
3. How are these traits linked to the success of the school? (This question offered an opportunity for the leader to reflect on his or her skillset that has contributed to the school's growth even further.)

4. What programs directly attribute to your student achievement? (With this question, the principals could elaborate on what they instituted to yield high student achievement. Revelation of how site administrators implemented some of their vision to help students rise is important for any educational leader. It offered grounds for possibly even more common threads amongst the top performing charters in Los Angeles.)
5. How involved are you in the creation and implementation of the academic programs of your school?
6. How essential are your intervention programs to your student achievement?
7. Besides you, who else supports academic accountability at your school?
8. How do you promote a positive work environment for your staff?

The responses to the questions were cross referenced by the coding system to determine not only common leadership traits but also possible academic programs that might be similar that yielded the high results. In particular, interview question 2 aligns with the questions and actions tied to the LPI survey (Appendix J) where participants shared their leadership strengths and experiences. The LPI survey lists actionable items per each characteristic in a question form. Thus, if any of the participants answered with examples that were similar to the questions in the survey, the coding was direct. See Table 7 and Appendix J for the complete set of questions, along with Table 12 for an example of a participant's answers aligned to the LPI.

Table 7 shows a partial alignment of some of the answers that participants might have shared. Interview question 2 allowed for the participants to reflect on their leadership style and strengths. The primary investigator then took the responses and coded them accordingly using Kouzes and Posner's survey workbook and analysis sheet as a reference.

Table 7

Interview Question and LPI Alignment

Interview Question 2	LPI Questions (Kouzes & Posner, 2003)	LPI Coding for Questions (Kouzes & Posner, 2003)
What are your leadership traits that have ultimately helped your school be successful?	1. I set a personal example of what I expect of others. 2. I talk about future trends that will influence how our work gets done. 14. I make sure that people are creatively rewarded for their contributions to the success of our projects. 23. I make certain that we set achievable goals, make concrete plans, and establish measurable milestones for the projects and programs that we work on.	Q1 = Model the way Q2 = Inspire a shared vision Q14 = Enable others to act Q23 = Challenge the process

Analytical Techniques

Commonalities that came forth from the interviews were noted, coded, and analyzed to thoroughly answer the research question. The coding techniques are described in this section. The research question asked: are there any leadership commonalities between these successful school leaders? This question is the nucleus of this research. Charter schools' main charge is to uplift urban schools to provide more equity and access compared to higher-performing, higher-income schools and even private institutions. If these high-performing charter leaders do reveal they have similar leadership trait strengths or even weaknesses, it could be a phenomenon worth exploring more, as well exploring the programs they realize.

A coding system was used to synthesize data from the interviews. The design for Question 2 is illustrated above in Table 7. See Table 8 for other interview questions.

Table 8

Coding System

Interview question	Supporting view code	Principal 1	Principal 2	Principal 3 (etc.)
3 – Leadership trait association with program(s)				
4 – Programs linked to raise student achievement				
5 – Involvement of implementation of programs				
6 – Intervention programs (if any)				
7 – Other leaders that attribute to the success of the programs				
8 – Positive work culture				

Human Subjects Considerations

The researcher completed a course with Pepperdine University’s Graduate School of Education and Psychology by the International Review Board (IRB) to protect human subjects. It provided more instruction for the researcher on how to conduct interviews with human subjects. Course completion certification is in Appendix F. All principals in the research were consenting adults who were directly asked to be part of the research.

An email was first sent to the identified principals introducing the researcher and the study along with an informed consent form to be human research subjects. Confidentiality and the option to withdraw at any time was communicated to the participants, assuring them of the purpose behind the research. Although names such as Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) and individual schools have been publically listed as top performing schools amongst low-income

charters, participating school administrators' names were withdrawn from the process. Interview responses were stored and locked at the researcher's home and will be destroyed after 5 years. As this phenomenon could not be studied without the participation of these key individuals, an email of appreciation was sent to the site leaders both before and after the interviews. IRB approval was noted.

Summary

Chapter 3 disclosed the research method, rationale, sampling criterion, and interview questions as pertinent to the previous chapters. The chapter described the setting for the research and protocols to test human subjects, and notes permission from the authorizers to use the valid and reliable survey tool of the Leadership Practices Inventory by Kouzes and Posner (2003) for participants that would like access to this tool. Student survey data from the CAASPP exams for all charter middle schools has been aggregated to determine the top performing middle charter schools in Los Angeles that serve low-income students. Principals were determined for this study based on the strict criterion to discover a possible phenomenon between these site leaders. The LPI and interviews were conducted by the researcher herself. All results of the interviews were coded and synthesized. Conclusions and summaries are shared in the following chapters.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

Interviews with seven principals were conducted for this phenomenological study in late 2017. As mentioned in the previous chapter, only seven schools were eligible for the study, making the sample size limited. However, a total of six schools participated, but one school had two principals, and thus seven interviews were conducted. The primary researcher obtained 87.5% of the possible interviews. The site administrators represent some of the highest performing charter schools in Southern California who have a majority of students that are of low socio-economic backgrounds. School leaders answered questions based on their self-reported leadership traits and unique school programs, environments, and personnel that are perceived to have influenced the high test scores on the state's Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium or SBAC. Questions were answered over the phone or in person. All interviews were between 24 to 35 minutes, and participants answered all questions thoroughly with multiple responses and answers.

The following analysis demonstrates a phenomenon for independent public school leaders. The science of phenomenology involves the understanding of a human experience within the person's social reality (Creswell, 2013). Participants reflected on their own strengths as a school leader and what programs or personnel led to the success of their students. Principals of these schools, which educate students of similar social and economic backgrounds, shared their beliefs of what contributed to their students' exceptional performances on California's high-stake assessments in English language arts, mathematics, and writing. Participants ranged in age, ethnicity, teaching, and leadership backgrounds. Moustakas' (1994) human science perspectives and models were employed to further analyze the data, as general meaning of their work as school administrators was derived from formal interviews with open-ended questions.

The primary researcher then used the empirical data to generate meaning from their collected naïve responses to further explain what these leaders of similar schools have in common.

Data Collection

Empirical descriptions based on the interview questions were completed by the primary investigator as described in Chapter 3 and following the approved IRB process (Appendix F). As principals are busy individuals, it took multiple attempts to get in touch with a majority of the subjects. Scheduling their interviews also took another step of coordination, and in some cases, rescheduling. The primary investigator's position as a school site principal of a similar high-performing middle school assisted in gaining access and building trust with the subjects. Conducting as many interviews as possible for the primary researcher took several months. All but one of the administrators fit the criterion of operating a successful charter school where students performed 50% or higher with standards met or standards exceeded in either English language arts (ELA) or mathematics on the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP).

All interviewees were directly emailed an invitation to participate, along with the Consent Form (see Appendix H). Notes were taken during each interview on a shared, live document, and two were audio-recorded with direct consent. Recordings were done to ensure accuracy of quotes for purposes of this paper. The shared notes during the interviews, however, had enough for quotable phrases and sentences for the study, and transcriptions were not necessary. Audio files are on password-protected devices in constant possession of the primary researcher either in her office or home.

Research Question

Reviewing the proposed inquiry first stated in Chapter 1, the primary investigator gathered all empirical descriptions based on the Interview Questionnaire (Appendix G). Each participant answered all eight questions that were approved by the IRB. This design was based on the research question: Are there any leadership commonalities between successful charter school leaders?

According to Moustakas' human science perspectives and models (1994), the shared experiences helped answer the research question: "Are there any leadership commonalities between successful charter school leaders?" based on themes the primary investigator derived according to the participants' *naïve* descriptions as a school leader of a high-performing charter school.

Question 1 asked for demographic data on the participant. Questions 2, 3, and 4 had the participant evaluate themselves as the school leader and the relationship between their leadership strength(s) and their school programs. Questions 5 through 8 asked subjects to further describe either the programs, personnel, and work environments of the successful charter school. These latter questions were a place holder in case the participant did not share this information on their own accord. These questions brought out stories and descriptors of elements that might be responsible for the success of the school based on their students' high achievements on the state benchmark exams.

Description of Subject Group

The participants in the study ($n = 7$) were all school site leaders of high-performing charter middle schools in the Los Angeles area. They were both male and female. Their ages ranged from 25 to 55 years. Subjects also represented diverse ethnic backgrounds from

Caucasian, African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Asian descents. The number of years as a principal spanned from 2 to 6 years. All participants were first time site principals. Almost half of the subjects had some administrative experience, such as serving as an assistant principal, and the others had previous leadership experience that ranged from 2 to 8 years, not necessarily at the current school site. More administrative positions prior to being the site principal included teacher leadership roles, and one participant had a fellowship for principal preparedness. Each participant is described further in the next section by pseudonyms selected by the principal investigator.

Description of Each Subject

Subject description of Connie. Connie is a first time principal. She has 4 years of experience as a site leader. Prior, she was a reading interventionist and also mentored teachers. She was also an assistant principal for a brief amount of time. Her current position was the first time she managed people. She is also a mother of young school-aged children.

Subject description of Hoda. Hoda has been a principal for 6 years. She has held no other administrative positions prior to her current role. She has had three small children during this tenure and has relied heavily on her administrative team and teacher leaders when she was on her maternity leave.

Subject description of Lisa. Lisa is a second-year principal. This is the first administrative position that she has held. She was a teacher leader for 8 years and had various roles from department lead, grade level chair, and literacy coach. Some of these positions were also held outside of the United States. She attributes her current promotion to her extensive curricular knowledge in all content areas. Lisa is confident in supporting teachers in a range of subjects based on her pedagogical experiences as a multi-subject educator.

Subject description of George. This year was George’s third year as a principal. He was an assistant principal for 2 years before and a classroom teacher for 3 years. George has been both a teacher and administrator at the same school. He used to teach mathematics.

Subject description of Oprah. Oprah has been in education her entire career immediately after her bachelor’s degree. She has been an assistant principal for over 5 years and a principal for over 4 years. Before that she was a science teacher for middle and high school. She has taught at the same school that he now oversees.

Subject description of Robin. It has been a total of 6 years that Robin led his current school. This is his first charter school experience, and he is a first-time administrator. He has two grown children, one of whom who is already in college. Anderson was a teacher for over a decade.

Subject description of Anderson. Anderson has been a principal for over 4 years. He was an assistant principal at the same school as well and also worked at the high school level. He has his administrative credential and has also taught in the classroom. Table 9 below shares demographic information of the participants.

Table 9

Participant Demographics

Demographic characteristic	Number of participants
Male-to-female ratio	4:3
Age range	Mid-late 20s – Mid 50s
Ethnic backgrounds	White (2), Latino (2), African American (1), Asian (1), Mixed race (Latino & Caucasian) (1)
Number of years in current position	1-6 years
Assistant principal prior to current position	4 participants

Data Coding and Interpretation

This section explains the themes the primary researcher developed based on the coding of the interviews and Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological approach to human perspectives of a common experience. Upon review of the notes of each interview, the primary investigator looked for leadership traits based on Kouzes and Posner's (2012) Leadership Practices Inventory: model the way, encourage the heart, enable others to act, inspire a shared vision, and challenge the process. These are the five practices that Kouzes and Posner wrote that leaders engage in to make "extraordinary things happen in organizations" (p. 15).

Because charter schools are outside the mold of traditional public schools, their leaders are also unique. Researchers Kouzes and Posner (2012) extrapolated that the five traits characterize "those who accept the leadership challenge—the challenge of taking people and organizations to places they have never been before, of doing something that has been done before, and of moving beyond the ordinary to the extraordinary" (p. 15). Charter school leaders bridge the achievement gap and educate some of the most impoverished students in urban and rural areas across the United States. From when these independent public schools first began in the early 1990s, to the present, the charter school movement has continued to gain steam, often outperform their surrounding local traditional schools based on state exams. Charter schools have created generations of scholars who seek higher education opportunities they might not have had access to before. These leaders who do this indelible work are studied in this research paper. The primary investigator studied a few of these leaders from Southern California and found they embodied Kouzes and Posner's (2012) five leadership practices.

Table 10 reveals the frequency of references to a leadership function that Kouzes and Posner (2012) validated as traits of individuals in effective leadership positions that leveraged

measurable results within their organizations. In coding by hand the interview responses, the primary investigator looked for words directly related to the five practices. Each interviewee without prompting mentioned two or three examples of their own leadership strengths that contributed to their school's successes. Each example that correlated to a leadership practice was tabulated only once, although multiple examples of that leadership characteristic might have been further expanded upon by the participant.

Table 10

Leadership Traits Based on Kouzes and Posner's Leadership Practices

Practice	Coding frequency
Model the way	6
Enable others to act	6
Inspire a shared vision	5
Challenge the process	4
Encourage the heart	3

Note. $N = 7$

Upon coding, the primary researcher developed two essential themes to address the Research Question 2, asking if successful charter school leaders have common leadership traits. The following themes show that high performing charter middle school principals have strong people skills in order to implement and sustain specific programs that target their students' needs.

Theme 1: Effective Charter School Leaders Have High Soft Skills (People Skills)

Interview questions 2, 3, and 8 allowed the participants to reflect on themselves as a leader and what they believed contributed to the success of their schools. According to Table 10,

the leaders of the schools that had the highest achievement shared strong personal values that characterized *modeling the way* and close relationships with the people of their community that *enabled them to act*. Subjects were able to leverage their faculties to yield high results with students.

As seen in Table 10, *model the way* and *enable others to act* have the highest references. Almost each participating subject revealed a value of themselves that they found noteworthy: mission driven, gritty, achiever, reflective, adaptability, organization, and good at planning. Kouzes and Posner (2012) repeat in their research that exemplary leaders have clear personal values that make them transparent and essentially easier to follow (p. 55). This fell in the *model the way* category as leaders clarified their values, affirmed shared values, and aligned action to these values (p. 29). The following are some responses about values:

Oprah noted: Being in the trenches with my team and putting in the same level of work that I expected from [my teachers] helps build trust and mutual respect. This further spills out to the student population.

Connie mentioned how her grit has helped her achieve: Leadership is hard. It's really lonely. Highs are really high and lows are really low. We learn from every mistake and failure. I can be hard on myself all I want, but if I don't learn from my mistakes [results will not occur]. When you're a principal, the school reflects you. Strengths are really evident. Weaknesses are *really* evident. I'm a student first. I can't be a leader that sits in the office all day. I can't do the work alone.

Connie shared her reflection skills that led her to being an effective leader as she is conscientious of herself, her contributions when positive, and especially when they were negative to the school. George's responses also share a common experience about values.

George: I've grown in being able to bring people into doing this—shared leadership. So, [I'm] not doing this alone. [I'm] leveraging other leaders. This also helps culture. If something goes well, everyone celebrates together. And if it doesn't, we can reflect together. My StrengthsFinder is *model the way*. I picked up poop in the boy's bathroom. I balance modeling the way with self-care, so that it doesn't push people away from the work.

George not only took a validated assessment, the StrengthsFinder (2007), that showed how he leads, but he also shared how he believes this characteristic and his reflection skills have helped him be an effective leader. Beyond this specific practice, the majority of the participating subjects mentioned how building relationships or, in the words of Kouzes and Posner (2012), *enabling others to act* and *inspiring a shared vision* were other key leadership traits in their daily lives as school leaders.

Hoda said her number one leadership trait is vision setting, and her number two was building relationships, both further confirmed by her direct supervisors.

Hoda: Being in South LA, it's hard to find high performing schools here. I'm very focused on the vision. No matter where or the zip code. I come up with a lot of ideas, and I have great people to execute [the ideas]. I'm not the best executor. I know I'm a visionary. I'm [also] very gritty. A go-getter. I don't rest until I get what I need to get done. I am an achiever. I find myself really late up at night, cleaning up my inbox. I'm an activator. I run straight to it.

The other highest common practice among these principals was *enable others to act*, with *inspiring a shared vision* closely next. Almost all the participants mentioned the importance of building relationships as an integral practice that contributed to the overall success of the school. "Fostering collaboration by building trust and facilitating relationships; [and] strengthening others by increasing self-determination and developing competence" (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 29) through their personal connections with their stakeholders was a common leadership practice for most of the leading charter middle school principals.

Robin: Everything "comes down to the personal character." Development of relationships. I'm looking to create a professional environment that attracts the people of the highest moral compass. Nothing to do with data, [but] about surrounding yourself with the highest human beings. There are many talented people everywhere, but how do you attract the best people?

Robin here thoroughly described his leadership philosophy. He perceives talented people around him, but he searches for those that are "mission driven" and are in education for the "right

reasons” because he’s “here to develop a human being.” He further shares that, “I have to grow them and ensure they contribute to the greater community.” Subsequently, he’s constantly communicating, developing, and meeting where his staff is, with weekly meetings and an open door policy. Robin strives to take the high road in everything he can, because he’s scrutinized for everything he does. This also reflects modeling the way (Kouzes & Posner, 2012).

Not only did the primary researcher find the exact words of the leadership challenge practices—such as vision, modeling, and building relationships—more examples and stories were shared that illustrated the principles enable others to act and challenge the process (Kouzes & Posner, 2012) that will be further explained in the second theme that emerged in this study.

Oprah: I have focused on building a team that is able to run their own department and projects so that each individual is reaching their full potential. This helps the success of the school as each adult is able to dive in deep on specific projects...From building [my] own team, trusting they get it done, having weekly leadership meetings, allowing them to shine...I was more confident at letting them take the reigns. This was *key* to the success of the school. It allowed me to catch my breath.

Principal Lisa recalled that she’s “good at seeking out support from others” and having “distributive forms of leadership” at her school site. These examples demonstrate how the different principals leveraged their soft-people skills that resulted in high student test scores based on the modeling of their work ethics, leadership philosophies, and relationships with their staff members. These connections, with the talent of their teams, also yielded effective programs, which leads to the second theme the primary researcher discovered. Beyond soft people-skills, the structured interview questionnaire (Kumar, 1995) helped extrapolate the second theme of hard-program skills demonstrated by these same leading principals.

Theme 2: Effective Charter School Leaders Have Hard Skills to Implement Change

Interview questions 4, 5, 6, and 7 had subjects analyze the specific programs that supported student growth and achievement on the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP). One participant shared the following experience:

George: Organization and planning. From the balcony, I'm able to see the macro as well as deep dive into the detail. Knowing what to focus on and then getting into that. When I think about success we've seen...we've grown in academic proficiency...student culture is in a different place...operationally we're much smoother...[due to] planning and attention to detail. Thinking strategically: what are the barriers and what are the next steps.

Additionally, Anderson illustrated how he “encouraged flexibility and adaptability within [his] own staff,” that modeled his own leadership strengths. He set a “high bar for academic excellence for both students and teachers.” As relates to challenging the process, Principal Anderson also stated, “Be bold with the people that you're observing.” He recommended to use techniques such as real-time coaching, for “everything is always going to get pushed to a higher bar of excellence.” Alongside these sentiments, Connie further illustrated challenge the process.

Connie: Innovation is the name. My trait is innovative. Thinking outside of the box. What can I burrow and steal and make it my own? I try new things, and it has [yielded] incredible results. We are the first STEAM middle school. Every student takes robotics and engineering/computer science for a month. We have to prepare kids for the future. We have to prepare opportunities for them to fall in love [with learning].

These varied and direct responses from the participants strongly demonstrate each of the five leadership practices that Kouzes and Posner (2012) have researched to be common traits among leaders of high performing organizations. Moreover, the participants shared another perspective: the need for specific programs and direct personnel to oversee those programs to support student achievement (see Table 11). As Moustakas (1994) described Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, “what appears in consciousness is an absolute reality, while what appears to the world is a product of learning” (p. 27).

Table 11

Additional School Programming and Personnel

Subject	Program	Additional personnel
Connie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School wide guided reading program • Math intervention • ELA intervention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full time math and ELA specialist • Deans • Assistant principal
George	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundation program in math • Foundation program in ELA • Professional development for teachers • Mentoring program for teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data coordinator • Teachers
Hoda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal professional development • Data driven instruction professional development for teachers • Intervention includes small groups, reteaching, and enrichment programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief academic officer • Assistant principal • Dean • Instructional support coordinator • Program managers
Lisa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory program • College preparatory math program • 2-hour humanities block • Response to intervention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistant principal • ELA specialist • Math specialist
Robin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher professional development • Intervention • Enrichment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistant principal • ELD coordinator
Anderson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Math intervention • ELA intervention • Math enrichment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELA intervention teacher • Math intervention teacher • Assistant school leader • 2 deans
Oprah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homogenous student tracking (esp. In math) • Response to intervention level 2 & 3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal of lower middle school • Assistant principal

Each of the principals shared the following programs at their school sites beyond general education for the students. These programs targeted specific students with specific content needs, particularly in math. There were also more administrators that oversaw these programs beside just the school site leader. In most cases, these programs were founded by the principal based on his or her vision.

Table 11 reveals the additional programming that involved students who had more academic challenges. Each of the top performing schools in the study addressed the academic achievement gap among their students in direct ways through additional curricula, data monitoring, and staffing. There was a correlation from the highest performing charter middle school with the most specific math and ELA interventions, including additional staffing whose main charge were those students that needed more educational interventions.

The leaders of these schools not only understood their own strengths, but they used their proficiency or even mastery of their ability to inspire a shared vision and enable others to act, by modeling the way, challenging the process, and encouraging the hearts (Kouzes & Posner, 2012) of their teachers and staff members to teach students what they needed to know. These principals helped guide student growth in their educational gaps through additional academic programming and by experts in the field. The following graphs delineate to what extent the participating subjects were involved and how much they believe those programs contributed to their school's success (Figures 4 and 5).

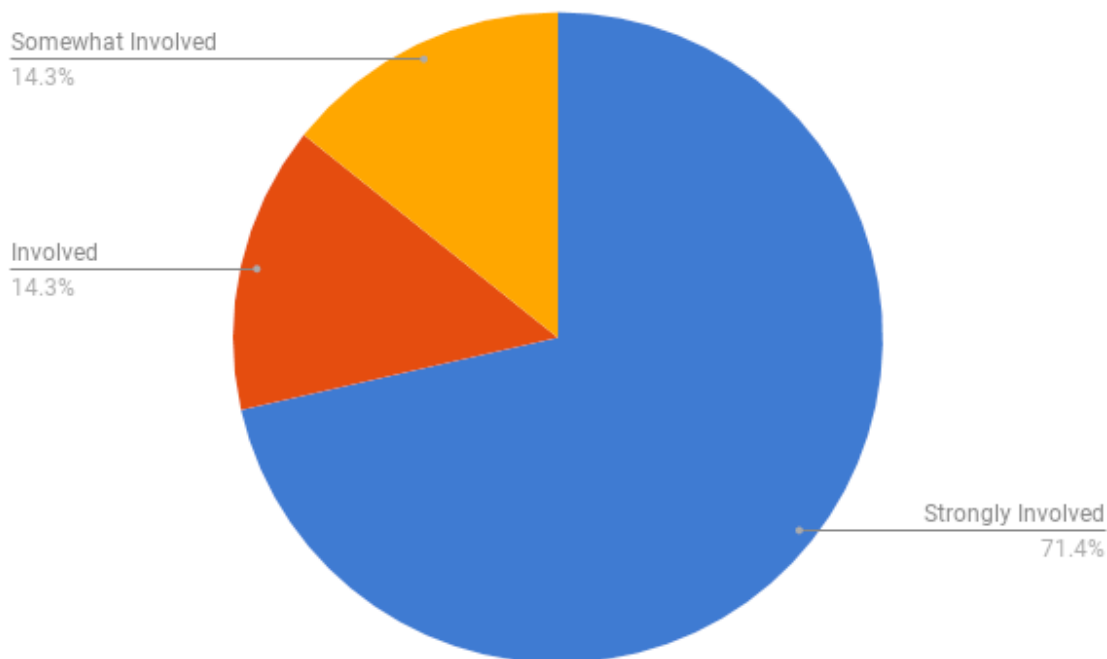


Figure 4. Response to the question “To what extent would you describe your involvement in the additional academic programs that accounted for your school’s achievement?”

Some comments shared by the participants who were strongly involved in the programs that are responsible for their school’s high student achievement include:

- Connie: Super involved
- George: I started the Foundations programs
- Robin: Extremely involved, integral to our school
- Anderson: Very involved in the beginning

This sentiment was found in most of the subjects that were studied. Therefore, the vision of the leaders and their ability to leverage their stakeholders by enabling them to act helped them realize these unique programs. These programs propelled their student achievement, which is the noteworthy phenomenon that is the second theme to this research study.

Figure 5 illustrates the ethos of the subject principals and their belief in the significance of the programs that most of them began that contributed to their high performing scores on the annual California benchmark exams.

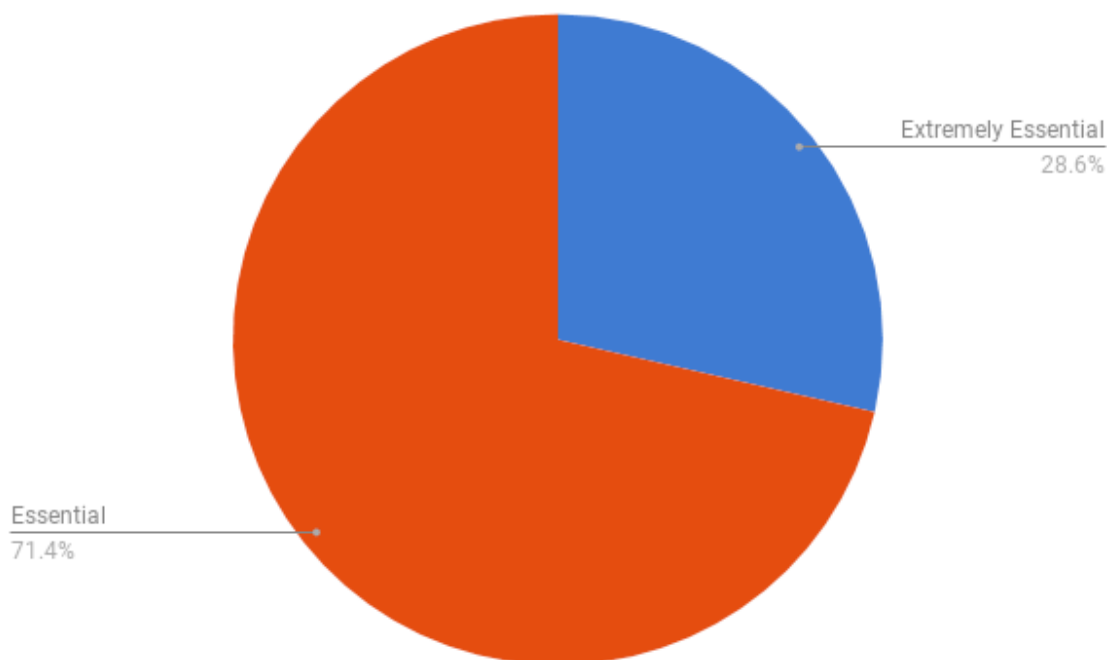


Figure 5. Response to the question “How essential do you believe those additional programs are to your school’s success?”

The bulk of the respondents felt that the programs were essential, but not extremely essential. Some of this sentiment is due to the programs being at an induction stage. Two principals particularly stated that their intervention programs “are not what they’d like them to be” at the moment, “but it is a start.” As Fixen, Blasé, Timbers, and Wolf (2007) explained, implementation of a program takes diligence that involves training, staffing, and consistent evaluations and accountability measures. As the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) have only had 3 years of official statewide testing, there will be more to come of analyses, programming, and responses to teacher and students’ needs.

Summary

The responses to the interview questions, coding references, and analysis of this qualitative data led the primary investigator to develop the following themes: (a) effective charter school leaders have high soft people skills, and (b) effective charter school leaders have hard skills to implement programs for change. Although SBAC and California Assessment of Student Performance & Progress (CAASPP) is at a beginning phase in California—and stakeholders such as educators, let alone parents, are just beginning to understand and prepare for it—the primary investigator studied this phenomenon through interviewing the leaders who are held most accountable by its measures.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Study Overview

Charter school leaders, do they have anything in common? When this new type of school first sprouted in the 1990s—and virtually exploded in California—early leaders were described as maverick entrepreneurs, or bold visionaries who attempted to change the centuries-old institution. They were and still are change agents according to the definition of someone within or outside the agency who helps transform the organization’s overall effectiveness (Study.com, n.d).

This study investigated a primary group of individuals: charter middle school principals whose schools scored 50% or higher (*standards met* or *standards exceeded*) on the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) in either English language arts (ELA) or mathematics. The research question behind interviewing this select list of individuals is: Do successful charter school leaders have common leadership traits? Some of the interview questions were as follows:

- What are your leadership traits that have ultimately helped your school be successful?
- How are these traits linked to the success of the school?
- What programs directly contribute to your student achievement?
- How involved are you in the creation and implementation of the academic programs of your school?
- How essential are your intervention programs to your student achievement?
- How do you promote a positive work environment for your staff?

The guiding theory behind the study was Kouzes and Posner's (2003, 2012) leadership practices inventory: model the way; inspire a shared vision; enable others to act; encourage the heart; and challenge the process.

Discussion

Upon completing all the interviews with the participants, the primary investigator developed two themes: (a) successful charter school leaders have high soft-people skills and (b) successful charter school leaders possess hard skills to create programs for academic change. Enabling others to act and modeling the way were the two leadership traits that participants had most in common in their responses to the interview questions, with inspiring a shared vision a close second. Each trait was mentioned, however, leading the investigator to believe that each of the characteristics Kouzes and Posner (2014) describe was leveraged at some point by the school leaders.

After model the way and enable others to act, the subsequent traits in order from the prior are: inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, and encourage the heart. This was a surprise to the primary investigator, as her prediction was that individual school leaders would show a dominance in one clear leadership trait that Kouzes and Posner (2014) identified in their research. Although the idea of a dominant strength resonated with each participant, examples were shared that exhibited other traits than those Kouzes and Posner identified. Principal Lisa had several responses to research question 2: What ultimately helped your school be successful? In Table 12 are phrases from her responses and the alignment to Kouzes and Posner. Each of the participants likewise exhibited responses where a multitude of Kouzes and Posner's leadership traits were referenced.

Table 12

Partial Coding of One of the Participants

Lisa's self-described traits	Kouzes and Posner's leadership traits
Fidelity to the vision set up before	Inspire a shared vision
Good at seeking out support from others	Enable others to act
Looking at things differently	Challenge the process

Power of relationships. The principals frequently mentioned how relationship building was key to their success, or by enabling others to act, the other was staying focused on the task at hand. These beliefs led to consistent practices that were data driven and modeled by the principals to increase student achievement. School leaders naturally shared their strengths that they felt were responsible for their school's success. There were clear examples throughout the interviews that showcased their soft people skills.

One principal mentioned her relationship-building skills. When a job needed to get done, she knew who to go to for what. She understood her staff in terms of who would push back on her initiatives and who would be led by her. Another school leader revealed that everything about the school reflected her, so she kept high expectations and involved her stakeholders when building programs. Additional comments included how providing opportunities for teachers to talk was essential to create a positive and more transparent workplace. This also led to more trust. One participant explained that departments having projects to demonstrate their potential allowed her teachers to shine. This supports Kouzes and Posner (2014) claim that trust and productivity lead to a more engaged workplace. When employees feel they have a clear understanding of their leader and vice versa, the work itself then becomes the focus.

Structural work environment. These aforementioned principals had academic initiatives too. One participant had data driven instruction (DDI) cycles where she would meet with teams to analyze student work regularly and provide guidance on how to change instruction accordingly. Another participant created tiered intervention and interdisciplinary programs that were school-wide goals and not just for the ELA or math teachers through a pronounced vision for growth. These areas of focus not only reveal proficiency in working with people, but also critical analysis and problem solving acumen regarding multiple community members.

The primary investigator studied these leaders to discover the success factors behind the principals who educated low-income, primarily Latino and African American youth, and yet had notable student achievement gains compared to other schools that had similar student demographics. The academic programs at these schools would be essential to their success as they work with the challenges of poverty, second languages, and lack of instructional support from home. The following list shows the types of programs the participating schools offered:

- Socio-emotional learning programs: advisory, dynamic mindfulness, circle forward
- General education programs: College Preparatory Mathematics (CPM), block schedules, Achieve 3000, Scholastic Reading Counts, Study Island
- Intervention Programs: flex period, Response to Intervention (RtI), advanced math, intervention in math and ELA for all incoming students, Accelerated Reader, iStation, math fundamentals, enrichment block
- Programs for teachers: professional development, leadership retreats, data driven instruction and video observation cycles, mentor programming, Summit Program, intensive hiring methods

Each principal addressed each of these categories in some way. Therefore, the second theme of leveraging their strong people skills to create programs for students emerged.

The other important element to Theme 2 was the foundations or intervention programs. The highly achieving schools in this study address their most impacted students in a specific way. The participants adhered to this call to bridge the significant achievement gap in some way, whether it was a school wide program that nurtured intense reading or math fundamentals, small group tutoring blocks with separate personnel, students in special education, student support and progress teams, or meeting specific challenges of African-American students or English language learners. Thus, within these notable schools were agendas for the teachers and programs for all types of students in order for them to learn and achieve.

In an article by Pelzel and Maxfield (2018) about eliminating the achievement gap, the authors noted the “glaring gap within various student groups, specifically English learners and economically disadvantaged students” (p. 9) in the Newhall School District, which is also in California. The district “experienced a convergence of a number of large-scaled initiatives, including implementing new math curriculum, extensive math professional development, and a focus on supporting English learners through a new inquiry process [which] yielded a significant reduction in the achievement gap for English learners, unheard of in an implementation year” (Pelzel & Maxfield, 2018, p. 9). The overall achievement for Newhall School District’s socio-economically disadvantaged students in this article is cited; however, it still less than that of the achievement of the schools in this study.

Overall, Newhall School District scored above 40% on the CAASPP in math for their low-income students, while the schools in this research achieved over 50%. The main difference

is that this study evaluated middle schools, and Newhall School District's data includes students in Grades 3 thru 6.

New Findings

How public schools fare on state testing measures and subsequently, how they compare to each other will continue to be a critical topic for both scrutiny and study. As the primary investigator discovered the charter middle school leaders traits and their programs, their responses in Theme 2 was further investigated in conjunction with another theory.

Bolman and Deal's (2008) reframing organizations came to mind, as the participants in this study not only demonstrated a clear idea of self and school, but also how to get there. Examples from the school leaders that lead to Theme 2 further reflect Bolman and Deal's theory of reframing organizations through the following lenses: symbolic, structural, political, and human resource, as each frame must be addressed for a successful and sustainable institution. The participants implemented programs by addressing general education first through powerful and meaningful professional development for their staff, consistent student data analyses, and with new objectives during regular team meetings with rubrics and observations. Additionally, participants revealed mentoring programs to support faculty, especially those that were new to the teaching profession, as well as a robust talent acquisition department that added members who were like-minded in values to already existing team members.

In analysis of Questions 4, 5, 6, and 7 that contributed to Theme 2, elements of each frame for Bolman and Deal were addressed to bridge the achievement gap. A breakdown of one program, Intervention in Math, is shown in Table 4.

Table 13

Bolman and Deal Coding for One Academic Program

Four frames	Coding
Symbolic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision of achievement and growth in math for the school. • Objectives created (large and small)
Structural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate schedule for math intervention for students (whole school or specific kids) • Space or classroom for meeting
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get buy-in for program from students, parents, and teachers. • Included are other members who make academic decisions.
Human resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional development for teachers or just math teachers. • Hire math internationalist

For Kouzes and Posner's *Leadership Practices Inventory*, as the schools and the leaders are high-performing, all five practices were referenced. Similarly, elements of Bolman and Deal's four frames were also indicated in the participants' examples. The authors clarify here:

In a given situation, one cognitive map may be more helpful than others. At a strategic crossroads, a rational process focused on gathering and analyzing information may be exactly what is needed. At other times, developing commitment or building a power base may be more critical. In times of great stress, decision processes may become a form of ritual that brings comfort and support. Choosing a frame to size things up, or understanding others' perspectives, involves a combination of analysis, intuition, and artistry. (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 317)

Whether intentionally or not, the programs the participants shared in the interviews also aligned with the four frames that might further prove the leaders' effectiveness. In another study by Bolman and Granell (1999), where managers and administrators in education and business were studied, they found that "the ability to use multiple frames was a consistent correlate of effectiveness" (p. 325). The principals in this study were effective not only according to the research of Kouzes and Posner (2012), Bolman and Deal (2008), and the primary researcher in

this study, but also the impressive student results from the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP).

This alignment is what surprised this researcher the most. One might have predicted such a correlation, but since the student results were only between the range of 50% to around 75% (standards met and exceeded), the researcher had predicted that only a few of Kouzes and Posner's leadership traits were practiced, and one or two frames of Bolman and Deal's were deliberately incorporated at the schools. As the leaders and their schools referenced in this study show, at least four out of the five leadership practices were referenced, if not all of them. In this further analysis with another theory, all four frames were demonstrated in the programs that were created, implemented, and/or sustained by the effective principals. Bolman and Deal, and also Kouzes and Posner, state about their findings that the more each element of their theories are observed, the more effective the leader is. As such, addressing all four frames (Bolman & Deal, 2008) and demonstrating all five leadership traits (Kouzes & Posner, 2014), such as the participants here exhibited, are indications of highly effective leaders.

Educational leaders who were multi-framed were more efficacious than those who were single-framed. Single-framed leaders tended to mainly be in the structural arena and more novice in their careers. Bolman and Deal (2008) wrote that the political frame tended to be one of "the primary determinants of effectiveness as a leader" (p. 325). Further, the most effective leaders were determined by their political savvy, according to Bolman and Deal. The wonder is, as charter schools are politically charged foundationally in order to exist and operate, this could be a frame and strength already embedded within the agency of charter schools that supports their achievement compared to traditional public schools.

Study Limitations

New performance measures. The California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) was the main determinant of student achievement for this study. It is a young program, being only 3 years old officially with 1 pilot year that did not share any student results, and one more additional testing year for logistical and technical purposes. Thus, the schools that were identified for the purposes of this study had only 2 years of calculated data. Yet, the California Department of Education has released a comparative study in conjunction with the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC, 2018)—and an independent review board confirms the most recent 2017 results—which signals a plateau in student performance. The report finds that ELA decreased by 1% across all California schools, and math increased by 1% (SBAC, 2018).

Small number of participants. Although six out of the seven schools participated—and seven interviews were completed, as one school had two principals—more participants in future years will be warranted. Aside from performance criteria, the other guidelines for inclusion in the study were that the principals be leaders of charter schools, and lead schools of low socioeconomic student demographics in the Los Angeles area. These standards narrowed the scope to a specific population. Notwithstanding the main criteria, if the location was broadened to include charter school leaders of middle schools within all of California, the number of prospective participants could have also been augmented. However, if this study had included non-charter school leaders, with the same student demographics, while holding the expectation for a minimum of 50% *standards met or exceeded* status on either English language arts or mathematics on the CAASPP, the possibility for more potential participants would have been still relatively low, considering the average achievement in all of California is about half in math

and 10 percentage points lower in ELA. High student achievement among low socio-economic public school students is a charter school phenomenon in Los Angeles particularly.

Recommendations

Sharing best practices. This research began due to the primary researcher's own desire to better herself as a leader, to better her school, and yield higher student results. Being a school leader within the top three middle schools that taught low-income students in Los Angeles, a deep reflection and analysis of other high-performing schools was the drive for the primary investigator. Through the research process, there was discovery of the theoretical frameworks being implemented and growing leadership among charter school principals that is directly affecting youth, their education, and the future needs. These remarkable practices need to be highlighted and shared as best practices for current school administrators.

The California Charter Schools Association reported that charters make up both the top 5% and bottom 5% of public schools (CCSA, 2012). There are approximately 277 charter schools in Los Angeles, and of these, fewer than half operate middle school grades. The majority of charter schools serve low-income, low-performing, or both types of students. And yet, only eight of these schools had high enough student achievement to be part of this study. As charter schools can innovate more quickly than large district counterparts, other charter schools in the middle, with student achievement gains below but near 50% of standards met or exceeded should learn from leaders in this study and also analyze some of their academic programs and faculty professional development. But that is not enough.

The politics of charter schools. The research shows that effective leaders manage more than just the structural and symbolic frames of an organization. Organizational politics are relevant for schools, and predominant among educators, as they are in the business for the students. Nevertheless, Bolman and Deal (2008) state that those who know how to work the

political frame will be seen as more effective. A principal's understanding of who holds the power both inside and outside the school is essential. The primary researcher also found that *encouraging the heart* and *challenging the process* were the least practiced leadership traits. These traits are tied to the political frame. One must find the entry point to further build relationships in order to leverage a need or a desire in another stakeholder.

Not only are there within-district board members, and political connectedness to the authorizing district or local educational agency (LEA), but there are also political plays within the schools themselves: strong and vocal family members, and most notably the teachers themselves. Beyond the school leader, the teachers are the next body that influences student achievement most.

Teacher leaders. This group is one of the most highly influential bodies within a school—its leadership, its politics, and their effect on student achievement and faculty dynamics. Teacher leaders of the school and the organization are likely content leaders for English language arts, mathematics, or writing. The participants of this study insisted they did not gain student progress on their own. They had the backing of other core administrators or teacher leaders such as department leads, grade level chairs, assistant principals of instruction and culture. This very much involves the political and human resource frames. Principals should recognize success as a collective group effort.

The Aspen Institute (2014) wrote in their study that although the lead principals were considered neutral and even weak in instructional effectiveness, because the teacher leadership was strong and prominent, the schools still had a vibrant and robust culture as well as high student achievement. Additionally, as aforementioned, the New Teacher Project (2014) in their

studies with Boston Public Schools and the Irreplaceables (2012), reveal that teacher leadership is the crux of student achievement.

Therefore, the primary recommendations for this study are not only an examination of the leadership traits of these high-performing schools' principals and the specific programs they fostered and refined through thorough student data analyses. Additional key players who influence instruction and culture between students and staff should also be identified and decisively recognized. If necessary, educational leaders should leverage the political framework or at least use a multi-framed approach to strengthen relationships and celebrate growth, as these strategies will further support student performance gains.

Future Studies

Additionally, charter schools themselves are a relatively new. This growing phenomenon is significant and one that warrants more study. The body of information that exists about charter schools, their leadership, and their effect on urban education is in its infancy, and therefore limited. Thus, continuing this research is important. The achievement gap for Latino and Black students persists, even within charter schools. CAASPP reported statewide results for economically disadvantaged African American students in 2016 for English language arts for all testable grades (3rd, 8th, and 11th) to be on average 25% standards met and exceeded, and mathematics is at a dismally 13%. For economically disadvantaged Latinos it is 32% in ELA and 21% in math. These statistics are from California, but nationwide, the results are not markedly different.

In Cohodes' (2018) study of charter schools and the achievement gap, she asserted charters and traditional public schools have the most remarkable differences when it comes to

minority students in underserved areas. Otherwise they perform relatively the same as other public schools. She wrote the following:

Urban charter schools and those serving low-income and minority students, a number of which share a *no excuses* philosophy, tend to produce the largest gains. Expanding these highly effective charters and their practices may be a way to close achievement gaps. Research shows that charters can expand successfully and that traditional public schools that adopt charter practices (or are taken over by charter operators) can also make large academic gains. But to have a meaningful impact on nationwide achievement gaps, charter school approaches would need to be adopted beyond the charter sector itself. Any interventions that are built around using charter schools to close achievement gaps should focus not on the type of school but on the practices that work in the most effective charter schools. (Cohodes, 2018, p. 1)

This is the reason why charter school leaders were studied in this research. According to Cohodes, to significantly reduce the achievement gap, one must take best practices of charter schools and apply them to all schools that serve similar communities. If not, the impressive results will only exist amongst a minority of schools and ultimately not affect the nationwide achievement gap. Cohodes (2018) shares the National Center for Education Statistics from 2015, that “7,000 charter schools now serve more than 5% of students in the United States,” (p. 1).

As the limitations of this study were shared above, additional studies should include more interviews with principals who face similar challenges with bridging the achievement gap. This can be beyond charter school principals. More grades can also be included, such as upper elementary schools, since third through fifth graders are also tested. Likewise, although CAASPP is not used outside of California, since Common Core standards have been adopted by almost all the states excluding Texas, Alaska, Nebraska, Virginia, and Minnesota only having adopted standards for ELA (ASCD, 2018), high performing school leaders across the country could also be part of a future study. A nationwide charter leadership study would be one of a few of its kind. A comparative study could also follow to evaluate leadership traits of successful

school leaders at large, regardless of student demographics, to see if there is a contrast in results according to academic programming, student data analyses, teacher leadership teams, and faculty professional development.

In view of the elements of this study, to further validate the leadership practices of the school leaders, 360° interviews could be conducted with key stakeholders within the school to see if there is direct alignment with the principals' self-reported traits. Alongside these interviews, if teacher leaders and other administrators were also part of the study, there would be more insight and reflection to the academic programs and their effect or lack thereof.

SBAC reported that in 2017, student scores plateaued on average. The participants in this study were also young and some even first-time administrators. All had on average around 5 years of principalship experience. Therefore, a longitudinal study to see where the leaders and schools are 5 years from this study would benefit educators and school leaders alike, eventually affecting students as well. Will these leaders be able to bring about even more substantial change? How can they elevate student scores even more? What types of programs and human capital development can leverage this growth? And at what cost? Could some of these schools and their leaders be at the cusp of being *good to great*? As Collins (2001) wrote, level 5 leadership looks different than level 4 leadership. Hence, what will it take to support students to achieve at the 80% mark and above on a state benchmark?

A cross analysis of the Bolman and Deal's (2008) theoretical framework could also yield more consistencies and understanding of effective leadership traits and organizational strengths. Bolman and Deal write, "Effectiveness as a manager was particularly associated with the structural frame, whereas the symbolic and political frames tended to be the primary determinants of effectiveness as a leader (p. 325). Educational leaders who were multi-framed

were more efficacious than those who were single-framed. Single-framed leaders tended to mainly be in the structural arena and more novice in their careers. Further, the most effective leaders were determined by their political savvy (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Moreover, as charter schools are change agents in their own right, discovering which frame was preferred and which leadership traits were espoused, whether purposefully or not, to yield the most student improvement results, could be a useful case study.

As Moustakas (1994) spoke of the epoche or character sketch of a community that experienced the shared phenomenon, the primary researcher expects that with future studies of successful charter school leaders who close achievement gaps to be very similar to the strengths of the current group studied. The sample of future principals will have multiple strengths and diverse programs and staffing that will help them achieve the goal of effectively educating urban youth.

Conclusion

Education is supposed to be the ultimate equalizer. It can minimize wealth disparities and elevate societies. Then why in the United States are there such disappointing results from schools and student outcomes? Could the American educational system, which has in the past been reputedly the best in the world, perpetuate institutionalized racism, poverty, and essentially be a prison pipeline instead, for many disadvantaged students?

There is a conflict of futures, jobs, and economies when schools as both a learning facility and an agency for change are not equal. Thomas Jefferson during his time spoke about how an effective democracy is contingent upon an educated citizenry. When groups of people distinguished by their ethnicity and their zip codes are dislodged from their pursuit of life,

liberty, and happiness, because the system that is supposed to give them a fighting chance does not equip them with the proper tools to do so, then there is an endemic conflict.

The educational system has become known for low graduation rates, comparatively low science and mathematical skills in the digital and technological era, teachers who are unskilled to train the minds of today, and to make matters scarier, there is a clear color divide amongst the well-educated versus the populations of underserved students. For these reasons, schools that are largely doing right by these poor and economically struggling communities have been studied. Their leaders and their programs are doing an immeasurable and dutiful service. May the research presented here help leaders advocate for equity and a champion more opportunities for disadvantaged students.

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APPENDIX A

California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP)

Standard 1 Engaging and Supporting

- 1.1 Using knowledge of students to engage them in learning
- 1.2 Connecting learning to students' prior knowledge, backgrounds, life experiences, and interests
- 1.3 Connecting subject matter to meaningful, real-life contexts
- 1.4 Using a variety of instructional strategies, resources, and technologies to meet students' diverse learning needs
- 1.5 Promoting critical thinking through inquiry, problem solving, and reflection
- 1.6 Monitoring student learning and adjusting instruction while teaching

Standard 2 Creating and Maintaining Effective Environments for Student Learning

- 2.1 Promoting social development and responsibility within a caring community where each student is treated fairly and respectfully
- 2.2 Creating physical or virtual learning environments that promote student learning, reflect diversity, and encourage constructive and productive interactions among students
- 2.3 Establishing and maintaining learning environments that are physically, intellectually, and emotionally safe
- 2.4 Creating a rigorous learning environment with high expectations and appropriate support for all students
- 2.5 Developing, communicating, and maintaining high standards for individual and group behavior
- 2.6 Employing classroom routines, procedures, norms, and supports for positive behavior to ensure a climate in which all students can learn
- 2.7 Using instructional time to optimize learning

Standard 3 Understanding and Organizing Subject Matter for Student Learning

- 3.1 Demonstrating knowledge of subject matter, academic content standards, and curriculum frameworks
- 3.2 Applying knowledge of student development and proficiencies to ensure student understanding of subject matter
- 3.3 Organizing curriculum to facilitate student understanding of the subject matter
- 3.4 Utilizing instructional strategies that are appropriate to the subject matter
- 3.5 Using and adapting resources, technologies, and standards-aligned instructional materials, including adopted materials, to make subject matter accessible to all students
- 3.6 Addressing the needs of English learners and students with special needs to provide equitable access to the content

Standard 4 Planning Instruction and Designing Learning Experiences for All Students

- 4.1 Using knowledge of students' academic readiness, language proficiency, cultural background, and individual development to plan instruction
- 4.2 Establishing and articulating goals for student learning
- 4.3 Developing and sequencing long-term and short-term instructional plans to support student learning
- 4.4 Planning instruction that incorporates appropriate strategies to meet the learning needs of all students
- 4.5 Adapting instructional plans and curricular materials to meet the assessed learning needs of all students

Standard 5 Assessing Students for Learning

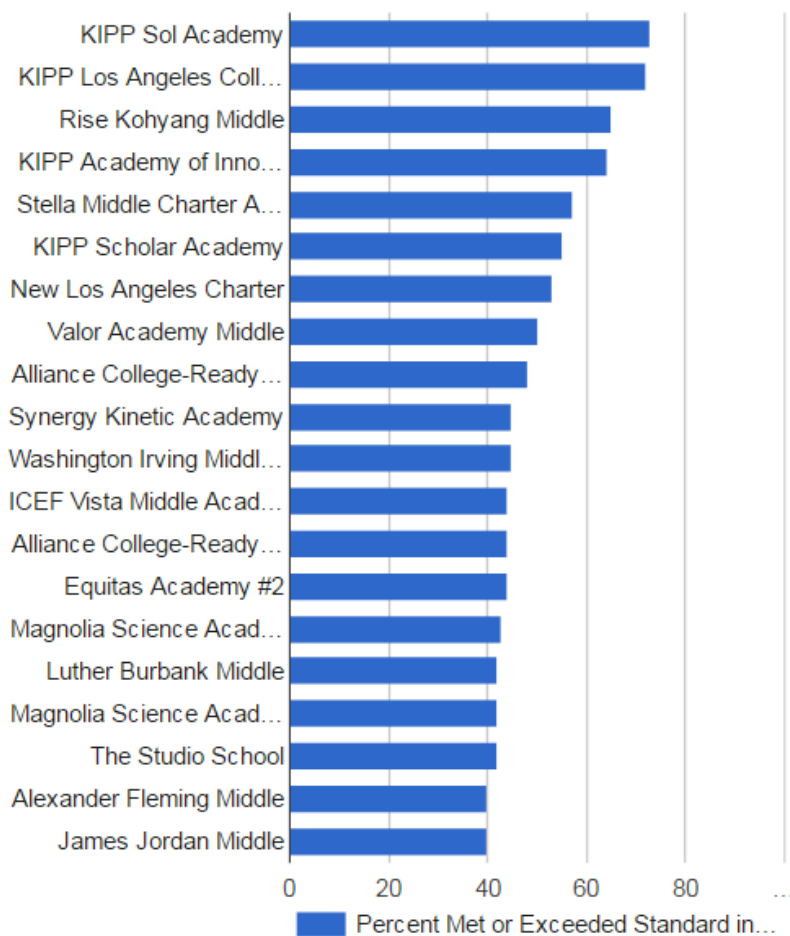
- 5.1 Applying knowledge of the purposes, characteristics, and uses of different types of
- 5.2 Collecting and analyzing assessment data from a variety of sources to inform instruction
- 5.3 Reviewing data, both individually and with colleagues, to monitor student learning
- 5.4 Using assessment data to establish learning goals and to plan, differentiate, and modify instruction
- 5.5 Involving all students in self-assessment, goal setting, and monitoring progress
- 5.6 Using available technologies to assist in assessment, analysis, and communication of student learning
- 5.7 Using assessment information to share timely and comprehensible feedback with students and their families

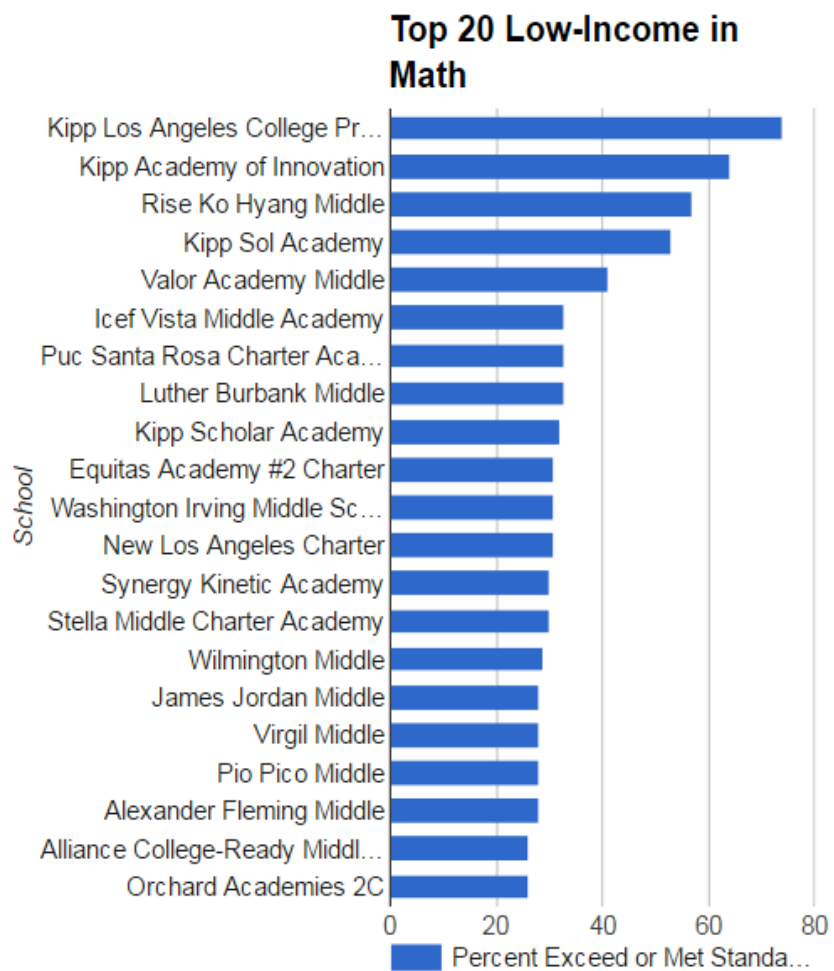
Standard 6 Developing as a Professional Educator-Teachers reflect on their teaching practice to support student learning.

- 6.1 Reflecting on teaching practice in support of student learning
- 6.2 Establishing professional goals and engaging in continuous and purposeful professional growth and development
- 6.3 Collaborating with colleagues and the broader professional community to support teacher and student learning
- 6.4 Working with families to support student learning
- 6.5 Engaging local communities in support of the instructional program
- 6.6 Managing professional responsibilities to maintain motivation and commitment to all students
- 6.7 Demonstrating professional responsibility, integrity, and ethical conduct (CSTP, 2009)

APPENDIX B

Scoring Criteria

Top 20 Low-Income Schools



APPENDIX C

Danielson Standards

Domain 1: Planning and Preparation

- 1a Demonstrating Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy
- 1b Demonstrating Knowledge of Students
- 1c Setting Instructional Outcomes
- 1d Demonstrating Knowledge of Resources
- 1e Designing Coherent Instruction
- 1f Designing Student Assessments

Domain 2: Classroom Environment

- 2a Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport
- 2b Establishing a Culture for Learning
- 2c Managing Classroom Procedures
- 2d Managing Student Behavior
- 2e Organizing Physical Space

Domain 3: Instruction

- 3a Communicating with Students
- 3b Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques
- 3c Engaging Students in Learning
- 3d Using Assessment in Instruction
- 3e Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness

Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities

- 4a Reflecting on Teaching
- 4b Maintaining Accurate Records
- 4c Communicating with Families
- 4d Participating in the Professional Community
- 4e Growing and Developing Professionally
- 4f Showing Professionalism

Partial Danielson Rubric (Abridged)

TCRP Teacher Effectiveness Rubric

June 9, 2011

1.1 Establish standards-based learning objectives and assessments	A) Selection of learning objectives	Learning objectives are loosely based on content standards and/or represent low expectations for student learning.	Learning objectives are informed by content standards and represent moderately high expectations.	Learning objectives align with content standards and represent high expectations and rigor and are sequenced to help students access the level of rigor in the standard(s).	Learning objectives align with or extend content standards that represent high expectations and rigor to promote in-depth understanding of complex, interdisciplinary concepts and college readiness and are sequenced to help students access the level of rigor for the standard.
	B) Measurability of learning objectives	Learning objectives may not be measurable or are stated in terms of student activities rather than as student learning.	Learning objectives are measurable, but consist of a combination of learning objectives and activities.	Learning objectives are specific, measurable, and are explicitly stated in terms of student learning.	Learning objectives are specific, measurable by multiple methods, and are explicitly stated in terms of student learning.
1.2 Organize instructional plans to promote standards-based, cognitively engaging learning for students	A) Designing and sequencing of learning experiences	The design and selection of learning experiences are not aligned to learning objective and not sequenced to ensure independent mastery of learning.	The design and selection of learning experiences are aligned to learning objective but are not sequenced / paced to maximize instructional time to enable students to demonstrate independent mastery of learning (e.g., sufficient modeling, varied practice).	The design and selection of learning experiences are sequenced / paced to enable students to demonstrate independent mastery of learning objectives including sufficient opportunities to practice under direct supervision of teacher and / or in collaboration with other students.	The design and selection of learning experiences are sequenced / paced to enable students to demonstrate independent mastery of learning objectives including differentiated resources / activities for re-teaching and additional practice to adjust instruction as needed.
	B) Creating cognitively engaging learning experiences for students	Instructional plans do not provide cognitively engaging learning experiences to support students in achieving mastery of the stated learning objectives.	Instructional plans include cognitively engaging learning experiences but the plans include insufficient time and supports for students to achieve mastery of stated learning objective.	Instructional plans provide students opportunities for sustained attention to a cognitively challenging learning experience. The plans include sufficient time and supports for students to achieve mastery of learning objective through cognitively engaging learning experiences.	Instructional plans provide cognitively engaging learning experiences that ensure students construct knowledge to achieve or exceed mastery of the stated learning objective.

APPENDIX D

Partial LAUSD's Rubric of the CSTPs

Revised March 2017

Standard 1: Planning and Preparation**Component 1a: Demonstrating Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy**

Teachers must have sufficient command of the subject to guide student learning and they must also know how their content fits into a larger context. Since every discipline has its own approach to instruction, teachers need to tailor their pedagogy to their content. Knowledge of content and pedagogy is not stagnant, but evolves over time and requires on-going, collaborative learning to support 21st Century Skills and learners.

Elements	Ineffective Practice	Developing Practice	Effective Practice	Highly Effective Practice
<p><i>1a1. Knowledge of Content and the Structure of the Discipline</i></p> <p><i>Knows the discipline and how the subjects within the discipline relate and integrate with one another [e.g., understanding how algebra, geometry, and trigonometry are related in the discipline of mathematics].</i></p> <p>PC, A</p>	Teacher makes content errors or the teacher's plan does not articulate sufficient knowledge of the content standards.	Teacher articulates a basic knowledge of the grade level concepts in the discipline. Teacher demonstrates limited connections across grade levels.	Teacher articulates knowledge of the concepts in the discipline through the development of essential understandings and big ideas that are aligned to the standards. Teacher demonstrates knowledge of the progression of the content standards within and across adjacent grade levels.	Teacher articulates advanced knowledge of the concepts in the discipline through the development of essential understandings and big ideas that are aligned to standards across disciplines. Teacher demonstrates knowledge of the progression of the content standards within and across multiple grade levels and disciplines.
<p><i>1a2. Knowledge of Content-Related Pedagogy</i></p> <p><i>Uses pedagogical content knowledge to plan instruction in the particular subject area.</i></p> <p>PC, A</p>	Teacher's plan displays little or no understanding of appropriate pedagogical approaches suitable to the essential understandings and big ideas that should be addressed in the lesson.	Teacher's plan reflects limited pedagogical approaches or some approaches that are not suitable to the essential understandings and big ideas addressed in the lesson. Teacher's plan incorporates limited connections to 21 st Century Skills.	Teacher's plan reflects intentional selection of effective research-based pedagogical approaches in the discipline, and is appropriate for the essential understandings and big ideas addressed in the lesson. Teacher plans appropriate use of technology and of 21 st Century Skills. Teacher anticipates students' misunderstandings.	Teacher's plan reflects intentional selection of effective research-based pedagogical approaches, appropriate for the essential understanding and big ideas addressed in the lesson. Teacher plans appropriate use of technology, and 21 st Century Skills. Teacher anticipates students' misunderstandings and plans how to address them.

APPENDIX E

Partial New Leaders Principal Evaluation Rubric

	Exemplary	Proficient	Basic	Unsatisfactory	Examples of Evidence
Implements rigorous curricula and assessments tied to both state and college-readiness standards					
Implements curricula aligned to state or national college-readiness standards	Builds the capacity of staff to effectively develop, adapt, and implement rigorous curriculum aligned to Common Core and state standards to effectively address all students learning needs	Engages the leadership team and other key staff in developing, adapting, and implementing curriculum aligned to Common Core and state standards to meet student learning needs	Develops and supports the implementation of standards-based curriculum; attempts to align to Common Core and state standards to meet student learning needs	Supports staff use of a curriculum that is not aligned to college readiness standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Systems ensure that lesson and unit plans align to the scope and sequence and prepare students to be on a college readiness track Instructional decisions throughout the year, including student grouping/differentiation and targeting for interventions, are based on periodic assessments, classroom tests, and teacher designed tests
Supports the development and implementation of standards-based lesson and unit plans	Builds the capacity of staff to analyze standards, curricula, and aligned assessments to develop and implement standards-based lesson and unit plans linked to year-end goals; implements ongoing systems to review and improve unit and lesson plans based on student outcomes	Leads analyses of standards, curricula, and aligned assessments to develop and implement standards-based lesson and unit plans linked to year-end goals; oversees revisions to unit and lesson plans based on student outcomes	Encourages teachers to analyze standards, curricula, and aligned assessments to develop and implement their own lesson and unit plans; adjusts some unit and lesson plans based on student outcomes	Supports staff use of misaligned lesson and units that are disconnected from year-end goals; rarely adjusts lesson or unit plans based on student outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lesson plans, unit plans, and curricular materials demonstrate curriculum coordination and alignment to Common Core content standards Rigorous course content is accessible to all students
Implements high-quality, effective classroom instructional strategies that drive increases in student achievement					
Implements effective instructional strategies to meet student learning needs	Builds the capacity of staff to effectively implement a variety of rigorous strategies and pedagogical methods that meet student needs and drive student learning; adapts instruction and assessments to ensure that all students master content	Supports staff in effectively implementing a variety of rigorous strategies and pedagogical methods that are meet to student needs and drive student learning; adapts instruction and assessments to ensure that all students master content	Provides staff limited support in the use of instructional strategies that support student learning; identifies adaptations to instructional practices and assessments with limited implementation	Rarely ensures instructional strategies support student learning; rarely adapts instructional practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Throughout the school, classroom activities engage students in cognitively challenging work that is aligned to the standards Instructional staff (teachers, coaches, and administrators) have a broad repertoire of pedagogical approaches that they effectively incorporate into lesson plans
Monitors multiple forms of student level data to inform instructional and intervention decisions					
Tracks student level data to drive continuous improvement	Uses multiple sources of quantitative and qualitative data to assess and monitor instruction; creates systems for consistent monitoring and frequent collection of data and uses data appropriately to identify student outcome trends, prioritize needs, and drive continuous improvement	Uses multiple sources of data to monitor instruction, identify student outcome trends, and prioritize needs; creates system for consistent data monitoring and uses data to inform continuous improvement	Uses limited forms of data and does not ensure consistent collection of data for analysis; draws conclusions about instruction with limited data	Inconsistently uses data to evaluate instruction; rarely uses data appropriately to identify trends or prioritize needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructional decisions throughout the year are based on student outcome data Student performance data is readily available and can be organized by cohort, grade, subject, sub-group, etc. Elementary students who are not yet proficient (basic) are identified and supported to ensure they make progress <p>(continued on next page)</p>

APPENDIX F

IRB Course Completion



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

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: August 23, 2017

Protocol Investigator Name: Eliza Kim

Protocol #: 17-03-526

Project Title: Thriving Charter School Leaders: A study of the unique, tenacious entrepreneurs that bridge academic achievement gaps in urban public Los Angeles schools

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Eliza Kim:

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.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chair

APPENDIX G

Interview Questions

1. How long have you been a principal?
2. What are your leadership traits that have ultimately helped your school be successful?
3. How are these traits linked to the success of the school? This question will offer an opportunity for the leader to reflect on his or her skillset that has contributed to the school's growth even further.
4. What programs directly attribute to your student achievement? With this question, the principals can elaborate on what they instituted to yield high student achievement. Revelation of how site administrators implemented some of their vision to help students rise will be important for any educational leader. It will also be grounds for possibly even more common threads amongst the top performing charters in Los Angeles.
5. How involved are you in the creation and implementation of the academic programs of your school?
6. How essential are your intervention programs to your student achievement?
7. Besides you, who else supports academic accountability at your school?
8. How do you promote a positive work environment for your staff?

APPENDIX H

Informed Consent

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

Graduate School of Education and Psychology

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Thriving Charter School Leaders

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Eliza Kim, M.A. Ed, under the direction of Dr. Shreyas Gandhi at Pepperdine University, because you are a school leader in a high-performing charter middle school in Los Angeles. Your participation is completely voluntary. Please read the information below. Ask any questions you may have to better understand the study and your participation. Please take as much time as you need to read the consent form. You may consult anyone you wish to before consenting. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form. You will also be given a copy of this form for your records.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose behind the research study is to explore any common leadership traits among successful charter school administrators. The outcome of the study can provide professionals in the field of education with innovative programs that bridge academic achievement gaps in urban public schools.

STUDY PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be subsequently asked to participate in a face-to-face or phone interview that consists of eight open-ended questions. You may respond with your own insights, personal experiences and expertise for each question. Follow-up questions may be asked by the researcher for clarification purposes. The questions focus on leadership characteristics that build and raise student achievement scores. The interview will be approximately 30 minutes. You have the right to request rest periods or breaks at any time. Notes will be taken during your responses. Upon request, interviews may also be audio taped. Once the interview has been completed, you may request a copy of the transcript of the interview for your own personal records. The researcher will provide you with this information after the study has been completed.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The potential and foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study may include boredom and mental fatigue. As site administrators also have very busy schedules, one might feel the need to finish the interview with expediency. Participants may also feel discomfort talking about the role and revealing any and all aspects of what it took to implement, sustain, staff and/or change academic and cultural programs. If you feel discomfort, you may withdraw from the interview at any time.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

One potential benefit for the participant is the opportunity to reflect on and assess the hard work s/he and the school team accomplished to create such an outstanding school of choice. While there may be no direct benefit(s) for participating, there are several anticipated benefits to society that include: providing researchers and professionals in the field of education with ideas and insight into the programs and structures that helped raise student achievement for urban youth and bridged the performance gap for students of color and/or low socio-economic backgrounds.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The records for this study will be kept confidential as far as permitted by law. However as the principal investigator, I am required by law to disclose certain information collected about you, if it falls under the following circumstances: issues that would require me to break confidentiality are of child and elderly abuse. Pepperdine's University's Human Subjects Protection Program (HSPP) may also access the data collected. The HSPP occasionally reviews and monitors research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research subjects.

The data will be stored on a password-protected computer in my place of residence. If results of this study are published or presented, individual names and other personally identifiable information will not be used. To minimize the risks to confidentiality, I will use coding techniques and store all digital files on a password-protected computer in my home which has a passcode entry and guarded security personnel. Hard copy files will be stored in a safe, locked file cabinet only accessible by the researcher. When the research is completed, I may save the tapes and notes for use in future research done by others or myself. I will retain these records for up to 3 years after the study is over. Your responses will be coded with a pseudonym and transcript data will be maintained separately.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

ALTERNATIVES TO FULL PARTICIPATION

The alternative to participation in the study is not participating or completing only the items that you feel comfortable. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty.

INVESTIGATOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION

The investigator is willing to answer any inquiries you may have concerning the research herein described. As the principal investigator, my contact information is egkim@pepperdine.edu or [phone number omitted for publication]. You may further contact Dr. Shreyas Gandhi, sgandhi@pepperdine.edu, my Committee Chair, if you have any other questions or concerns about this research.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT – IRB CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions, concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant or research in general please contact:

Dr. Judy Ho, Chairperson of the Graduate & Professional School Institutional Review Board
Pepperdine University
6100 Center Drive Suite 500 Los Angeles, CA 90045
310-568-5753
gpsirb@pepperdine.edu

I have read the information provided above. I have been given a chance to ask questions. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX I

Email and Telephone Script for Interview Questioning

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Email/Telephone Request for Interview

Good morning, Principal _____,

I am Eliza KimLy, Founding Principal of Rise Kohyang Middle, a Bright Star School. I am also a doctoral candidate for Pepperdine University's Organizational Leadership program.

I am requesting a brief interview with you to conduct my study of "Thriving Charter School Leaders: A study of The Unique, Tenacious Entrepreneurs that Bridge Academic achievement Gaps in Urban Public Schools. Your school has been identified as a highly-performing school in either ELA or Math per the 2016 CAASPP where 50% or more of your students scored Standards Met or Exceeded.

Please let me know if I may schedule an interview with you at your earliest convenience.

Best,

Eliza KimLy

APPENDIX J

LPI Survey

Your Name: _____

To what extent do you typically engage in the following behaviors? Choose the response number that best applies to each statement and record it in the box to the right of that statement.

- | | | |
|-----|--|----------------------|
| 1. | I set a personal example of what I expect of others. | <input type="text"/> |
| 2. | I talk about future trends that will influence how our work gets done. | <input type="text"/> |
| 3. | I seek out challenging opportunities that test my own skills and abilities. | <input type="text"/> |
| 4. | I develop cooperative relationships among the people I work with. | <input type="text"/> |
| 5. | I praise people for a job well done. | <input type="text"/> |
| 6. | I spend time and energy making certain that the people I work with adhere to the principles and standards we have agreed on. | <input type="text"/> |
| 7. | I describe a compelling image of what our future could be like. | <input type="text"/> |
| 8. | I challenge people to try out new and innovative ways to do their work. | <input type="text"/> |
| 9. | I actively listen to diverse points of view. | <input type="text"/> |
| 10. | I make it a point to let people know about my confidence in their abilities. | <input type="text"/> |
| 11. | I follow through on the promises and commitments that I make. | <input type="text"/> |
| 12. | I appeal to others to share an exciting dream of the future. | <input type="text"/> |
| 13. | I search outside the formal boundaries of my organization for innovative ways to improve what we do. | <input type="text"/> |
| 14. | I treat others with dignity and respect. | <input type="text"/> |
| 15. | I make sure that people are creatively rewarded for their contributions to the success of our projects. | <input type="text"/> |
| 16. | I ask for feedback on how my actions affect other people's performance. | <input type="text"/> |
| 17. | I show others how their long-term interests can be realized by enlisting in a common vision. | <input type="text"/> |
| 18. | I ask "What can we learn?" when things don't go as expected. | <input type="text"/> |
| 19. | I support the decisions that people make on their own. | <input type="text"/> |
| 20. | I publicly recognize people who exemplify commitment to shared values. | <input type="text"/> |
| 21. | I build consensus around a common set of values for running our organization. | <input type="text"/> |
| 22. | I paint the "big picture" of what we aspire to accomplish. | <input type="text"/> |
| 23. | I make certain that we set achievable goals, make concrete plans, and establish measurable milestones for the projects and programs that we work on. | <input type="text"/> |
| 24. | I give people a great deal of freedom and choice in deciding how to do their work. | <input type="text"/> |
| 25. | I find ways to celebrate accomplishments. | <input type="text"/> |
| 26. | I am clear about my philosophy of leadership. | <input type="text"/> |
| 27. | I speak with genuine conviction about the higher meaning and purpose of our work. | <input type="text"/> |
| 28. | I experiment and take risks, even when there is a chance of failure. | <input type="text"/> |
| 29. | I ensure that people grow in their jobs by learning new skills and developing themselves. | <input type="text"/> |
| 30. | I give the members of the team lots of appreciation and support for their contributions. | <input type="text"/> |

APPENDIX K

Effect Teacher vs. Teacher Leader

Effective Teacher	Teacher Leader
Implements best practices routinely in the classroom	Readily shares and models best practices and/or resources with colleagues
Works to improve his/her own practice	Works to improve the practice of others
Seeks opportunities for continuous improvement	Models an attitude of continuous improvement in order to combat complacency
Maintains professional relationships with others	Works to build relationships with others through active listening, facilitation, and mediation
Collaborates with colleagues and school teams	Encourages and facilitates collaboration among colleagues and school teams
Implements solutions to challenges that promote the best interest of his/her students	Provides solutions to challenges that promote the best interest of all stakeholders
Creates an environment where students are comfortable asking questions, initiating topics, and challenging their peers' thinking.	Creates an environment in which colleagues are comfortable asking questions, initiating topics, and challenging their peers' thinking.
Welcomes feedback from supervisors and colleagues	Actively seeks feedback from supervisors and colleagues

Danielson, C. (1996). *Enhancing professional practice: A framework for teaching*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
 Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium. (2011). Model Standards Advance the Profession. *JSD*, 32(3), 16-24.