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Contents

Notes from the Editors

In this issue of the *Southeast Journal on Educational Administration*, Coaching, mentoring, partnership, and leadership models are discussed. Undeniably, Covid-19 had drastic impacts on all levels of education. Despite any challenges remaining and those yet unknown, quality educational leaders are needed at every level to provide guidance. Thank you to all of the peer reviewers who took the time to evaluate and provide feedback for articles for this issue.

Patricia Corr, Lou Sabina, Rajni Shankar-Brown, Deb Touchton, and Anna Peters discussed *Coaching Strategies for Principals That Lead to Academic Achievement* for students. Their study began with identifying coaching strategies used by principals, assistant principals, and instructional coaches at three middle schools in Florida to improve student achievement. They discussed the added implications of COVID and virtual learning on student outcomes and leader responsibilities. The impact of coaching and feedback on teacher success was compared to the need that principals have for the same. The authors presented the exigency for principal coaching with specific feedback on practices by experienced mentors for the first three years of their principalship.

With a focus on *District Administration and Local Workforce in an Era of Centralization*, Amanda Frasier provided a thorough policy analysis through the lens of institutional theory. Three major themes were evident from her analysis, including: equity, special interest influence, and public democratic participation. Understanding the changing dynamics pertaining to the superintendency and relations with the school board can explain how events in the past have shaped the current status.

Suzanne Harris and Kathleen Campbell provided an *Effective Leadership Model for an Ongoing Crisis*. In analyzing the 2019 pandemic shutdown of schools, school- and district-based adminsitrators had to address challenges of remote learning quickly. Through a mixed-methods study of teachers' perceptions they reveal components of best practices and areas for improvement. Through qualitative analysis, the model was constructed and presented for addressing crisis situations.

The importance of superintendent and regional university partnerships was discussed by Dan Novey. Through his research, *Service Leadership Projects Provide Positive Impact on Schools*, in which he described how superintendents provided opportunities in their school systems for the principals-in-training programs to gain valuable experiences and implemented the university's service leadership projects for school improvement. There was previously limited research related to the benefits of SLP work for university students and the schools, and the added perceptions of stakeholders helps to provide a foundation for future research.

Aneta Walker and Tonya Conner studied reciprocal mentoring as a successful partnership for leadership growth. Their study was located within an elementary school and an associated institution of higher education with a purpose to strengthen the success of their partnership through a change process. Themes of trust and accountability were vital, and they discussed how a lack of leadership buy-in could be problematic. They concluded the article with a review of reciprocal or reverse mentoring and the importance to the partnership.

An important note for readers and potential authors, beginning with Volume 22, Issue 1, a section for book reviews will be added and a limited number of commentary/concept papers will be considered for publication. Although not a requirement, the preference for submissions for book reviews should be graduate students and junior faculty members. Submissions for commentary or concept papers are encouraged from pretenured faculty. An updated scope and guidelines will be provided for the next volume.

In closing, thank you again to all of the authors and peer reviewers. Although lingering challenges limited Volume 21 to this one issue, the articles chosen for publication add to the body of scholarly knowledge and will contribute to future research. As intended by the editorial review board, the *Southeast Journal of Educational Administration* serves to provide a forum for professors, graduates students, and educational leadership practitioners to exchange scholarly ideas and foster practical research.

Sincerely,

Dana M. Griggs   Christopher M. Parfitt
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Author and Editor Biographies

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Walker, Aneta H., Ph.D.(AWalker2@uwf.edu) is the Coordinator for Graduate Programs in the School of Education at the *University of West Florida.* Aneta Walker earned a Doctorate in Philosophy in Administration of Elementary and Secondary Schools in 2016 from Auburn University. The focus of Dr. Walker's research agenda is implementing innovation and sustaining change in schools and investigating the relationships among building a capacity for change through leadership, establishing internal and external partnerships, and collaborative networks. She continues to be dedicated to improving leadership practices.

Coaching Strategies for Principals That Lead to Academic Achievement

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Abstract

Through this study, we aimed to determine the impact that coaching strategies have on school principals, which lead to improved academic performance of their students. The exploration of principal coaching and its effect on student achievement outcomes is important to understand how to support both new and veteran principals in honing their instructional leadership skill set. As the primary instructional leader on the campus, the school principal is entrusted to lead and model the curriculum and instruction efforts for their teachers and students. Too often, principals focus their time and attention on the managerial tasks of the principalship thus overlooking the primary importance—instructional leadership. In addition, many administrators feel underprepared to take on all that comes with moving a school academically. Principals need to know and understand a variety of curriculum, as well as how to help teachers improve their instructional practices to change student outcomes positively. Through this study, we examined the best practices and strategies of instructional coaching that can be used to improve principals' instructional knowledge. We aimed to show how both novice and experienced principals may benefit from ongoing coaching and support to improve their instructional practice.

Keywords: coaching, instructional leadership, mentorship, educational administration, principal leadership

Coaching Strategies for Principals that Lead to Academic Achievement

Principals oversee all aspects of the school campus and therefore have a direct effect on how teachers and students perform (Marzano, 2016; Murray, 2013; Sabina, 2014; Stronge & Xu, 2021). However, principals cannot be expected to carry this burden alone. The instructional coaches and assistant principals in the building are instrumental in supporting principals with obtaining high levels of student academic achievement in schools. With high-stakes testing and student achievement accountability outcomes being continually measured by the state and local district, the need for principal readiness is at an all-time high.

The goal of this research study is to examine three similar middle schools in a Large Central Florida School District to determine what effective coaching strategies, if used with principals, will lead to improved academic achievement on their campuses. Descriptive data including school grades from the prior five years was utilized as well as semi-structured qualitative interviews with principals, assistant principals and instructional coaches.

In the Large Central Florida School District that was chosen for this study, the middle school student achievement data have remained relatively "flat" over the last five years. There does not appear to be any upward trending of student achievement performance on the school report card. Principals are the lead learners and instructional leaders on their campuses and need to know and understand how to move student data in a positive way. Through this study, we aimed to identify if the school principals in the selected schools have the necessary skill set to increase student achievement on their campuses and what, if any, coaching strategies may be used to assist them in this endeavor.

Research Questions

The following three research questions guided this study:
- Research Question #1: What are the effective coaching strategies that can be implemented with middle school principals that lead to improved academic achievement in their schools?
- Research Question #2: What coaching strategies have been done in the past and were they successful or not?
- Research Question #3: How can improved coaching strategies lead to improved academic achievement?

In Research Question #1, we aimed to identify coaching strategies that are proven effective and can be implemented with principals to improve academic outcomes at their schools. Research Question #2 was used to identify what coaching strategies the participants have utilized in the past and their effectiveness for both their personal and professional growth and overall student achievement. Research Question #3 summarized the relationship between effective coaching strategies and improved academic achievement. To obtain critical data for these question, three principals, three assistant principals, and six instructional coaches were interviewed and asked a variety of questions regarding their experiences with instructional coaching.

Purpose and Significance of Study

The purpose of this study was, simply put, to obtain a better understanding of how instructional coaching for principals can lead to improved outcomes for students. The importance of this study cannot be overshadowed, as the role of the principal is to oversee the academic performance of students. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this particular school district shifted entirely to virtual learning during the last quarter of the 2019–2020 school year. Students left in March for spring break, not knowing they would not return to their school for the remainder of the year. In addition, this school district offered virtual learning to all students for the following school year (2020–2021). There are many instances in which students at this school district have been off their school campus for almost two years and therefore have not interacted in a face-to-face manner with their teachers. The learning loss for these students has yet to be measured or understood fully. However, the ramifications of this learning loss may be catastrophic for some students. Now, more than ever, principals must be adept at identifying skill gaps in their most vulnerable student populations, and they must be able to close the ever-widening and to some extent, unknown, achievement gap.

Review of Related Literature

While attempting to determine the effectiveness of principals coaching on school grades, a variety of literature was utilized to gain a cohesive awareness. Aguilar et al. (2011) examined a school that was able to close the gap between white and black students, to which instructional coaching was credited. A Wallace Foundation study examined the district's role in building and sustaining an effective principal pipeline of individuals who are trained and ready to step into the principalship. Gates et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of the role of the principal and the influence that principals have over student outcomes. Fullan (2019) explored the human side of leadership and influence when leading a school. Fullan focused on specific steps that can be taken by the building leader to harness the power of faculty and staff to make improved and sustained changes that lead to success. Sabina (2014) examined the role of the school principal and how the success of a school depends greatly on the principal's leadership ability. These studies, along with countless other recent studies, have addressed the importance of the school principal and the role the principal has in the success of the school. Ultimately, it appears the role of the principal is not getting easier; and effective school principals must utilize all personnel on their campuses, including instructional coaches, in order to be the critical leader needed for success.

Why Coaching?

"Even a great school leader needs a coach." (Aguilar et al., 2011, p. 70). No longer are school principals charged with only managing a site, they are expected to improve any and all student academic outcomes. To become a school administrator in the State of Florida, one must possess a teaching certificate, have a master's degree, obtain certification either through completion of an additional master's degree or approved educational leadership courses, and pass the required state examination called the Florida Educational Leadership Exam (FELE). Once certified as an administrator, most serve in the role of an assistant principal for a minimum of two to three years before even being considered for a principal position. Occasionally,

counties will have their own principal preparation program. These programs are specific to the county and are normally overseen by district personnel. After completion of this program, administrators may then become building principals. Although that sounds like extensive training, Young et al. (2005) argued that the real training for principals begins once they are named the head of their own school. This is difficult to refute, as no amount of book work can truly prepare someone for the day-to-day inevitabilities that come with leading a school – especially a middle school, which has elements of both elementary and high schools. Therefore, the coaching a new principal receives from mentors or district-level administrators is critical for their success.

Is also critical to note the changed nature of instructional coaching across United States schools. Instructional coaching and mentoring teachers has changed so significantly over the last 20 years; there are now instructional coach positions at most schools (Anderson & Wallin, 2018; Zugelder, 2019), assistant principals have to be teacher leaders now (Kaplan & Owings, 1999; Searby & Browne-Ferrigno, 2017), and the principal ultimately has to be *the* teacher leader in the building—preparing future assistant principals to be that leader as well (Baker, 2010; Lochmiller & Karnopp, 2016; Sabina, 2014). Finally, to contextualize this study, it is quite possible that no level of school is more challenging to work at currently than middle school. Coupled with the increased need for social and emotional learning, mental health and well-being at the middle school level (Wahl et al., 2011)—the middle school principal is perhaps the most challenging role right now in educational administration. This challenging role makes the need for effective coaches even more critical, and perhaps dire, when working with teachers, who are working with quite possibly, the most challenging students in all of education.

What Coaching Currently Exists for Principals?

In most school districts, there is a training program for assistant principals to become principals. However, the nature and quality of the training are diverse based on the size of the school district (Johnston et al., 2016). Researchers have shown that principals, especially new principals, require support and feedback from their supervisors. Training, mentoring, and supporting principals once they receive their first building is more ambiguous. As the primary instructional leader in the school, the school principal covers training and feedback in curriculum and instruction. Depending on the school district's organizational structure, a principal's immediate supervisor may be the (a) superintendent of schools, (b) an associate or deputy superintendent, or (c) an executive director. Because these individuals also have varied job responsibilities, it is difficult to schedule the time needed to effectively coach principals. To compensate, some school districts have opted to utilize site-based instructional coaches to coach new principals and assistant principals on both teaching and learning and curriculum and instruction. That leaves the immediate district-level supervisor the ability to coach the principal on managerial tasks (Aguilar et al., 2011).

Effective Coaching

To ensure coaching can be successful for both the coach and the principal, mutual trust and respect must be garnered. Experience providing and accepting feedback are crucial to this endeavor. Hattie and Clark (2018) have shown that effective feedback practices in the classroom

can have .76 effect size with regard to student learning. Therefore, it would stand to reason that this information can be extrapolated out to the relationship between principals and their teachers. There are several ways in which this can be incorporated into effective coaching for principals. First, the supervisor can use a coaching cycle to give feedback to the principal on their current practice based on observations, surveys, and data. In addition, when a principal gives feedback to a teacher, the supervisor can coach the principal on what feedback to give and the accuracy of the feedback. Both parties can then reflect on the activity and use it as a coaching tool for future conversations the principal will have with other teachers (Aguilar et al., 2011).

For the coaching cycle to be effective and lead to growth for the principal, an open mind and a true desire to improve must be present. There is imperative that principals self-evaluate their influence on teaching and learning in their schools (Hattie & Smith, 2020). Another successful coaching strategy related to self-evaluation is cognitive coaching (Ellison & Hayes, 2006). This style of coaching is especially helpful when school leaders have never previously served as an instructional coach. Cognitive coaching assists principals by helping identify their goals and coaching them through systematic processes that will lead them to reach their goals. Cognitive coaching can be utilized with principals and teachers with a high correlation to increased student test scores (Ellison & Hayes, 2006).

The Benefits of Mentoring Principals to Their Teaching Staff

Ultimately, the coaching that principals receive is used to develop better leadership skills to lead their schools. This, in turn, assists principals in developing strategies to effectively coach their teachers to improve their instructional practice. Principal mentoring can be a reciprocal learning process (Bush & Coleman, 1995; Parylo et al., 2012) where the coaching that principals receive can impact how they themselves coach their teaching staff. In this way, coaching novice principals is beneficial for all involved within a school system as it can better principal performance and improve the quality of their teaching staff. Additionally, mentoring of principals can improve the leadership pipeline in a school or district, as principals receiving mentorship may be more willing to mentor others (Parylo et al., 2012).

Summary of Literature

School leaders, regardless of experience, can benefit from coaching and feedback. This coaching and feedback need to be deliberate and actionable. In addition, the coaching for principals needs to be differentiated based on the individual needs of each person. In order for the coaching to have a positive effect on student outcomes, principals must be open to coaching and feedback and willing to be honest about their own growth areas. Principals must be able to influence faculty and staff on their school campuses to improve their instructional practice. To help others improve, principals must be well versed in curriculum and instruction. One way to ensure this happens is through ongoing, high-quality coaching.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to determine the effective coaching strategies that can be utilized with middle school principals to improve academic achievement at their respective

schools. In this study, we utilized targeted qualitative case study research (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009) in the form of semi-structured interviews coupled with descriptive statistics from the Florida Department of Education regarding school performance to select which schools would be studied. The ultimate goal of qualitative research is to gain a more detailed and in-depth understanding of the phenomena that is being studied. Through semi-structured interviews, information was gained from participants through one-on-one interviews that allowed for follow-up questions that were relevant to this study (Mertler, 2019). While this study could have utilized structured interviews, semi-structured interviews were chosen to encourage the participants' comfort speaking about their experiences with coaching. Interviews consisted of two sets of questions; an eight-question interview for school principals and assistant principals of curriculum and instruction, and seven questions for the instructional coaches in each building. The interview process of this study was critical because the answers the participants provided answered the three guiding research questions regarding coaching, performance, and student achievement. These questions have been included in Appendix A.

Setting

This study took place in a Large Central Florida School District. Three middle schools with common demographics and economic status were chosen to study. The principal, assistant principal, and two instructional coaches at each school were chosen to be interviewed. The interviews took place at each respective school. At each school, a quiet office space was utilized to conduct the face-to-face interviews. The participants were given a copy of the questions to have in front of them during the interview to reference if needed. The office space was well lit, comfortable, and private so participants could focus on the questions and their responses.

Procedure

In this research study, descriptive statistical data was provided from the Florida Department of Education State Report Card for each school for the five-year period from 2015 through 2019. The Florida Department of Education State Report Card is the predominant method in which the state monitors student achievement in individual schools in the areas of proficiency, learning gains, and learning gains of the lowest quartile of student performance.

In traditional middle schools, grades six through eight, there are nine reporting categories on the school report card. These categories include performance in English-language arts (ELA), math, civics, science and acceleration. For the ELA and math performance indicators, there are three areas measured for all students in grades six through eight. The first category is proficiency. This category measures the percent of students who scored a level three or above on their grade level ELA and math test. The second category is learning gains which measures how many students performed better on the current assessment from their most previous assessment in ELA and math. Finally, the third category for ELA and math measures the learning gains of the lowest quartile students. These are the lowest performing students on the campus in ELA and math and the expectation is they will show growth each year in order to close the achievement gap. Therefore, ELA and math make up six of the nine reporting categories on the school report card issued by the state. Civics and science each only measure the percent of students who score proficient at a three or higher. The acceleration category measures the pass rate on the end of

course exams for the students who take accelerated or high school level courses in middle school. These nine reporting categories are all weighted equally and collectively make up the school grade each year. Once all the testing data is in—usually in the summer—schools will receive their results. In the State of Florida, however, only students who were enrolled and present in a school for both the October attendance count and the February attendance count will be reported in the school report card. The percent of points possible to earn in a given year are 900 points. The actual points earned are calculated and divided by 900 to give the school a percent of points possible score. This score in turn determines the school grade (FLDOE, 2021). Table 1 outlines the color-coding structure used, and Tables 2 through 4 show performance at the three schools selected in this study.

Participants

This research was conducted at three middle schools in a Large County School District in Central Florida. All three schools have a long history in the county and have been open for close to 40 years. Also, all three schools are Title I funded schools and have diverse demographics on its campus. Due to the nature of this study, participants were selected using purposeful sampling, utilizing the maximum variation technique (Mertler, 2019). Because we aimed to support principals to achieve higher student achievement, it was critical to gain perspectives from principals, assistant principals, and instructional coaches. The schools have been labeled School A, B, and C, and all interview participants (Table 5) were given pseudonyms.

Table 1
Color Coding Schema for School Grades

Percent of Points Earned	School Grade	Color
62 – 100	A	Green
54 – 61	B	Blue
41 – 53	C	Yellow
32 – 40	D	Orange
0 – 31	F	Red

Table 2

Five-year Report Card Data School A

School A	ELA	ELA LG	ELA LG LQ	Math	Math LG	Math LG LQ	Science	Civics	Accel	Percent of Points	School Grade
2019	45	48	41	48	44	34	52	56	70	49	C
2018	44	49	46	52	58	49	52	67	76	55	B
2017	46	50	42	46	52	41	58	65	74	53	C
2016	46	50	37	47	50	34	50	64	60	49	C
2015	48			47			58	64	42	52	C

Table 3

Five-year Report Card Data School B

School B	ELA	ELA LG	ELA LG LQ	Math	Math LG	Math LG LQ	Science	Civics	Accel	Percent of Points	School Grade
2019	46	54	44	47	48	41	55	61	68	52	C
2018	46	47	43	52	55	48	61	52	86	54	B
2017	49	56	39	51	59	38	56	67	86	56	B
2016	44	51	44	44	51	37	45	63	62	49	C
2015	47			48			55	54	63	53	C

Table 4

Five-year Report Card Data School C

School C	ELA	ELA LG LQ	ELA LG	Math	Math LG	Math LG LQ	Science	Civics	Accel	Percent of Points	School Grade
2019	49	51	40	41	43	42	51	68	72	51	C
2018	46	54	45	43	46	46	52	71	66	52	C
2017	46	48	46	42	41	38	55	55	73	49	C
2016	43	47	37	44	46	44	49	67	64	49	C
2015	45			49			47	61	52	51	C

Table 5

Interview Participant Demographics

School	Position	Ethnicity	Gender	Years of Experience in Current Position
A	Principal	White	Male	2
A	Assistant Principal	White	Female	1
A	Instructional Coach 1	White	Female	1
A	Instructional Coach 2	Black	Female	3
B	Principal	White	Female	2
B	Assistant Principal	White	Female	6
B	Instructional Coach 1	White	Female	4
B	Instructional Coach 2	White	Female	4
C	Principal	Black	Female	5
C	Assistant Principal	Black	Female	1
C	Instructional Coach	Black	Female	1

The schools utilized in this study are consistently scored as B or C schools, each with their own strengths and weaknesses, and the principals, assistant principals, and instructional coaches all have six years or less in their current positions. The sampling of participants was important to ensure that selected participants would best help answer the research questions (Mertler, 2019). Purposeful sampling involves the intentional selection of individuals and sites to learn about or understand the topic at hand (Creswell, 2005; Williams, 2020). To select the participants for this study, the typical sampling technique (Creswell, 2005) was used. This

technique focuses on commonalities of the participants and sites. In this research study, typical sampling is appropriate because all three school sites are Title I schools, have relatively new principals, and have instructional coaches in the building who perform similar job functions. Title I schools are schools that have exceeded the federal index with the number of students who receive free or reduced-price lunch. Therefore, these school are considered high poverty schools.

All school leader names used in this paper are pseudonyms for the actual name of the principal. School A is led by Principal Adams. Mr. Adams is in his second year as a principal and his second year at this school. The assistant principal for curriculum is Ms. Allen and she is in her second year as an assistant principal and the first year at this school. The literacy coach, Ms. Anderson is in her first year as an instructional coach. However, she was an ELA teacher at School A prior to taking on the coaching role. Math coach, Ms. Andrews is in her third year as the math coach at School A. School B is led by principal, Ms. Brown. She is in her second year as principal at School B and came from an elementary school in the same geographic area where she was a principal for two years. Ms. Britt is the Assistant Principal for Curriculum at School B and has served in this role for six years at this school. Ms. Bella is the literacy coach at School B and has served in this role for four years at this school. Ms. Baxter serves in the role of math coach and has been in this position at School B for four years as well. School C is led by Principal Cook. School C is Principal Cook's first school as a principal, and she is in her fifth year there. The assistant principal for curriculum is Ms. Clark and she is in her first year in this role, however, she is not new to the school. Ms. Charles is the math coach at School C, and she is in her first year in this role at this school. She came from an elementary feeder school in the same geographic area.

Instrumentation

To ensure accuracy of transcribing the interviewee's responses, a Philips Voice Tracer micro cassette recorder was used to capture the interview question responses in real time. Participants had a copy of the interview questions in front of them on the table during the interview. Participants signed the informed consent prior to sitting down to interview and were reminded that participation is voluntary, and he/she may choose to quit at any time. The same eight questions were asked of the principals and assistant principals and were designed to capture their strengths, areas of growth, and their understanding of their role in student achievement (See Appendix A). The instructional coaches received a different set of seven questions, which were intended to gauge what successful coaching looks like (See Appendix B).

Once qualitative data was collected, interviews were transcribed to ensure accurate transcripts of each interview session (Mertler, 2019). Thematic coding was used to look for commonalities among responses which could help to answer the research questions (Williams, 2020). To protect the identity of both the schools and participants, a codebook was utilized that contained the actual identities of the individuals and schools (Mertler, 2019). Pseudonyms were also utilized in the codebook to further protect anonymity and to eliminate any potentially identifiable factors.

Limitations

In this large Central Florida School District, there are 12 traditional middle schools serving grades 6 through 8; only three of these schools were utilized for this study. Because all 12 middle schools were not utilized for this study there is a possibility that the results may not be reflective of this region entirely. Future research may be beneficiary, as collecting data from all 12 of the middle schools could provide a more cohesive picture. However, these three schools were chosen because they are all Title I schools, have newer principals, and multiple instructional coaches in each building. The schools are also similar in achievement data.

A delimitation was chosen by the primary researcher, in that only one district was chosen and used for this study. In Florida, there are 67 school districts that could provide data to a research study such as this one. While this district was chosen because it was convenient, it should be noted that the schools were selected to represent a diverse sample of the population being studied. Again, future studies should consider this limitation and potentially adjust as a way to ensure that an accurate account of data is collected from multiple locations.

Finally, it should be noted that the state data that are being utilized are from 2015–2019. In the state of Florida, no state testing occurred in 2020 due to school shut-down because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The last school data which lead to a school report card grade was from the 2018–2019 school year. One could assume that this limitation is a consistent one in any research that is utilizing test scores as a quantitative piece of datum.

Findings and Discussion

The following findings were representative of the descriptive statistical data and the qualitative interviews. To present the results of this study, each question will be restated with direct findings and a discussion of those findings.

Research Question 1
What are the effective coaching strategies that can be implemented with middle school principals that lead to improved academic achievement in their schools?

Findings

According to *Visible Learning* by John Hattie (2018), feedback can lead to a .76 effect size for the learner. This effect size equates to almost two year's growth for the learner in the course of one year. The caveat is that the feedback must be relevant, timely, and actionable for the one receiving the feedback (Smith & Smith, 2018). In addition, the person giving the feedback must build trusting relationships, be well-versed in the content and be able to differentiate the feedback to the individual (Smith & Smith, 2018). Feedback given correctly from teachers to students and from administrators to teachers has proven to be successful when done correctly.

When asked, "in what ways do you monitor teacher performance and give teachers ongoing feedback for improvement." Principal Adams stated that he uses Microsoft Forms when

walking teachers' classrooms. He charts the data from the "look-fors" that are part of the school improvement plan in the form. Once he hits submit, teachers receive a copy of the form with relevant details. Adams stated, "the teacher gets immediate feedback because we get an email with all the data we entered, and we send it to them." Principal Brown stated that she gives feedback during professional learning community meetings where teachers meet by subject area and she does active classroom coaching when doing walk-throughs. Similarly, Principal Cook stated she uses a visibility calendar to conduct walk throughs and provide feedback to teachers. "We have a new visibility calendar that we use that allows us to give teachers immediate feedback outside of the evaluation process so it's not as daunting to the teacher," Cook stated. This process lends itself to a coaching for improvement model and not a "gotcha" situation for teachers.

When asked the same question, the assistant principals had very similar responses to the principals. Ms. Allen stated she walks classrooms to see what students and teachers are doing and she uses a more informal method of feedback which is leaving a note on the teacher's desk or in their mailbox, but she does it the same day, so the feedback is timely. Ms. Britt uses a more formal approach which is the evaluation process. She meets with the teacher prior to their observation to discuss the lesson, she then observes the lesson, and then meets with the teacher to debrief. During the post observation, she digs deeply into the evidence she collected during the evaluation and the evidence the teacher has provided and has open, honest dialogue to help the teacher improve their practice. Assistant Principal Clark monitors teacher performance by conducting classroom walks and providing constructive feedback and resources for teachers to improve their practice.

The instructional coaches were asked a slightly different question—what do you think the role of coaching should play in student achievement? Literacy coach Ms. Anderson mentioned the primary role of an instructional coach is to improve the instructional practice of the teacher. The math coach from School A, Ms. Andrews, stated that it is imperative for coaches to understand the content area they are supporting and the best practices that can be shared with teachers. Ms. Bella, literacy coach, stated building relationships first with teachers so they will accept feedback and being data-driven to improve teacher practice. Math coach, Ms. Baxter affirms that coaching should be focused on student achievement first and foremost. Finally, the math coach at School C, Ms. Charles, believes her role is to help teachers improve their practice which in turn impacts student achievement.

Discussion

In summary of research question one, during the interview process, no concrete examples were evident since none of the principals were able to provide any evidence of current ongoing coaching strategies being utilized with them specifically. The evidence does suggest, however, that the principals understand the importance of coaching as they make an effort to conduct coaching and feedback with their own faculty and staff. Assistant principals thought similarly to their principals about the importance of coaching teachers for success. Instructional coaches believe their main purpose to impact student outcomes by helping teachers improve their practice.

In education, there is a perpetual cycle of continuous improvement. No one is exempt. Each must strive to improve our practice every day. Therefore, everyone can benefit from systematic coaching and feedback—even school principals. Instructional coaching for principals specific to improving academic achievement in their schools is sporadic at best. Therefore, it was not a surprise that principals and assistant principals referenced coaching they received as teachers when queried. The principals, assistant principals, and instructional coaches acknowledged the importance of coaching and feedback for teachers. The administrators engage in classroom walkthroughs and provide specific feedback for teachers to improve their practice. Instructional coaches take it a step further by conducting side by side coaching and modeling lessons for teachers to help them improve. Therefore, it stands to reason that if these strategies work and help teachers improved practice, then these same strategies can be implemented with school-based principals to improve their practice. Principals are responsible for the academic achievement of students on their campus now more than ever. However, principals cannot be masters of all curriculum content areas on their campus. Thus, targeted coaching with specific feedback from a knowledgeable other may prove to help principals expand their knowledge base on best practices which in turn can be transmitted to teachers and finally affect student academic outcomes positively.

Research Question 2
What coaching strategies have been done in the past and were they successful or not?

Findings

The results of the interviews with both principals and assistant principals indicated that the last time they experienced coaching was when they were classroom teachers or in a non-administrative position. They mentioned having an instructional coach who worked with them when they were a new teacher and how helpful that coaching was to their success. Ms. Clark, the assistant principal from School C, went so far as to state that the coaching she received as a new teacher is what kept her in education as she was not an education major in college. She stated, "The people (coaches) who supported me made me want to take my career further because they just provided me with everything that I needed to be successful and so because of my experience not being an education major and going into the field and the support that I was given was amazing." Principal Adams from School A spoke fondly of a mentor principal he had during his principal preparation program and stated the mentor was very helpful. "When I talk with my mentor principal who has been a principal for a number of years and they're having the same struggles that I'm having, it makes me realize that I'm not alone." Principal Brown referred to "on the job training" she received when she was pursuing the principalship and her principal allowed her to take on tasks to broaden her experience. Principal Cook from School C stated that received coaching from a literacy coach when she was a classroom teacher, and the veteran coach was a valuable resource to her as a new teacher. Assistant Principal Ms. Britt recalled receiving classroom management coaching from a coach and having strategies modeled in the classroom for her to observe. This allowed her to see best practices in action.

When asked to talk about a time when they helped a teacher become successful, the instructional coaches proudly spoke about their experiences. Literacy coach Ms. Anderson spoke fondly of a situation in which she assisted a new teacher in gaining confidence and taking

ownership of her classroom. She accomplished this through ongoing coaching cycles with the teacher and modeling lessons for her in the classroom. Ms. Anderson also helped the teacher with her organization of the classroom so as not to feel overwhelmed by the tasks required of her. The math coach Ms. Andrews stated, "that's just a ray of sunshine," when referring to her most positive experience helping a teacher. Ms. Andrews spent focused time in the teacher's classroom helping her with classroom structures and best practices. When the math scores came out at the end of the year, there was a big jump for this teacher, and they celebrated together. Ms. Bella exclaimed, "I can't even choose! I have so many success stories!". She stated her feeling of success is the team they have created, and they have remained together, and she continues to support them through coaching. Ms. Baxter stated her most positive experience was helping a math teacher increase her students' Algebra One scores to a 92% pass rate in one year. Finally, Ms. Charles indicated that helping her teachers build confidence in the classroom so they will try something new excites her. She enjoys seeing how her influence on teachers trickles down to the students.

Discussion

In summary of research question two, all participants interviewed spoke about the positive effects of instructional coaching. The principals identified the mentoring aspect of coaching as important to their growth as well as the operational and instructional part. Assistant principals discussed how coaching helped them hone their practice and become successful in the classroom. Instructional coaches spoke about how working one on one with teachers who are struggling can make an impact for both the teachers and the students. When the teacher improved their practice, the students benefitted.

Principals and assistant principals who cited experiences they received with a coach occurred when they were teachers. Principal Adams indicated that he worked with a principal mentor when he was a new principal and found that to be helpful, however that was conversational and not formal coaching. According to Mr. Adams, "In the past I have had other principals work with me and talk me through things." Assistant principal C stated that when she was a teacher she had someone who worked with her and modeled lessons. "…a person that would actually sit with you, help model lessons for you, help plan your lessons…" The interview responses suggest that principals would benefit from differentiated, ongoing coaching and feedback to improve their practice.

Research Question 3
How can improved coaching strategies lead to improved academic achievement?

Findings

All principals and assistant principals indicated that their primary responsibility is student achievement. They understand their role in the district strategic plan is to ensure their school and students are performing at maximum potential. Principal Adams discussed that the role he plays in the district's strategic plan is to ensure high quality instruction is occurring on his campus. To achieve that goal, the onus is on him to hire the best teachers for his students. Mr. Adams stated he works constantly with the human resource department to make sure he has quality applicants

to fill his vacancies. Principal Brown agreed by stating she is responsible for, "ensuring that the instructional staff on [her] campus are prepared, qualified, and dedicated." Principal Cook said her responsibility is to make sure high levels of learning are happening on her campus.

Assistant principals also have the pressure of performing and living up to the district strategic plan. Assistant principal Allen stated she supports the district strategic plan by making sure all teachers, students, and instructional coaches have the resources they need to succeed. For assistant principals, this means ensuring the master schedule framework is accurate and that students are placed appropriately in their courses. Ms. Britt, assistant principal from School B stated, "my role is getting the right teachers in the right spot and once I get those right teachers in the right spot providing the support that they need to be successful." Ms. Clark focused on professional development to help her teachers with best practices in the classroom that will help their students increase academic achievement.

Instructional coaches understand the connection between coaching and improved student academic achievement. They acknowledged that their role is to improve teacher effectiveness through ongoing coaching cycles and feedback and the goal of all coaching is improved performance. Ms. Baxter from School B sums it up perfectly, "Coaching should focus on student achievement. When we are coaching teachers to be better teachers, we're looking at those best practices that we know improve student achievement and then always reflecting and seeing if we're making an impact." In this example, Ms. Baxter's ongoing coaching with a math teacher led to a 92% pass rate for that teachers' Algebra I students that year.

Discussion

The principals and assistant principals knew and understood their role in student achievement and how teacher efficacy plays a huge role in how students perform. They also felt the tremendous weight of their role in reaching the academic benchmarks. Instructional coaches seemed to understand and embrace their role in helping teachers and students improve. They noted their primary responsibility and focus is student academic achievement and the instructional coaches interviewed in this study were comfortable with that responsibility.

Researcher suggested there is much to learn from our instructional coaches and the instructional coaching model. Principals and assistant principals know and understand their role in the district's strategic plan and their responsibilities in their schools to move student achievement forward. They know what to do and why they need to do it, however, the administrators are lacking the *how*. This is where the instructional coaches come in and why they are so important to their schools. Teachers and students depend on their guidance and expertise on a daily basis. In addition, the instructional coaches have been extensively trained in both their content and coaching practices. They are well versed in how to help struggling teachers with either pedagogy, classroom management, or lesson planning. Through their coaching cycles, instructional coaches can plan with teachers, observe their progress, and give ongoing, specific feedback for sustained improvement.

Conclusions

In today's age of accountability and expected outcomes for students, the principals, assistant principals, and instructional coaches overwhelmingly wanted to do what is best for their faculty and students. In some cases, they did not exactly know how to make improvements happen. They were adept at reading data and seeing where a problem lies, but may not have known exactly how to go about correcting a problem. This is where instructional coaching for principals may close the gap.

As a 21st Century Leader, the principal has a litany of responsibilities on their campus. In addition to the managerial aspects of the job—safety, security, operations, etc.—the school principal must ensure student achievement improves on his/her campus. The pressure at times can be daunting. For a middle school principal with over 1,000 students, the task may seem impossible. Just like any winning team, however, the leader cannot carry the weight alone. The principal needs to build a school leadership team of assistant principals, instructional coaches, and teacher leaders to ensure the school is moving forward in a positive direction. Although academic achievement is the top priority, teachers and students cannot perform at their best if the environment is not safe and welcoming. Principals need to ensure the climate and culture on their campus is one of continuous improvement. The individuals the principal chooses to place on their school leadership team must be aligned to the vision created by the principal. Once his/her team is in place and all systems and structures are running smoothly, the principal must then be ready to be the lead instructional leader at his/her school. The teachers and students are depending on the principal and need the support in order to improve. The principal makes decisions about academic programs to purchase, sets expectations for lesson planning and instruction and monitors student achievement data. It is imperative that he/she knows what they are looking at to ensure the faculty and staff have confidence in their ability to be an instructional leader.

Recommendations

The State of Florida, like most states has a rigorous process to go through in order become a school principal. In addition to completing a master's degree in educational leadership, aspiring principals must also complete a principal preparation program within their school district. This process may vary from state to state. Although there is training and mentoring along the way, it is important that principals receive support after they are given the school keys as well. Too often, principals are left on their own to sink or swim. Principals should have a tiered support plan to ensure their success when they take over a school building for the first five years they are a principal. For the first three years, they should receive a principal coach who meets with them regularly to set goals, plan for the school year, and problem solve along the way. Beginning in year four, the support can start to wane based on the success of the principal. In addition, the novice principal will be given specific professional development tailored to their areas of growth. When the five-year period is over, the principal coach and/or the principal supervisor will be responsible for releasing the principal from the coaching cycle.

Coaching and feedback can be very powerful tools to increase performance for teachers to improve their practice and for students to improve their academic performance when utilized

correctly. Knowing this, we can then extrapolate that experience and apply it to principal supervisors and principals. The research and the interviews suggest that principals would greatly benefit from formal, ongoing coaching cycles that include specific feedback that is timely, relevant to their growth needs, and actionable. According to Knight (2020), the research on instructional coaching conducted at the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning has resulted in the development of a deceptively simple instruction coaching cycle. The cycle involves three elements: *identify*, *learn*, and *improve*. In supporting principals, this three-part cycle can be utilized by the supervisor in conjunction with the principal through conversation to identify the problem of practice. This will be specific for each principal based on their skill set, experience, and knowledge. Once the problem is identified, the learning cycle can be created. This cycle may include professional learning modules, peer observations, article or book studies, side-by-side coaching support or modeling from the supervisor so the principal can learn firsthand. The third part of the cycle will then focus on metrics for improvement. What does the principal need to be able to do to show improvement? How will they know when they have mastered the identified problem area? What will the checkpoints be along the way? Once the principal and the supervisor are comfortable with the improvement and its sustainability, they can then identify the next problem of practice to work on. The principal supervisor is acting as a coach in this process by giving very clear targets for improvement, meeting frequently with the principal for progress monitoring checks, and giving targeted feedback along the way.

Implications

The implications of this study are clear—principals need focused, ongoing coaching and purposeful feedback with action steps to grow into instructional leaders and thus have a positive impact on student academic achievement. School leaders are responsible for the academic achievement of all students on their campuses. The role of the principal has shifted from managerial to instructional leader. It has been stated that middle school principals, quite possibly, have the hardest job in the principalship. The nature of the adolescent child in the middle school years alone is tough to navigate. In the past, school principals had to make sure students basic needs such as food and clothing, were met in order to teach the students. Today, there is so much more to this theory. The needs of our students in this pandemic time have increased immensely. Many students were out of school for almost two years. They are academically behind and socially maladjusted. The pressure for principals now compared to just a few years ago is staggering. For today's principal, they must go above and beyond the basic needs of students and ensure the social emotional needs are being met as well. In addition, school principals very often are assisting families and the parents with basic needs such as food deliveries and clothing. This added pressure along with student misbehavior makes it very difficult for principals to keep the primary focus on student achievement. This challenge is not unique to the school district in this study. The challenges that face all school leaders across the county, state, country, and world are feeling the pressure of this challenge. School districts should invest in targeted professional coaching for all school leaders in not only academic leadership, but also to build their skill set to handle the social-emotional needs of their students.

Future Research

Coaching strategies that can be implemented with school leaders to improve academic achievement has multiple implications for future research. This study was conducted with only three schools in a Large Central Florida School District, which were Title I schools. Further research is possible by expanding this study to other middle schools within the same district to determine if there are any correlations to the research questions. One way to do this would be to study the non-Title I schools in this district. Non-Title I schools do not have the benefit of added funding for their schools. Many times, the Title I funds are used to hire additional personnel to work directly with students to increase student achievement. Instructional coaches are one example of this. Intervention teachers, who push into classrooms and work in small groups with students, is another example. Non-Title I schools do not have these extra instructional people on their campus and therefore cannot provide the same type of interventions for their students. However, the Non-Title I schools still face all the same challenges their Title I counterparts do with fewer resources.

Another avenue for further research would be to conduct this study with another school district in the state of Florida with similar numbers of schools and similar student demographics. This would allow us to determine if the findings are isolated to one large central Florida school district or if there are commonalities across similar middle school in the state of Florida. Interviews could be conducted and State of Florida report card data studied to determine if similar results are found in two separate districts in Florida.

This study can be expanded to high schools with similar student demographics to determine coaching needs of high school principals. High schools have even higher stakes for student achievement due to graduation rate calculations. There are more state requirements for high school students like taking an accelerated course and taking an online learning option. The calculation of school grades at the high school level is more complicated than that of the middle school configuration. With the added pressure of graduation on their plates, it would be interesting to take this study to the high school level and determine if those principals need coaching and if they are prepared to move their schools academically.

Finally, educators can benefit from a longitudinal study on coaching principals for student achievement. Due to the nature of the last two years in education because of the COVID-19 pandemic, schools have changed dramatically. If we were to conduct this same study five years from now, it would be interesting to see if there are similar results. We could study the exact same schools and get a snapshot of a different time. A limitation to doing a longitudinal study is that the principals, assistant principals, and instructional coaches will have probably changed by then. Even so, it would be worthwhile to conduct a longitudinal study. Whichever method for future study is chosen, it is important to continue this work to identify the coaching strategies that will help principals become better instructional leaders.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions for Principals and Assistant Principals of Instruction:

1. What led to you to want to be a principal/assistant principal?

2. What do you consider your greatest strength to be?

3. What do you consider your largest area of growth to be?

4. What do you do to nurture a climate of trust and continuous improvement in your school?

5. Describe your role in the district's strategic plan for increased student achievement.

6. In what ways do you monitor teacher performance and give teachers ongoing feedback on their effectiveness and opportunities for growth?

7. What coaching have you received in the past? Can you elaborate on how coaching has impacted your professional role?

8. Is there anything else you would like to share with me?

Appendix B

Interview Questions for Instructional Coaches:

1. What are you career inspirations?

2. What do you think the role of coaching should play in student achievement?

3. What was the biggest challenge when transitioning from classroom teacher to instructional coach?

4. What attributes are non-negotiable for instructional teachers to possess?

5. Tell me about a time you worked with a teacher who was resistant to coaching. What supports did you provide? What support did your principal or assistant principal provide you?

6. Tell me about your most positive experience in helping a teacher become successful.

Is there anything else you would like to share with me?

District Administration and Local Workforce in an Era of Centralization

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Abstract

This historical and research review tracks how centralized policy has impacted school boards and the position of the superintendency, as related to local workforce, over time. The potential costs and benefits of such a shift are examined including the key themes of equity, special interest influence, and public democratic participation. Additional work should be done to examine such impact. Institutional theory is proposed as a potential lens for future analyses.

Keywords: school boards, superintendents, policy

District Administration and Local Workforce in an Era of Centralization

Workforce issues have historically been a concern of local school administration. Kirst and Wirt (2009) described the situation "… most states…prescribe teacher certification but leave hiring and compensation issues to local districts" (p. 146). However, as federal influence has increased state power in schools through both mandates and incentives, some of these traditionally held powers have shifted and become centralized, at least in part, to the state level. While centralization is a term that has broadly been used in literature to describe the shift of governing power from localities to larger legislative bodies, the main concern of this article is the transfer of teacher workforce related policies from local governing bodies to the state level. While a shift in this power structure has been occurring throughout recent history, in the early 2010s, the Race to the Top (RttT) initiative incentivized states to create legislation that has sometimes drastically changed local districts' ability to control how they recruit, compensate, and maintain their teaching workforce.

However, some argue that local actors that exist at the level closest to the public may have a better understanding of the types of teachers that are able to address local concerns, interests, priorities, and values. Because education is largely funded at the local level, local governments may be better suited to handle budgetary concerns and interests. On the other hand, history has demonstrated that localities may need intervention from higher levels of government if minority groups lack representation, as demonstrated in America's tumultuous history of school desegregation, as well as ongoing discrepancies in funding of low-income and/or high-minority areas. Most recently, disputes around how schools should handle the Covid-19 pandemic and who should make decisions around policy have raged in states such as Florida, Tennessee, and Texas. Therefore, it is important to evaluate what may be lost or gained as power over teachers is shifted to higher levels of governance and additionally, to consider the frameworks which may be useful in understanding not only this government shift but how local governing bodies accommodate such changes. Considering this, I will address the following research questions:

1. What is the historical relationship between school boards, superintendents, and policies regulating the teaching workforce?
2. What costs and benefits may an increased level of centralization have on the agency and conditions of district level educational administration, specifically school boards and superintendents, as related to the management of the local teaching workforce?
3. How might institutional theory serve to better inform future research on the agency and conditions of district level administration such as school boards and superintendents?

To address these questions, I first provided a history of school boards and superintendents in the United States leading up to contemporary times will establish the historical relationship between these individual entities and each other as well as their control of the teaching workforce. Next, I discussed the potential costs and benefits increased centralized governance may have on the school board and superintendent as related to control over the local teaching workforce. Three themes emerged for analysis of existing literature: equity, special interest influence, and public democratic participation Then, I discussed institutional theory and described potential for use in future research. Finally, I discussed the implications of my research review and proposed approaches for future study.

History of School Boards and Superintendents

Because a myriad of research studies exists on different aspects of school district-level administration and because districts across the United States employ several different models consisting of different components for running schools (e.g., central office staff, district-based instructional coaches), I will only focus on two components of district administration: school boards and superintendents. The relationship between superintendents and school boards throughout history has been both close and complex. For instance, Tyack and Cuban (1995) described the historical relationship between boards and superintendents as being a power struggle between policy-elitist superintendents and layman school board members who meddle in professional affairs, such as matters of teaching and curriculum. However, researchers suggested that the relationship may be more complicated and dependent on several factors. For instance, Kirst and Wirt (2009) characterized some of the types of relationships that exist between school boards and superintendents; for example, a strong, trusted superintendent can dominate local policy but a strong board who does not trust the superintendent can yield mixed results. A distinct separation of roles also can exist. Maeroff (2010) described the relationship between boards and superintendents as resembling a marriage that can be either accommodating and supportive or characterized by distrust and feuding.

There may be stark differences in board and superintendent relationships in rural compared to urban contexts. Hess (1999) described how urban superintendents may have an extremely short tenure (3.8 years average), are normally hired from outside the community upon promising to "shake up the system," and thus make rapid changes (p. 50). Because of this structure in urban schools, Hess found reform initiatives are greatly accelerated (1999). The following presents a brief historical overview of both school boards and superintendents as well as a brief discussion of the two entities in contemporary times.

Formation of School Boards

In 1647 in Massachusetts, the *Old Deluder Satan Law* mandated that each town form a school fulfilling varying requirements that were based on population, which resulted in the creation of town committees that were tasked with creating such institutions (Castallo, 2003; Maeroff, 2010). However, school boards as recognized today first formally appeared in 1826 in Massachusetts when Horace Mann declared that schools should be ruled by "local lay boards" and subsequent legislation made these boards independent of towns and local government (Kirst & Wirt, 2009, p. 132; Maeroff, 2010) The creation of these lay boards marked the start of a tradition of attempting to "keep education out of local politics." At that time, boards were given power over both policy formation and administrative functions such as: selecting teachers, determining salary, visiting classrooms, and examining the pupils (Maeroff, 2010). By the 19th century, boards hired whomever they wished with whatever qualifications desired, which allowed for salary and workforce negotiations based on the individual in rural areas (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Board members could be voted out of public office, but aside from that possibility, there was no accountability or restrictions placed on how the workforce was managed. However, the landscape was shifting as urban school districts became increasingly bureaucratized and published salary schedules based on teacher characteristics, as well as developed exams as a form of evaluation for those entering the workforce (Tyack & Cuban,

1995). Following this trend, by the late-19th century, states were beginning to develop entry qualifications for elementary school teachers, which again shifted greater control to the states (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Such qualification requirements may have prevented nepotism resulting from the previous practices in which boards could hire whomever they pleased; however, the state only held a role of gatekeeper to the profession and localities still exercised a great deal of control over their workforce.

However, the formation of state-level teaching entry requirements was just the start of a shift to a greater centralized governance structure. While boards had historically controlled all the district's money and mediated policy conflicts at the local level, the early 20th century marked an era of challenge and change to existing systems (Kirst & Wirt, 2009). For instance, school boards ran by electoral wards in urban areas had become increasingly politicized and many, such as those in New York City, were dismantled in the Progressive Era to create a more business-like, and scientific centralized board, which delegated the running of the district to experts (superintendents) and consolidated district power (McDermott, 1999; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Ellwood P. Cubberly was a leader of this movement and described directors of a bank as an ideal model for boards, which he contended should be controlled by businessmen and professional elites. University teacher preparation faculty also borrowed from business ideals during this time to develop specialized programs of study for superintendents (McDermott, 1999; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). This era led to the separation of boards from city government and the formation of smaller boards to continue to separate politics from school administration, an effort that McDermott contended served to increase "the status of school leaders by setting them apart from other local government functionaries" (1999, p. 15).

Of note, Cubberly's ideas were not motivated by a desire to increase local democracy, rather they were motivated by a desire to remove the public from controlling schools and place administrative control in the hands of those deemed to be professionals (McDermott, 1999). Therefore, the effort to keep education out of politics further isolated the public from control of schools and made the school board into a facade that would not allow for effective democratic participation. This fact is evident in existing studies and critiques of the school boards today, which will be discussed in the later evaluation of costs and benefits. Regardless, these actions in the Progressive Era were responsible for the creation of a new actor in education governance— the superintendent.

Formation of the Superintendency

As previously discussed, there were no administrators between boards and teachers in American schools initially; however, by the mid-19th century, the formation of the new profession of superintendent had emerged, serving a role as a local "legislative body," tasked with setting and enforcing the implementation of "broad policy guidelines" set by the school boards (Kirst & Wirt, 2009, p. 136; Kowalski, 1999, 2005; Maeroff, 2010). By 1900, most urban districts had created the position of superintendent; yet the role initially blended with that of a head educator (Kowalski, 2005). Bjork et al. explained:

> Before 1900, superintendents were viewed as supervisors and administrators responsible for carrying out board of education policies. After the turn of the century, however, many superintendents advocated the adoption of business ideology and management models,

advancing the idea that CEOs should be highly trained professionals who make administrative decisions. (2005, p. 26)

Thus, by 1910, with the push of ideals such as scientific management and the development of bureaucratic-like structures that resulted from the Progressive Movement, the superintendency became focused on management issues in which its role became distinctively separate from that of teachers (Bjork & Lindle, 2001; Kowalski, 1999; McDermott, 1999). This delineation also spurred the further professionalism of the position, resulting in specialized programs of study at the university level, which were also focused on scientific and management principles (Kowalski, 1999). This history illustrates that Progressive Era ideals shifted and yet, further politicized the roles of not only school boards, but also superintendents.

Yet, the role of superintendents in school districts may not be so easily "clear-cut." For example, Kowalski (2005) described five research-based conceptualizations of the superintendency: (a) teacher-scholar, (b) manager, (c) democratic leader, (d) applied social scientist, and (e) communicator. These titles indicated that at various times a superintendent may be responsible for being a master educator, a businessperson, a statesman, a researcher, and a negotiator with the school board and other key stakeholders. Also suggested by the combination of functions, while being a position formed to rise above politics, superintendents may indeed serve a political role within the school district. Bjork and Lindle (2001) advocated for further research on the political role of the superintendent and defined several types of relationships that can exist between boards and superintendents. These relationship types tend to lead to different types of board and superintendent conflict and cooperation, for which a large research base does exist. However, there is minimal explanation for why superintendents, who are professionally trained and usually appointed to their position, continue to adopt ill-suited strategies and policies of implementation regardless of professional and historical knowledge (Bjork & Lindle, 2001). One explanation may be that these decisions are based on political pressures rather than professional expertise. Greater information on the superintendent as politician is needed to address the issue. This need for further research is another reason why it is appropriate to consider the role of the superintendent along with the school board.

Contemporary School Boards and Superintendents

Having now examined the historical roles of both positions, it is important to examine what school boards and superintendents are like in contemporary times. Kirt and Wirst (2009) reported that 93% of school boards are elected and average five to seven people who give three to four years average service. Furthermore, according to a 2002 study, school board members are generally more affluent than the public and, following with the ideal of the Progressive Era, nearly half (44.6%) hail from the business world, while only around 13% have a background in education (Hess, 2002). Additionally, 60% of board members are men and minorities are underrepresented, even in communities predominantly of color (Hess, 2002).

Additionally, one of the predominant critiques of school boards is that generally, elections have very minimal turn-out, with an average of 10-20% of registered voters participating, with most elections occurring outside of general cycles (Kirst & Wirt, 2009; Maeroff, 2010; McDermott, 1999). Critics have stated that minimal voter turnout defers much of

the ballot power to candidates endorsed by the teacher's union and, while board members usually campaign on non-partisan platforms, they are often endorsed by a political party (Kirst & Wirt, 2009; Maeroff, 2010; Moe, 2005, 2006). Additionally, unions hold greater power in board elections in urban areas (Hess & Leal, 2005) and race matters more to candidate preferences in areas with increased minority populations, though more so for blacks than Hispanics (Hess & Leal, 2005; Marschall, 2005). These critiques have called into the question whether school boards fulfill a democratic purpose or if local control of schools is really a myth. Local control of schools is based on the idea that individual residents of a community have an impact on how schools are operated by way of locally elected officials, in this case the school board.

Not surprisingly given the history, the people who assume the superintendency are often quite different from those who serve on boards. Usually, school boards appoint a superintendent who is professionally trained (Kirst & Wirt, 2009). By the 1980s, 82% of states required superintendents to complete a graduate program and obtain a state license (Kowalski, 2005). Hiring for this position is arguably the most important task a board undertakes as nearly everything else that follows in a district can be traced to the selection of a head administrator who serves the district in a full-time capacity (Castallo, 2003; Maeroff, 2010). In some ways, the pressure and responsibility that stems from the superintendent position may make the hiring of candidates somewhat problematic.

For instance, in the early 2000s, the United States experienced a shortage of superintendents, particularly in urban areas, due to the existence of more jobs than qualified applicants coupled with fewer people willing to take on the job (Kirst & Wirt, 2009). Perhaps because of the decline in qualified applicants, states began trending towards removing academic and certification requirements for this position (Kowalski & Glass, 2002). Similar to school boards, there is also minimal representation of women and minorities as superintendents, which has been improving in recent years (Kist & Wirt, 2009). Additionally, there is a high level of turnover with 81% of superintendents leaving their job in less than five years, though less than three years is often typical in urban areas (Kirst & Wirt, 2009; Hess, 1999). Of importance, while acknowledging that superintendents perceive a career crisis due to hard-to-fill positions, particularly in difficult to manage districts, determines a high level of job satisfaction amongst incumbent superintendents (Fusarelli et al., 2002). Therefore, it may be that despite high turnovers, many superintendents are satisfied with their positions.

The high level of turnover in the superintendent position can be explained in many ways. First, because superintendents are elected by a board that changes, involuntary superintendent turnover often occurs simultaneously with election cycles, as especially in urban areas, the role of a superintendent is a political one (Castallo, 2003; Kirst & Wirt, 2009; Maeroff, 2010). Furthermore, superintendents must anticipate board reaction to administrative actions because boards can subsequently constrain or fire superintendents (Kirst & Wirt, 2009). Additionally, Hess (1999) proposed that this high turnover, which is particularly accelerated in urban areas, stems from serving as the scapegoat for school boards who are protecting their own replacement by dissatisfied voters. Such action leads urban superintendents to be pressured to make drastic reforms, which leads to focus on initiating reform rather than seeing through implementation of new policies (Hess, 1999). Finally, Tyack and Cuban (1995) described some of the historical pressures of the position, to keep their job, superintendents must appear ready to adopt

improvements and must remain ahead of other districts due to competition against peers. Therefore, superintendents may publicly advocate and support positions that may go against their own values or their perceived ability to execute (Castallo, 2003; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). These factors have led some researchers to describe the position as working in a "pressure cooker" (Kirst & Wirt, 2009, p. 183) or serving as a "lighting rod" for public dissatisfaction (Hess, 1999, p. 50).

Both school boards and superintendents have been the focus of several studies, though as a whole, they may be under researched. For school boards, research exists most commonly pertaining to board composition as related to representation (Marschall, 2005; Meier & England, 1984), electoral voting patterns (Berry & Howell, 2005, 2007; Hess & Leal, 2005) and election turnout (Allen & Plank, 2005). For superintendents, research exists pertaining to leadership styles, leadership decisions, and conflicts with boards (Fusarelli et al., 2002; Keedy & Bjork, 2002; Kowalski, 1999; Kowalski & Glass, 2002). However, there is a clear gap that exists when considering if and how the work of these policy actors has changed in relationship to a transitioning of power over the workforce. As decisions related to selecting, evaluating, and maintaining the teaching workforce shifts to a higher level of governance it is important to consider if and how the work of superintendents and school boards is affected. Additionally, it becomes increasingly important to consider if and how these actors reconcile policies with local interests and values.

Alternative Governance Models

The criticism of the effectiveness of boards and superintendents coupled with the increasing influence of the state and federal government in education has led to the emergence of alternative forms of governance. For instance, a policy consequence of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) legislation was state takeover in cases in which schools failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for several years in a row. While these takeovers varied in execution state to state, they removed the power of local administrators and placed decision making in the hands of state officials. While in practice, these take overs were limited to large urban districts, such replacements also resulted in financial distress for the state and the takeover districts, as both often lacked the necessary infrastructure and expertise to create change in schools and for the failing district.

Recently, the replacement of school boards with mayoral control is one of the greatest threats to boards today. Many argue that this approach may offer an alternative democratic scheme to school governance (Kirst & Wirt, 2009; Maeroff, 2010; Wong et al., 2007). Some researchers suggested that mayoral takeover has resulted in an increase in spending, but also improved student performance (Wong & Shen, 2005; Wong et al., 2007). Interestingly, there is evidence that elected school boards are aware that their position is being threatened. Fusarelli (2002) shared a conversation with a school board member in New York City, who believed that with mayoral takeovers and growing state influence, school boards would be obsolete in five years. Following that conversation, Mayor Michael Bloomberg was given control of the schools and expanded the board by appointing over half its new members along with directly reducing its overall power (Fusarelli, 2002). Because such takeovers have occurred only in large and distressed areas, the effects as a governance plan in other contexts is yet to be seen. However, it

is important to consider how these alternative governance structures in urban areas may be related to an increased shift in transferring power from local governance, like school boards, to the state.

Centralization of Teaching Workforce Control to the State Level

While centralization is broadly defined as the consolidation of power at a higher level of government, at issue here is the transfer of power over decisions regarding the teaching workforce from local governing bodies to the state level. While historical aspects of this consolidation, such as the creation of state teacher certification, were previously discussed, much of the recent evidence of this shift can be observed in what has been termed the "evaluation movement." Mintrop and Sunderman (2013) characterized the evaluation movement that has accompanied increased centralization in school governance as occurring in three waves. These waves illustrate that student test scores on standardized tests have long served as a proxy for student learning and that many states or localities have used these measures to influence teacher pay, retention, or promotion. The first wave of this accountability involved the experiments of states, such as Texas, and localities, such as Chicago (Mintrop & Sunderman, 2013). Additionally, after the passage of NCLB in 2001, test scores became a main component of measuring the effectiveness of individual schools and districts, representing the second wave of accountability in which failure to make targeted improvements in different measures led to sanctions including the possibility of state takeover (Mintrop & Sunderman, 2013). During this wave, previously mentioned state takeovers or closures occurred, primarily in urban districts such as Chicago.

The third generation, as Mintrop and Sunderman (2013) described, is the current wave and includes the latest federal influence, the Race to the Top (RttT) competition. RttT was a federal initiative that enticed states to change teacher personnel laws, along with other requirements, to be eligible to compete for federal grants. The timeline of RttT was followed with a waiver application for the 100% proficiency requirement to the previously established NCLB laws. Of note, most states that changed their laws to comply with requirements for either the competition or the waiver did not receive additional funding. Thus, regarding the teaching workforce, federal values have influenced the state's assumption of previously held local powers. RttT inspired legislation may affect the work of boards and superintendents by altering their power over selecting, maintaining, and compensating a teaching workforce.

Among the personnel law changes inspired by RttT, states had to revamp their teacher evaluation systems to include student growth measured by test scores along with the use of standardized observation data as part of a requirement for multiple measures of evaluation (RttT Executive Summary, 2009). Furthermore, these evaluations were required to be attached to personnel retention decisions. These personnel laws were changed along with laws that eliminated or reduced the power of teacher tenure, increased the creation of charter schools, increased alternative pathways into the teaching profession, required the creation of statewide data systems for students and personnel, and made changes to state standards, largely through the adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Thus, in many states, the legislation greatly impacted the way that teachers are hired, retained, promoted, and fired because of a shift in power and governance structure that was not restricted merely to how teachers are evaluated.

Thorn and Harris characterized: "[t]his shift in the way we measure success in education represents a sea change, with consequences for the way schools operate as well as for the individual autonomy that teachers came to expect during the past half-century," a sentiment that demonstrates the effects that such macro-level policies have on policy actors down to the classroom level (2011, p. 57).

However, there is an often-overlooked layer caught in between state legislation and school operations, and that is the district. As of now, research has emerged on how increased accountability affects the teaching workforce (e.g., Clotfelter et al., 2004), yet it is unclear what is happening at the level of district actors. There is a possibility that the elimination of tenure and the state regulation of the workforce through new data systems may remove some of the previously held staffing power of the district. Another possibility is that boards and superintendents are afforded greater influence in hiring, evaluating, and dismissing teachers as power has been shifted further from the level of building principal. Much is unknown and, therefore, it is important to consider whether this is happening and if so, what is the response?

So, the shift to using student test scores as a proxy for teacher, rather than school effectiveness, represents the latest incarnation of test scores as a proxy of student learning and serves as the third wave of accountability: one that is focused on the effects of the individual teacher. An unintended consequence of this is a further narrowing of what is valued as important in education and important in teachers as tested schools undergo more intense microscopic examination under these teacher-focused policies. This defining of what is valued in a teacher is problematic when it comes to local preferences for teaching staff. What, if any, the effects of ignoring previously held local values in favor of test scores and student growth will have on the functioning of district administration is unclear. Furthermore, there is the issue of the relationship between boards and superintendents and the idea of local control.

Educational historian, Carl Kaestle, has explained that America's commitment to local control of schools is based on the idea that this makes schools more responsive, more democratic, and more efficient (2006). One may argue that this ideal is what keeps the school board alive in America. The loss of one of the only democratic institutions in education (in which the public votes for the board) is one that should be considered carefully and as previously discussed, there is certainly ample research that is critical of whether boards are effective at encouraging democratic participation of citizens. But, as barriers to open employment (such as certification), evaluation, and compensation have been changed by this latest wave of accountability legislation focused on individual teachers, these powers may simply be transferred to another, potentially less democratic entity. Therefore, it is important not to view these actions in isolation and the effects this shift has on boards and superintendents should be examined.

Further, it should be noted that increased centralization and similar policy actions have been seen in other sectors such as the federal welfare program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), which was a system of block grants created in 1996 that allowed states to select from a variety of policy levers but provided strict consequences for a failure to improve targets (Soss et al. 2001). TANF was not only very similar to the policies of NCLB in structure, but also in state reaction, which Soss et al. found to result from systematic reasoning and influenced by factors such as the political leanings of state governance and the racial make-up of

the state population (2001). So, it should be noted that changes in education are following changes in other sectors as well. Therefore, any research on how these changes intersect with local actors such as school boards and superintendents could be applicable to areas outside of education.

Potential Cost and Benefits of Centralized Teacher Policy

The possible costs and benefits of removing power from the traditional holders of district teaching workforce decisions, meaning the school boards and the administrative arm of the superintendent, should be examined. Three themes emerge in the literature as areas in which potential costs and benefits should be examined: equity, special interest influence, and public democratic participation. Of these themes, it should be noted that all these areas are substantially referenced in literature as criticisms of school boards and/or superintendents.

Equity

First, one must acknowledge that the idea of local control of schools has at points in history, stood in the way of equity issues. For this section, equity refers to access to education for various subgroups of students. Historically, individuals from minority groups and of low socio-economic status have received lower quality education, or at some points in history, been excluded from participation in education. This issue has been behind landmark school desegregation cases such as *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka*, and federal programs such as Title I funding. This conundrum is often framed as a tension between democratic ideals and equity. For instance, McDermott (1999) examined how several districts responded to the landmark desegregation case *Sheff v. O'Neill*. This case was unique because it occurred in state court rather than federal and named the state as defendant rather than an individual school district, thus forcing the state to create inter-district remedies that could not have been awarded in previous desegregation suits, such as *Milliken v. Bradley*, at the federal level. In this examination, McDermott (1999) explored the functions of school boards and the extent to which local control was a democratic practice before presenting a case study of how four Connecticut districts responded to the ruling of *Sheff v. O'Neill*. McDermott illustrated the complex and often conflicting relationship between the equity and the local (in this instance, the majority) interest (1999).

Yet, despite this history of federal intervention to ensure equity in schools, states may not be sensitive to the needs of localities. This insensitivity extends beyond the realm of education as evidence by a previously mentioned example. For instance, in the research on TANF referenced previously, Soss et al. (2001) suggested that states have historically ignored and underserved marginalized populations, which is heightened by federally influenced social policy environment. Similarly, one of the criticisms of NCLB was the targeting of low performing districts, which usually were of high minority populations. Additionally, Clotfelter et al. (2004) suggested that low-performing schools are at risk of performance sanctions and have experienced negative effects in the retention rates of teachers and in the probability of filling a vacancy with a high-quality teacher. Furthermore, increased accountability has led to both a narrowing of curriculum in certain subjects to cover tested areas and the rewarding of teachers who use a curriculum focused on testing or testing strategy rather than actual subject matter, particularly in

low-performing areas (Carnoy & Loeb, 2002; Ladd & Zelli, 2002; Rothstein & Mathis, 2013). Thus, the possible negative effects of state mandates may exacerbate achievement discrepancies between districts.

In contrast, researchers on school boards suggested that in communities with high minority populations, a greater representation of a particular minority group has led to greater satisfaction with schools, as well as higher trust, efficacy, and knowledge of school issues, especially for black populations (Marschall, 2005). Similarly, Meier and England (1984) found that more black membership on a school board in black communities leads to greater equitable policy formation. So, while school boards do not always have balanced representation, it is apparent that there are benefits to having local government officials who understand the particularities of context in their locale. Researchers suggested that this context is particularly true in high minority population areas, which often also happen to be low performing. Given this fact, it may be that boards are more sensitive to local needs only if their make-up mirrors that of the local population. In this case, shifting power over the teaching workforce to the state level may be detrimental to equity.

Special Interest Influence

Another critique of boards has been that, particularly in areas in which school board elections are held separate from the larger general election, unions have the potential to have great influence. However, as local governance loses power over the teaching workforce, it is possible that school boards will receive less support and attention from unions. Removing local control of the workforce may lessen supposed union influence on local workforce issues. However, the possibility exists that the weakening of union influence at the local level may allow for other interest groups to step in to influence elections, school board selection, and school board interests and priorities. Given the issue of already minimal voter turnout rates and low public attention to board matters, it may be possible for another interest group to "sway the vote."

Another result of a loss of board power is that union strength could be further weakened. This aspect could be positive or negative, dependent on the perspective of whether union influence is a positive aspect, which is a relevant topic that falls beyond the scope of this article. Without local government making teacher policy, unions may have to direct attention higher up to the state level for workforce concerns. Although, it is unclear whether this shift and the resulting loss of local control could equal poorer working conditions and more work dissatisfaction from teachers. What is clear is that turnover is a very real concern, given research in which Clotfelter et al. found that increased accountability contributes to teacher mobility, including leaving the profession altogether (2004). Furthermore, replacing any teacher comes at a monetary cost and instability in a school's workforce that can carry educational and institutional costs as well (Ingersoll, 2001). So, this shift to the state level should be examined to consider the potential effects to the teaching workforce.

Public Democratic Participation

Finally, there is the argument that board elections are the only direct means citizens can influence education policy. Yet, school board elections are often held in a special session to separate politics from schools. The critiques of this system have already been discussed; however, researchers have suggested that election turnout is higher in consolidated elections which may yield better democratic outcomes (Allen & Plank, 2005). Therefore, voters may participate more actively in board elections and matters of educational concern if election structure is shifted. However, in a broad analysis of school boards across the country, McDermott found that even in states that allowed for partisanship elections, party lines were seemingly invisible on the board with members demonstrating limited awareness of each other's affiliations and often voting outside party lines to elect leaders (1999). McDermott suggested that in these cases, party affiliation may serve as more of a gatekeeping mechanism for who enters the board. Therefore, the issue of partisanship may be less of an issue than Progressive Era reformers had believed and consolidating school board elections with the general election cycle may be a way to increase election turnouts and democratic participation.

Additionally, there is the matter of active public participation. While consolidated elections may improve the number of people who participate in selecting leadership, it is not clear if such action would result in an actual increase of public influence in how schooling is conducted. Researchers suggested that except in matters of finance or safety concerns, the public does not often participate in board meetings (McDermott, 1999). Even then, McDermott explained that the public has limited opportunity to participate in board decision-making processes, often only being given a few moments of public address time to speak to an intentionally unresponsive board and meetings are generally a perfunctory affair that yields little information on what the board does behind the scenes (1999). However, research also suggests that voters are retrospective in school board elections if the timing of score release and information allows (Berry & Howell, 2005, 2007). So, changes in information dissemination practices along with voting structure changes could help increase public participation, though whether that is true remains to be seen. In contrast, removing school boards and shifting their duties to the state level could potentially remove the public's one outlet to express concerns over, among other things, the types of teachers needed in their community.

Institutional Theory

The term "loosely coupled" has often been used to explain American school governance as districts have historically had autonomy. In this case, coupling is a phrase meant to describe the degree to which different levels of governance are linked. Weick explained that school systems are loosely coupled because districts within a state, schools within a district, and classrooms within a school all maintain a great deal of independence (1976). However, as additional power shifts to the state, the couplings tighter. In a call for institutional theorists to focus to a greater extent on the processes of transformation, Fusarelli said, "[t]he concept of loose coupling is static and leads to the development of organizational theory that explains thoroughly why policies do not work as intended-why policy implementation is uneven- but it less adequately explains changes in coupling over time" (2002, p. 565). But, even in seemingly loosely coupled organizations, the goals and activities of organizational actors conform to the

norms of institutional legitimacy (Ogawa et al., 1999). Therefore, it is necessary to look beyond the concept of loose coupling and investigate individual couplings more closely to better understand the interaction between policy and policy actors. In education research, the concepts of normative systems, regulative systems, and cultural-cognitive systems have widely been used in studies of schools (Casto & Sipple, 2011; Coburn, 2001, 2005; Ogawa et al, 1999; Ogawa & Kim, 2005). Scott (2001) referred to these elements as the "three pillars of institutions" and explained that it is possible to "view all of these facets as contributing, in interdependent and mutually reinforcing ways, to a powerful social framework, one that encapsulates and exhibits the celebrated strength and resilience of these structures" (p. 51). However, examining each pillar independently may reveal important differences in institutions. As demonstrated in the research on boards and superintendents reviewed previously, there is great variability across contexts, but also show great resemblance to each other in certain ways. Examining the positions of school boards and superintendents across all three pillars may lead to a better understanding of what creates these similarities and differences. In other words, each of these pillars explains different ways institutions gain legitimacy, but it is the nuances behind each pillar that would lend to a better understanding of how boards and superintendents function as traditional roles shift.

The Regulative Pillar

Regulative means are those that are formally adopted into policy and rules. Historically, board regulations have been created based on what is believed to make the institution apolitical. Additionally, the position of superintendent, while often presented as that of a professional administrator, is also a political one that is restricted by regulations to appear apolitical. While some of school board and superintendent behavior is normative, there are historical regulations such as non-partisanship and special election cycles that may restrict behavior. Furthermore, there are rules and laws that have been created to constrain behavior. For example, rules about conduct for voting on items, electing leadership, following and publishing agendas, speaking at meetings, and more have all been created to keep boards appearing professional rather than political. Furthermore, the superintendent's involvement in board meetings, in adopting district policies, and in reporting business to the board are regulated. Additionally, the shift in governance is one that is regulative as it is the direct result of legislative changes. Therefore, an examination of the regulative perspective may reveal how regulations at the state level have changed the ability of local actors to maintain their workforce.

The Normative Pillar

Norms are the actions and ways of conduct that members of an institution adopt to be legitimate representations of that institute. According to tradition and the historical evolution of school boards and superintendents, school governments should be apolitical. So, actions that appear apolitical have become norms for how boards and superintendents operate. As a result, one normative element of school boards is unanimity. McDermott identified that the norm of separating politics from education leads to administrative decision-making characterized by an almost total public unanimity amongst members (1999). This separation may be done to keep disagreement and thus, politics in the board from the public eye. For superintendents as well,

professional culture often constrains actions and despite being public figures, politics in education is viewed as unprofessional (Bjork & Lindle, 2001).

Scott contended that the normative pillar is one of values, as norms define not only what constitutes a legitimate objective of the boards, but also legitimate ways of pursuing objectives (2001). Yet, this unanimity norm in school boards may inhibit democratic processes by preventing public participation. Furthermore, norms also create roles, which in the case here may lead to a distinct separation of not just the unanimous board and the administrative superintendent, but also of an alienated public. A better understanding of the normative elements of school boards and superintendents may lead to better understanding of how to increase democratic participation at the local level. Of interest to this article is that examining normative elements may lead to a better understanding of how school boards are reconciling increased state power over the teaching workforce with local preferences and concerns.

The Cultural-Cognitive Pillar

The cultural-cognitive pillar is one that is based on how inner interpretive processes are influenced by external factors. In other words, in this pillar there is an examination of the effects that various components of a culture may have on the understanding, defining, and classification of interests. These three combine to create cognitive conceptions, which become adopted as natural or commonsense (Coburn, 2005; Scott, 2001). While there is some research on the interactions between superintendents and external cultures (Keedy & Bjork, 2002; Kowalski, 1999), explicit explorations of superintendent culture or their cognitive processes appears to be under researched, though much could be inferred about that topic from the research presented previously. Additionally, there has not been much work on how school board members think about issues or the internal culture of school boards. The work on the types of information that school boards use to make decisions by Asen et al. (2013) may be an exception, though they do not delve into the cognitive processes board members use to make these decisions.

Overall, state influence is forcing the role of school boards to shift regarding many aspects of education, including teaching workforce issues. Understanding the resulting shift of culture, as well as the evolving cognitive processes of boards and superintendents is important in understanding how these institutions construct meaning and values. Only in doing this will it become possible to better assess the possible costs and benefits of this shift.

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Implications and Future Research

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The history of school boards and superintendents in the United States leading up to contemporary times demonstrates how legislation has shifted power from localities to the state level over time. Additionally, speculating on some potential costs and benefits that emerge in other research on boards and superintendents reveals some potential areas for future research. Thus, considering how such a transition of power may affect the work of these policy actors is important.

One approach to investigating these questions would be to conduct comparative case studies across several school districts undergoing these policy changes in a similar environment

(such as several systems within the same state operating under the same state policies). Because school boards are public bodies, there is a host of available data, such as documents and videos, from board interactions available, which can be coupled with district-level data, interviews, and surveys to understand the effects, if any, that state teaching policy changes have on the work and agency of boards and superintendents.

Institutional theory can be used to analyze the processes of the board and superintendent relationship as the three pillars allow for three different explanatory views of processes. Conducting a comparative case study as described previously using the frame of institutional theory could help identify the ways in which state policies affect the work of policy actors at the district level, such as superintendents and school boards. An examination based on all three pillars could help tease out differing affects this shift may have on the institutions of district administration.

Additionally, boards are not apolitical bodies devoid of valuation, researchers have suggested that boards "modify, regulate, innovate, or refuse political demands in response to a variety of value preferences" (Kirt & Wirst, 2009, p. 134). Others have made the case that superintendents serve a political role along with a professional role (Bjork & Lindle, 2001). Therefore, it is important to consider if the values of these local structures are important and what the trade-offs of increased centralized governance may be as it relates to the control of the local teaching workforce. Therefore, the question of what school boards value in the workforce and the relation of those values with policy decisions should be explored.

Overall, not much is yet understood about the effect that increased state control of the teaching workforce will have. Additionally, there has been ongoing debate over the usefulness of local political institutions such as the school board and superintendent. If these positions are to be potentially weakened by removing control over the workforce than the costs and potential benefits of this removal should be weighed.

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Effective Leadership Model for an Ongoing Crisis

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Abstract

When the 2019 pandemic caused the shutdown of schools, districts were confronted with providing remote learning, and school principals were faced with providing professional development to their teachers for them to continue instruction in an online delivery system. Despite limited research of leading schools in a prolonged crisis and the lack of a how-to guide, some school leaders were successful. In a study of public-school teachers throughout Louisiana, we conducted a mixed methods study of teachers' perceptions of principals' professional and social-emotional support for the school community. During the final analyses, we discovered the components of what teachers perceived to be effective practices that satisfied their needs as well as actions they wished had been taken to satisfy the school community needs. By thematically grouping similar qualitative teacher responses, the researchers constructed a leadership model for an ongoing crisis—the Framework of Leadership for an Ongoing Crisis.

Keywords: principals, principal preparation, crisis leadership, leadership model

Effective Leadership Model for an Ongoing Crisis

Statement of the Problem

After the sudden shutdown of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic, schools were faced with the task of providing online instruction for their students, and school leaders were faced with providing professional development for their teachers to enable them to continue classroom instruction in a remote delivery system. As the shutdown wore on, however, it became apparent that caring for social and emotional needs of teachers and students was also necessary. The support principals show for teachers through professional training and assistance as well as personal concern and opportunities helps teachers develop confidence to adapt to changing circumstances during uncertain times (Calik, et al., 2012; Fletcher & Nicholas, 2016).

Although there was limited research about how to manage schools during a crisis and no how-to guide for school leaders to follow, some school leaders led their schools successfully. The present study is a follow-up to a previous mixed-methods study (Campbell & Harris, 2021), which surveyed teachers across Louisiana regarding their perceptions of their principals' leadership behavior before and during the pandemic lockdown of schools. Gathering information from teacher perceptions about effective leadership behaviors during a crisis in five areas (principals' support in providing professional development for online instruction, principals' support in providing professional development for social and emotional learning for students, principals' support in providing emotional support for teachers, teachers' delivery of online instruction, and teachers' social-emotional support of students), in the previous study, we found that perceptions of school leader practices were positive. Through the open-ended responses in that study, participants revealed additional details about effective leadership, as well as other needed leadership behaviors in an ongoing crisis.

The pandemic was the first ongoing crisis of its type in over 100 years, and schools were unprepared. The problem is that there are other weather-related events that have caused and are still causing ongoing crises in the communities in which they occur, and school personnel need to be prepared for those events and their aftermath. For instance, Hurricane Ida recently wreaked havoc in communities from Louisiana all the way to the Northeast. School shootings, wild-fires, droughts, floods, and heatwaves likewise can produce long lasting disruption to student learning and require leadership to help the school community adjust. School leaders struggle to lead schools through such crises without benefit of a leadership model to guide them.

Therefore, the purpose of this present study was to identify a leadership model that addresses teacher needs in crises so that it could be referenced and implemented for future ongoing crises. The criteria used for defining teacher needs were derived from the previous study's qualitative teacher responses that indicated both supportive behavior of principals and lack of supportive behavior. The researchers analyzed all the qualitative open-ended comments regarding teachers' perceptions of the professional and emotional support they received from their principal. Next, to identify an appropriate leadership model that addressed those needs, the researchers examined the following: adaptive leadership model based on Heifetz (1994); transformational leadership model based on Burns's (1978) model and later modified by Bass (1985) and Leithwood (1994); the hybrid leadership in uncertain times model (Drysdale & Gurr,

2017); and crisis leadership behaviors (Marshall et al., 2020). Adaptive leadership and transformational leadership theories were chosen because they are commonly studied in M.Ed. and Ed.D. programs while the hybrid model and crisis leadership behaviors were chosen because they address crises directly. This study is important because it may provide school leaders with a guide for navigating upcoming crises.

Brief Review of the Literature

The pandemic revealed the need for effective leadership to manage a school site in crisis. Leaders were faced with providing professional development and support to enable teachers to deliver virtual and hybrid instruction. Furthermore, school and district leaders were faced with extraordinary circumstances brought on by the pandemic including lack of student access to food, internet, and computer devices. Schools that already had a positive culture with strong relationships in place at the time of the pandemic were able to respond effectively to the unusual conditions that were brought on by the pandemic (De La Rosa, 2021; Next Generation Learning Challenges, 2021). Some district leaders responded quickly with training for teachers, distributing devices to students, and communicating with parents frequently (District Administator.com, 2020). Schools that offered distance learning during the pandemic helped to provide a stable environment that reduced stress and uncertainty for students and the community according to a study conducted in the Ukraine (Dushkevych et al., 2020). The ability of district and school leaders to respond quickly in a crisis is crucial. The literature gives some clues about the leadership skills required for an ongoing crisis such as the recent and ongoing pandemic. The purpose of the present study was to identify a leadership model that would be effective during a prolonged crisis.

Leadership models

The models of adaptive leadership, transformational leadership, leadership in uncertain times (hybrid model) (Drysdale & Gurr, 2017), and crisis leadership behaviors (Marshall et al., 2020) were examined to (a) determine which model best addressed the teacher needs identified in the qualitative responses from the previous study and (b) provide district leaders with an effective model to which they can refer in a time of crisis.

Adaptive Leadership

The adaptive leadership model, developed by Heifetz (1994) and further developed by Heifetz et al. (2009), includes six components. The first—*get on the balcony*—is described as the ability of the leader to observe situations and patterns in the environment. The second component—*identify the adaptive challenge*—is described as the ability of the leader to decide which challenge needs to be addressed with strategies that may require some experimentation. *Regulate distress* is the third component which describes the leader as one who "can mitigate the frustration people feel during adaptive change" (Northouse, 2019, p. 267). The fourth component—*maintain disciplined attention*—is one in which the leader encourages followers to stay on task using the "balcony view" to observe the work progress. In the fifth component—*give the work back to the people*—the leader allows followers to have an engaged part in helping to solve the problem. The sixth component—*protect leadership voices from below*—defines the

leader as one who promotes dialogue between the leader and followers so that potential ideas are not overlooked. Developing and protecting a structure so that ideas from others can be heard is unique to this model of leadership (Northouse, 2019). This adaptive model is most often used to address upcoming academic challenges and to prepare staff to make change within the school, not necessarily a model that will address an immediate crisis or a prolonged crisis.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is based in part on a leader's ability to inspire others to a common vision. Based on the work of Burns (1978), Bass (1985) developed a leadership model in which the needs and motivation of the follower is important. Leaders who exhibit transformational leadership factors referred to as the Four Is—*Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration*—can achieve greater than expected results for the good because the followers are motivated and inspired to help the organization meet its shared goals (Bass, 1985). Idealized influence is the ability of the leader to inspire others around a moral goal that will make the organization better and position the organization to reach its goals. Inspirational motivation is the way in which the leader communicates the vision and inspires others to have the same vision and make challenging goals so that they can implement the vision. Intellectual stimulation challenges the beliefs and actions of the leaders and followers (Northouse, 2019). Individualized consideration describes a culture that considers each participant as important to the work and to the organization. Leithwood (1994) applied transformational leadership to the educational setting and expanded Bass's (1985) domains to include forming and communicating a vision, shared leadership development, providing support for individuals, providing professional learning, and setting high expectations.

Teachers who work for principals who exhibit transformational leadership attributes have significantly higher job performance than teachers who work for principals who exhibit other leadership attributes (Ahnad, 2018). They also have statistically significantly higher rates of job satisfaction that is positively related to the ability of the principal to influence and inspire others with visionary leadership.

Despite its positive outcomes with a normal school cycle, transformational leadership does not address leadership in a crisis. However, this model does provide a cultural structure from which a crisis could be managed. Transformational leadership domains form the foundation upon which the leadership in uncertain times model (hybrid model) was based.

Leadership in Uncertain Times (Hybrid Model)

Leadership in Uncertain Times (hybrid model) is based on four of the leadership domains from transformational leadership but includes an additional three that address leadership in a crisis (Drysdale & Gurr, 2017). The four leadership domains in the hybrid model (based on the framework developed based on Leithwood's school transformational leadership model) are developing a vision, supporting shared leadership, improving the schools, and improving student instruction (Leithwood, 1994). The three added domains are influencing others, applying leadership to the specific context, and self-development (Drysdale & Gurr, 2017). With student outcomes at the center of the model, the model is based on academics and adapting to the

changing landscape that comes with new technology. A leader must decide to use the changing context to the advantage of the organization or become overshadowed by it. Leaders must make decisions that may involve some risk but need the ability at the same time to minimize risk. Leaders need to use data and information that is available but also be able to anticipate unplanned consequences and have an alternative plan ready (Drysdale & Gurr, 2017). Although the Drysdale and Gurr (2017) leadership model was developed prior to the pandemic, Gurr (2020) explained that the seven leadership domains can be applied in almost any context. Nonetheless, student outcomes are at the center of the model (Drysdale & Gurr, 2017), and an ongoing crisis impacting the entire school community may require more than an academic remedy from school leadership.

Crisis Leadership Behaviors

Based on Drysdale and Gurr (2017), Marshall, et al. (2020) identified four leadership behaviors that are needed in an ongoing-crisis. The first one was *assessing the situation, establishing needs, and making a plan*. During the pandemic shutdown of schools, as the school leaders made the decision to move to virtual instruction, they also had to make alternate plans for students who did not have access to computer devices or internet services, as well as comply with the complexities of the coronavirus development. The second behavior was to *communicate the plan clearly and often*. Leaders with a good communication plan can help to allay fears within the stakeholders and establish trust. The third behavior was *working together with others to solve problems and using committees to share the work*. The leaders developed many committees to manage the varied tasks that arose. The last behavior was *using adaptive leadership strategies like trying new approaches, thinking out potential problems, and developing preemptive plans.* School leaders had to be willing to try something new. The final behavior, using adaptive leadership strategies, refers to a leadership model that focuses on academic issues and prepares staff to make change. As stated in the section about the adaptive leadership model (Heifetz, 1994), this model does not focus on managing an on-going crisis but rather creates a culture for making change.

Summary

Each of the leadership models—adaptive leadership, transformational leadership, leadership in uncertain times and leadership behaviors—provide helpful information for school leaders in running a school dealing with all sorts of academic crises rather than dealing with the responsive nature of leadership that is required in an ongoing crisis.

Methodology

Sample Population

The population for the study consisted of 563 Louisiana PK-12 teachers who experienced the school lockdown and who completed the online survey. Teachers from 30 different school districts throughout the state completed the survey, although a large majority came from south Louisiana. Urban, suburban, and rural school districts were represented by the participants.

Survey

The quantitative-qualitative survey designed for the original research project was developed from a review of research about what teachers needed and what school leadership actions were taken after a crisis occurred. The survey questions asking for teacher perception were divided into five different categories that included instructional support from principal leadership (could include district response), personal support from principal, resources from principal for supporting the emotional needs of students, assessment of their own virtual instruction of students, and assessment of their own emotional support of students. In the present study the researchers were interested in teacher perceptions about the professional and personal support they received during the pandemic crisis. The professional support questions were focused on virtual instruction because that was the immediate need of teachers at the time.

Survey questions were designed from a review of the literature about what teachers need for virtual instruction professional development and what teachers need from leadership in a crisis. Each quantitative question was followed with a qualitative question in which teachers were asked to provide additional information.

Method of Analysis

The purpose of the present study was to identify a school leadership model that would be effective during a prolonged crisis, such as the pandemic lockdown. To that end the researchers examined all the qualitative teacher responses regarding their perceptions of their principal's professional and personal support (or lack thereof) during the pandemic and, using open coding, grouped similar qualitative teacher responses into patterns or themes (Blair, 2015). After conducting a literature review of studies of several leadership approaches (transformational, adaptive, crisis leadership behaviors, and a hybrid model), the researchers then aligned the domains of each model with the teacher responses. Although the domains of the models aligned with many teacher responses, they did not capture the essence nor the urgency of the ongoing crisis needs.

Therefore, having failed to discover a leadership model that addressed the kind of teacher needs that were expressed in their qualitative responses, the researchers developed an original model of leadership for an ongoing crisis. Having already used open coding to group similar qualitative teacher responses into patterns or themes (Blair, 2015), the researchers then used *a priori* (template) coding by using the patterns to construct the domains for a new model of leadership that would address the perceived needs of teachers during a prolonged crisis.

Results

An examination of leadership models and leadership behaviors was completed to find domains and descriptors that addressed the needs expressed by the teachers' qualitative responses. Transformational leadership, adaptive leadership, crisis leadership behaviors, and the hybrid (transformational and crisis) models were examined. The leadership models do not include domains that focus on ongoing crisis management and leadership behaviors based on the expressed needs of teachers identified in the previous study (Campbell & Harris, 2021).

Adaptive Leadership

The adaptive model is most often used to address upcoming academic challenges and to prepare staff to prepare for a change within the school. The adaptive approach addresses change as a process for which the leader can prepare the followers to adjust. In a crisis, change is forced upon the school and community as compared to adopting a change with staff in a normal academic cycle. Each of the six components is focused on helping a staff to adopt a new reality in the way they approach instruction and school improvement. While the *get on the balcony* component addresses the need to study the current situation, a level of accepting an entirely new long-term situational reality that impacts the entire school community is absent. Absent from the model also and identified in the previous study (Campbell & Harris, 2021) is the need for constant communication as plans are being formulated to address the crisis. Also absent from the model is a component that addresses the personal concern that teachers needed. In this present study, the qualitative responses of teachers indicated that their principals reached out to them about their personal and professional situation during this time of crisis.

The *identify the adaptive challenge* of the adaptive model suggests that the school leader has time to consider several ideas that might work. In a crisis, the leader must make decisions (or interpret district emergency policies) quickly without the benefit of time. The leader has to accept the idea that the first idea implemented may have to change quickly due to the evolving nature of crisis recovery or management. The school leader implementing an adaptive model may include professional development as part of his long-term plan to implement change. However, in a crisis, the school leader must provide practical, immediate professional development that can assist teachers in getting through the crisis. The *giving the work back to the people* component suggests that a plan had been made and that teachers will further develop it. In a crisis, the plan is often being made as circumstances develop. School leaders need teachers to help create and develop solutions in real time. This adaptive model is often used to address upcoming academic challenges and to prepare staff to make changes within the school, not necessarily a model that will address an immediate crisis or a prolonged crisis.

Transformational Leadership

The transformational leadership model does not address leadership behaviors that may be needed in a crisis as it does not address urgency and uncertainty. The level of communication identified by teachers' qualitative responses (Campbell & Harris, 2021) is not addressed in this model. For instance, frequent and immediate communication was identified by teachers as a need. The transformational model does not address the urgency with which leaders must make decisions or form teams who can help to make decisions. The positive culture and strong relationships that this model can provide could help a school leader respond effectively to the conditions that were brought on by a crisis (De La Rosa, 2021; Next Generation Learning Challenges, 2021). Transformational leadership is based in part on a leader's ability to inspire others to a common vision. If a common vision has been established, then this model provides the basis upon which a crisis could be managed.

Leadership in Uncertain Times (Hybrid Model)

The leadership in uncertain times model (Drysdale & Gurr, 2017) focuses on academic leadership issues rather than a crisis that impacts the entire school community. The transformational leadership domains, the foundation of this hybrid model, do not address urgency or communication. The additional domains of influencing others, applying leadership to the specific context, and self-development do not address the urgency of communication. Although this model has many of the behaviors that could apply to a crisis, it is focused on academic leadership crises. While Gurr (2020) suggests that the model has been reviewed from the perspective of a crisis (like the pandemic), the domains he recommended for use in a crisis do not suggest urgency nor the cycles of review with which the leader must engage to manage an ongoing crisis.

Crisis Leadership Behaviors

Based on Drysdale and Gurr (2017), Marshall et al. (2020) identified four leadership behaviors that are needed in an ongoing-crisis: *assessing the situation, establishing needs, and making a plan*. This examination of behaviors does not include the needed personal care required by teachers in times of crisis. The personal connection from the principal was needed and impactful for teachers as expressed by their qualitative responses.

Framework for Leadership in an Ongoing Crisis

The leadership models and leadership behaviors examined do not address all of what is needed by teachers in times of crisis. While there are a few similarities with existing models, none of the existing models or behaviors analyzed captured the full context of leading within an urgent and ongoing crisis. Failure to identify a model that aligned with the teacher responses led the researchers to develop a new leadership model—the Framework of Leadership for an Ongoing Crisis—which is comprised of domains and descriptors of effective and supportive leadership. The new model contains the following domains for dealing with a prolonged crisis: concede reality, consider solutions, communicate, care for others, coordinate efforts, and conduct contextual training. The domains presented create a more complete approach to leadership within an urgent and ongoing crisis. While each of these domains is equally important, they are not linear. The communicate domain is connected to each of the other domains as illustrated in Figure 1, and a summary of each domain is described below.

Concede Reality

The domain Concede Reality is one in which the leader confronts the actuality of the situation and acknowledges the need for a plan of action. The descriptors that define the parameters of the domain are the following actions: define the crisis; identify who is impacted; identify how widespread the problem is; and identify how the crisis impacts students, staff, and the community. Similar to the get on the balcony domain within the adaptive leadership model (Heifetz, 1994) that focuses on academics, this domain has a much broader approach. The adaptive leadership model deals with preparing for change; however, a leader must accept and respond to and make sense of the situation to which they have been subjected when a sudden

ongoing crisis occurs. This domain is most similar to the domain in Leadership behaviors (Marshall, 2020) assessing the situation, establishing needs, and making a plan. See Table 1 for sample teacher responses that correspond to this domain.

Consider Solutions

The domain Consider Solutions is one in which the leader begins to generate ideas regarding the best way to deal with the problem at hand. The descriptors that indicate the practical nature of this domain are the following actions: work within the district response, decide the most immediate need, decide who should and who can meet the need, list the resources needed, and develop a plan of where and how resources can be obtained. This domain aligns somewhat with the applying leadership to the specific context domain within the Drysdaye and Gurr (2017) model. As stated before though, their hybrid model is focused on the preparation of change to improve student outcomes. See Table 1 for sample teacher responses that correspond to this domain.

Communicate

The domain Communicate is crucial to the successful implementation of all the other domains as it is connected to the other five domains. (See Figure 1.) The descriptors that indicate the various actions of the domain are the following: use various forms of communication, reach out to parents and students, communicate often, be transparent, and develop an encouraging message. Marshall, et al. (2020) addresses the descriptors in this domain similarly with communicate the plan clearly and often. Good communication can help everyone deal with the uncertainty that an ongoing crisis can bring. The descriptors described in the Framework of Leadership for an On-going Crisis are more specific than those in Marshall's (2020) leadership behaviors. See Table 1 for sample teacher responses that correspond to this domain.

Care for Others

The domain Care for Others is an important one in which the leader can soothe anxiety, calm distress, and begin taking care of social/emotional needs. The descriptors for this domain are the following actions: personally connect with each staff member, empower leadership team to check on staff members, offer help, offer encouragement, ask if staff needs help, and encourage teachers to take care of themselves. These descriptors could fit within the transformational leadership model domain of providing support for individuals (Leithwood, 1994) in a regular school cycle; however, survey results of teachers show that personal support as described in the Care for Others domain is even more important in an ongoing crisis. See Table 1 for sample teacher responses that correspond to this domain.

Coordinate Efforts

The domain Coordinate Efforts is one in which the leader starts implementing the initial stages of the plan by empowering other administrators and teacher leaders to organize and act. The two descriptors of this domain are the following actions: organize leadership teams to gather ideas and resources from staff, and work with staff to develop plans. This domain is similar to

the third behavior working together with others to solve problems and using committees to share the work within the leadership behaviors identified by (Marshal, et. 2020). See Table 1 for sample teacher responses that correspond to this domain.

Conduct Contextual Training

The domain Conduct Contextual Training is one in which the leader makes critical decisions about the most appropriate type of professional learning or training for each group of teachers and staff for continuing the work of school during the crisis. The descriptors that define the parameters of this domain are the following actions: develop or locate specific professional learning or training that is most appropriate for the specific crisis, use various forms of training (face-to-face, digital, synchronous and/or asynchronous), and give teachers time to learn. While the transformational leadership model includes professional development (Leithwood, 1994), it is not focused on the urgency with which a leader must provide professional support to address the needs of an ongoing crisis. See Table 1 for sample teacher responses that correspond to this domain.

Figure 1
Framework of Leadership for an Ongoing Crisis

Note. Communicate is the center of the Framework of Leadership for an Ongoing Crisis.

Table 1

Domains of Framework of Leadership for an Ongoing Crisis

Domain	Descriptor	Example from Teacher Perceptions
Concede Reality	Define the crisis	We have been informed of all the steps taken and that we will be taking.
	Identify who is impacted	She set up Zoom meeting for teachers and students to see each other in April. Principal organized a staff parade to visit the neighborhoods of our students.
	Identify how widespread the problem is	The principal discussed how herself, assistant principal, and counselor will have daily evaluation times to assess how students are coping with virtual learning and our current pandemic.
	Identify how the crisis impacts students, staff, and the community	He asked for us to remain calm as a model for students. The district is helping with Wi-Fi needs and loaning out of computers. Also had a meal plan for kids at home.
Consider Solutions	Work within the district response	All decisions were at the district level. She collaborated with other schools, teacher coach, and our ILP on campus.
	Decide the most immediate need	Principal had a very clear plan, and it was implemented. The principal provided virtual instruction and the faculty observed social distancing and put on face masks.
	Identify who should and who can meet the need	The principal stayed in contact with us and checked on the students' progress. [T]here was a great deal of support from meals to free Wi-Fi hot spots as well as dropping off and picking up work.
	List the resources needed	Had weekly online meetings, kept us informed on different distance learning programs.
	Develop plan of where and how resources can be obtained	He provided links to district-provided trainings and encouraged teachers to enroll. My principal actively participated in gaining information and shared with her staff.
Communicate	Use various methods of communication	Principal used REMIND101, and social media pages such as Facebook were used to communicate with parents.
	Communicate often	Daily to weekly communication and Google Meets.

Table 1 continued

Domains of Framework of Leadership for an Ongoing Crisis

Domain	Descriptor	Example from Teacher Perceptions
Communicate	Be transparent	He made it clear that we are all growing and learning daily. This is new to us all and we will get through it together.
	Develop an encouraging message	Our principal is the best cheerleader and always tries to maintain a positive attitude.
	Encourage teachers to reach out to students and families	We were encouraged on the importance of being in constant contact with our students and their parents.
Care for Others	Personally connect with each staff member	Principal and Vice Principal both contacted me every two weeks to check on me and my family.
	Empower leadership team to check on staff members	Our individual coordinators organized the training of different methods of online instruction based on subject area.
		The assistant principal checked in on us.
	Offer help	Courses were offered.
		The principal maintained weekly virtual faculty meetings and provided resources to assist in the shift to virtual instruction.
	Offer encouragement	Our principal encouraged us to continue to reach out to our kids and provide work for them.
		No PD was held. No encouraging words were shared. Did not even acknowledge Teacher Appreciation Day.
	Ask if staff needs help	Asked how we were and if we needed anything.
		She was concerned about my physical and emotional health.
	Encourage teachers to take care of themselves	Our principal was very encouraging and supportive, always telling us to give ourselves a LOT of grace as we navigated the challenges.
Coordinate Efforts	Organize leadership teams to gather ideas and resources from staff	Any decisions made were discussed and shared among us all.
	Work with staff to develop plans	Cluster meetings were geared at feedback, troubleshooting, and problem solving.

Table 1 continued
Domains of Framework of Leadership for an Ongoing Crisis

Domain	Descriptor	Example from Teacher Perceptions
Conduct Contextual Training	Develop or locate specific professional learning or training most appropriate for the specific crisis	School provided lots of pd about tech tools. That's different from teaching us how to deliver effective instruction virtually. Had weekly online meetings, kept us informed on different distance learning programs.
	Use various forms of training (face to face, digital, synchronous and/or asynchronous	Our principal did a great job of relaying directions from the parish about how to provide instruction, either video or electronic.
	Give teachers time to learn	Principal was patient as we implemented the new practices.

Conclusions

School leadership behaviors required in an extended crisis are different from leadership behaviors in a typical school cycle. The researchers organized the comments from teachers and attempted to align them with a leadership model that best represented what teachers received and needed during the pandemic. Following are the conclusions of the study.

The leadership models examined do not capture the urgency of the situation in an ongoing crisis; however, the leadership domains in many of the leadership models can develop a strong culture to handle the uncertainty of a crisis. For instance, Ahnad (2018) found that teachers who work for principals who exhibit transformational leadership attributes have high job performance and statistically significantly higher rates of job satisfaction that is positively related to the ability of the principal to influence and inspire others with visionary leadership. This culture of high job performance and job satisfaction found by Ahnad (2018) can be the basis from which the principal can guide teachers through an ongoing crisis.

Ongoing crises will continue to occur. Therefore, the need for a leadership model that can assist school and district leaders is needed, and this model—the Framework of Leadership for an Ongoing Crisis—provides a good framework from which to start.

The professional training needed in an ongoing crisis cannot be predicted and will depend upon the actual needs identified in the next crisis. The domains described in this Framework of Leadership for an Ongoing Crisis model allow for the flexibility that a school administrator will need to address the current situation. Similarly, the training needs will change as the crisis continues; again, the flexibility is built into the model.

Crisis leadership is needed in educational leadership programs to better prepare future school and district leaders. The Framework of Leadership for an Ongoing Crisis could be tested in a future ongoing crisis although the specifics of each domain may look different based on the needs of the school and community in the next crisis.

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Regional University-Superintendent Partnership: Service Leadership Projects Provide Positive Impact on Schools

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Abstract

University-superintendent partnerships are beneficial as they help schools and students through regional collaboration between principal preparation program officials and school superintendents. Superintendents provide opportunities in their school systems for the principals-in-training programs to provide valuable experiences for their administrative interns. This process helps implement the university's service leadership projects (SLPs) to improve schools. There is limited research related to the benefits of SLP work for university students and the schools. From the study, the survey respondents stated SLPs positively impacted schools and will strengthen the university-superintendent partnership. Through the study, I also provided essential results that underscored the benefits of implementing SLPs, as perceived by principals and teachers.

   Keywords: service leadership projects, project-based learning, servant leadership, principal preparation programs

Regional University-Superintendent Partnership:
Service Leadership Projects Provide Positive Impact on Schools

Strong partnerships between the superintendents of regional school systems and universities successfully provide positive outcomes for their collaborative members, such as valuable feedback for the universities and resources for the superintendents (Local Area Superintendent Partnership, 2014). Carlson (2012) described a regional superintendent-university partnership that helped design a PK-12 principal preparation program (PPP) to support a region of rural school districts. In addition, some superintendent-university partnerships that focused on teachers have won national awards for professional development (Baylor Proud, 2017; Baylor University Media Relations, 2014, 2018).

Superintendents and universities focus on intentionally providing optimum learning experiences for their students. As such, it is incumbent upon K-12 leaders and PPPs to make sure that value-added learning activities engage their students. PPPs understand the value that the internship experiences play in the development of principals in training. On the other hand, superintendents make trusting assumptions that the principals' in trainings experiences especially in applying service leadership projects (SLPs) provide value added to the schools in which they are implemented. From the perspective of a former superintendent and current university professor, I conducted a study to measure the results of SLPs on the schools in which principals-in-training address problems of practice with an SLP. The purpose of the study was to measure results that could better inform superintendents about the impact on the schools when they are asked to provide PPPs opportunities for principals-in-training to implement their SLPs.

The Pool of School Leaders

Holloman and Novey (2018) described a national model for a PPP at a regional university that utilizes a process called *Service Leadership Framework for Leadership Preparation* (SLF4LP). The researchers described an extensive model utilizing SLPs as integral learning components for principals-in-training. The researchers described SLPs as authentic field-based experiences designed collaboratively by the principal-in-training, the school's principal, and the university instructor to address a problem of practice in the school. Holloman and Novey (2018) reported that principals-in-training are supported by the research and practices that correlated with principal leadership and student achievement. The researchers indicated that principals-in-training explored the literature to find and "implement the practice that provides results and avoids the practice that promises but does not deliver."

According to North Carolina Regional University's (a pseudonym used to provide confidentiality) PPP SLP handbook, the SLPs focus on the following six areas: "(1) Positive Impact on Student Learning and Development, (2) Teacher Empowerment and Leadership, (3) Community Involvement and Engagement, (4) Organizational Management, (5) School Culture and Safety, and (6) School Improvement" (North Carolina Regional University Educational Leadership Department, 2019, p. 4). The PPP's SLP handbook further indicates that principals-in-training for each SLP complete the following tasks: (a) gather and analyze data from their school, (b) identify areas of improvement, (c) narrow the focus after meeting with the principal, (d) summarize stakeholder and researcher language, (e) create an action plan that includes

detailed actions steps and responsibilities, and (f) evaluate the project and summarize the impact with both quantitative and qualitative data. To provide a template that details the university department's expectations, the SLP handbook provides a sample student SLP that satisfies the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) evidence requirement for Standard 6 School Improvement (see the handbook's Appendix G, pp. 58–94). According to the SLP handbook, principals-in-training satisfy NCDPI administration licensure requirements by completing the six SLPs.

Researchers supported the positive impact of SLPs on learning for the University's principals-in-training (Hull et al., 2016; Lowenthal & Sosland, 2007; Seymour, 2013). Likewise, a limited amount of literature is directly related to the benefits that SLPs provide the schools wherein they are implemented (Baker & Murray, 2011; Bates et al., 2009; Edmonds, 2017). With the considerable investment in the university and superintendents' regional partnership, the university needs to provide expert training for its students who will lead the K-12 schools. University personnel had to provide ways in which regional schools could improve while its students sharpened their leadership skills. Through this paper, I aimed to add to the literature about the positive impact of SLPs on the schools wherein they are implemented, specifically to describe the impact on the schools. The results could strengthen the partnership between regional superintendents and the university utilizing SLPs to enhance its PPP.

Review of the Literature

Bates et al. (2009) defined service learning as follows:
Service learning is an instructional approach that engages students in service-related activities while connecting the experience to course curricula, so students could learn academic content while applying that knowledge in service to their community. This model is predicated on student involvement and student ownership of the experience to make it meaningful and personally relevant. (p. 1)
According to the authors, service learning helped students gain experience in the field and help improve the school (Bates et al., 2009).

To find support for the value of SLPs, I reviewed three areas of the literature: student success using project-based learning, from which SLPs have emerged; PPPs' pedagogical success using project-based or service learning projects; and the impact of project-based or SLPs on schools in which they are implemented.

Students Succeed with Project-Based Learning

Researchers have found that project-based learning has produced student achievement at elementary and high schools (Duke et al., 2016). Duke et al. (2016) found that compared to "status quo teaching," project-based learning had produced significant improvement in elementary literacy skills and social studies advanced placement scores. According to the researchers, students in high-poverty schools showed improvement in literacy skills when teachers used project-based learning (Duke et al., 2016). This finding is significant when it is combined with the work of Weber et al. (2010). Weber et al. (2010) found that students from high-poverty schools performed poorly on standardized tests and often dropped out of school.

Other researchers asserted that project-based learning positively impacted learning (Hull et al., 2016; Lowenthal & Sosland, 2007; Seymour, 2013). As supported in the literature, the notion that university students "sharpen" their skills as they complete their projects focused on problems of practice. Research by Joseph et al. (2007) found that graduate and undergraduate business students participating in project-based community learning believed those projects were important for their business careers. Anderson et al. (2014) found positive benefits for physical therapy candidates who worked in communities with high-poverty candidates. Other researchers found further support for the benefits of project-based learning (Bonczek et al., 2007; Chen, 2017; Iachini & Wolfer, 2015; Seymour, 2013). In one study of note, Jenkins and Sheehey (2009) found that undergraduates and graduate students who sought a degree in special education teaching learned best in courses that incorporated problems of practice. Becnel and Moeller (2017) found support for the benefits of online SLPs for graduate students who interned in community libraries. Finally, Lowenthal and Sosland (2007) found that alumni indicated that SLPs led to more robust academic performance and more successful careers.

Other researchers indicated that hands-on learning experiences helped implementers "sharpen" their skills. For instance, undergraduate teachers-in-training also benefited from implementing an afterschool SLP (Baker & Murray, 2011). In addition, Coffey (2010) found that pre-service teachers responded positively to their service learning experiences in urban schools. Finally, Information Technology students involved in SLPs embedded in community businesses improved their skills (Grant et al., 2010).

There was support for the benefits of SLPs internationally (Hull et al., 2016; Araujo et al., 2016; Rajdev, 2011). For example, Hull et al. (2016) found that candidates who participated in projects while studying in China were engaged successfully with business, government, and non-government groups. Araujo et al. (2016) found that SLPs delivered in Brazil provided "real-world" learning. Similarly, Rajdev (2011) found relevant learning and the importance of cultural awareness that candidates experienced while participating in an SLP in India.

David (2008) summarized early research and the links between project-based learning and student engagement and learning. According to David (2008), "[u]sing real-life problems to motivate students, challenging them to think deeply about meaningful content, and enabling them to work collaboratively are practices that yield benefits for all students" (p. 4).

Principal Preparation Candidates Succeed with SLPs

The university personnel purported that when its PPP utilizes project-based learning by focusing its principals-in-training on problems of practice, the candidates acquired leadership skills more readily than through abstract assignments. For example, principals-in-training in Kentucky responded positively to the field experiences in which they participated, touting them as one of the most critical parts of their training (Dodson, 2014). In Illinois, Applegate and Holt (2016) found that 70% of the program coordinators believed they produced stronger leaders by focusing on field experiences rather than lectures and reading about the work.

Likewise, Darling-Hammond et al. (2010) touted the need to connect instruction with hands-on service learning calling the connections "Clinical Correlations." Davis and Leon (2011)

added that SLPs provided principals in training with opportunities to work with and eventually lead people. The researchers emphasized the need to have students interact with people in the schools as experience is just as valuable as learning to manage a project.

Schools Where SLPs Are Implemented Improve

Likewise, project-based learning that may include SLPs benefits the principals-in-training, but SLPs provide a benefit for the schools in which they are conducted (Baker & Murray, 2011; Figueiredo-Brown et al., 2015). For example, Bates et al. (2009) found that service learning helped students gain invaluable experience learning to lead K-12 schools. For this study, the students were principals in training. The authors also indicated that the schools in which the service-learning activities were implemented also benefitted.

In a recent study focused on a PPP designed to train leaders for rural schools where often poverty and lack of resources provide daunting obstacles, Edmonds (2017) found that principals in training were able to impact their schools. Schools led by the PPP's principals in training improved student proficiency and growth (Edmonds, 2017). The study's participants listed their training and field experiences as vital to their and the schools' success.

In conclusion, the authors cited in the literature made a case for project-based learning, from which SLPs have evolved. SLPs have a positive impact on the implementers. In my study, I felt compelled to add greater support to the literature, like the evidence from Bates et al. (2009) and the Edmonds (2017) study that SLPs benefited the schools where they are implemented.

Study Purpose and Questions

The purpose of the study was to survey the region's principals to determine the impact that SLPs had on their school. The overarching question is as follows: Do PPPs provide value from the SLPs implemented by principals-in-training to the schools where they are implemented? The sub questions of the study are these:
1. To what extent do SLPs have a significant positive impact on student achievement in schools in which they are implemented?
2. To what extent do SLPs have a significant positive impact on teacher performance in schools in which they are implemented?
3. To what extent do SLPs have a significant positive impact on teacher morale in schools in which they are implemented?
4. To what extent do SLPs have a significant positive impact on the school communities in which they are implemented?
5. To what extent do SLPs have a significant positive impact on parents in schools in which they are implemented?

Research Design and Methodology

The study's primary purpose was to determine the impact of SLPs in the schools in which they were implemented. A survey design was formed for a quantitative research study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A survey design is a process that enables researchers to gather for analysis

the perceptions that a representative sample of a larger population hold toward topics covered in a questionnaire. I applied descriptive statistics to summarize what the surveys yielded to make sense of the data from two surveys—an 11-item Qualtrics Survey and the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (NC TWCS, 2020). As for using the survey data in which a positive impact of the SLPs was shown, leaders can use the data to inform decisions to implement an SLP strategy to improve their schools. The results can be used to inform; on the other hand, as I cover in the study's limitations, they may not signify causation.

Instrumentation and Procedures

In an attempt to measure the impact of SLPs in the schools in which principals-in-training implemented them, I provided an 11-item online survey through Qualtrics (see the Appendix) and accessed data from the NC TWCS. First, to take the Qualtrics survey, I invited the study's participants, including principals whose schools were the sites of the PPP's principals-in-training SLP implementation of SLPs. There were 262 schools that fit this description. From the results of the Qualtrics survey, I analyzed the data to answer each research sub-question. Next, to gather data to answer the research sub-questions from the school system whose school board suspended all external studies, I analyzed the data from sections of the NC TWCS that pertained to the SLPs implemented in the system's schools. My "hunch" was that that even though teachers and not principals were surveyed, a possible impact of the SLPs on the school might be shown in the NC TWCS data. Finally, I compared the previous NC TWCS that provided a pre-SLP baseline with the post-SLP NC TWCS.

Instrument Reliability and Validity

I vetted the Qualtrics survey by sharing it with members of my department in connection with a grant submission to study the impact of SLPs on regional K-12 schools. The final survey was submitted with the grant proposal to decision-makers at the university's research department's highest levels. Although the grant was not funded, the methodology and instrument were not the reasons. The second survey tool, NC TWCS, is used by the NCDPI to provide valuable input for school leaders and the public based on feedback provided by teachers. According to Cynthia Martin, NCDPI's Director of District and Regional Support, "The survey is a valid and reliable instrument designed to measure educator perceptions about the presence of teaching and learning conditions that research has shown increase student learning and teacher retention" ("North Carolina," 2020, para. 6).

Finally, this study was approved by the appropriate university administrators. I submitted my proposal to conduct the study involving human research for an expedited review. I received approval from the University and Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB).

Study Population

With the UMCIRB approval, I asked a random sample of superintendents of those systems that had provided the university with principal-in-training internships for permission to contact the school principal whose school was the site of an SLP. Because the university implemented the SLP requirements for its principals-in-training in 2013, 403 interns have

implemented 515 SLPs in 262 different schools in various North Carolina systems (32 county, one city, five charter, and five private). In an even narrower "snapshot" that captures the footprint of the SLP implementation, I provide information in Table 1. This table captures the presence of 67 former principals-in-training who implemented as many as five SLPs each in high-need areas in the region served by the University's PPP.

Table 1
Number of PPP Graduates in High Need School Districts from 2016 to 2018

High Need School District	Number of PPP graduates
County B1	2
County B2	1
County C1	1
County C2	4
County C3	1
County D1	1
County E1	1
County F1	1
County G1	4
County J1	1
County J2	3
County L1	5
County M1	5
County N1	3
County O1	9
County P1	17
County W1	7
County W2	1
Total	67

Participants in the Study

To seek permission to contact their principals, I emailed 17 superintendents. Next, I invited 124 principals to complete the survey (see Appendix A). Many who were new to the school or were not a principal during the SLP implementation opted out of the study. One large county's superintendent who had permitted several SLP implementations told me that because of the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic, their school board suspended all external research projects, further shrinking the study's population. Of the 124 possible participants, a convenience sample of 23 principals responded to the survey.
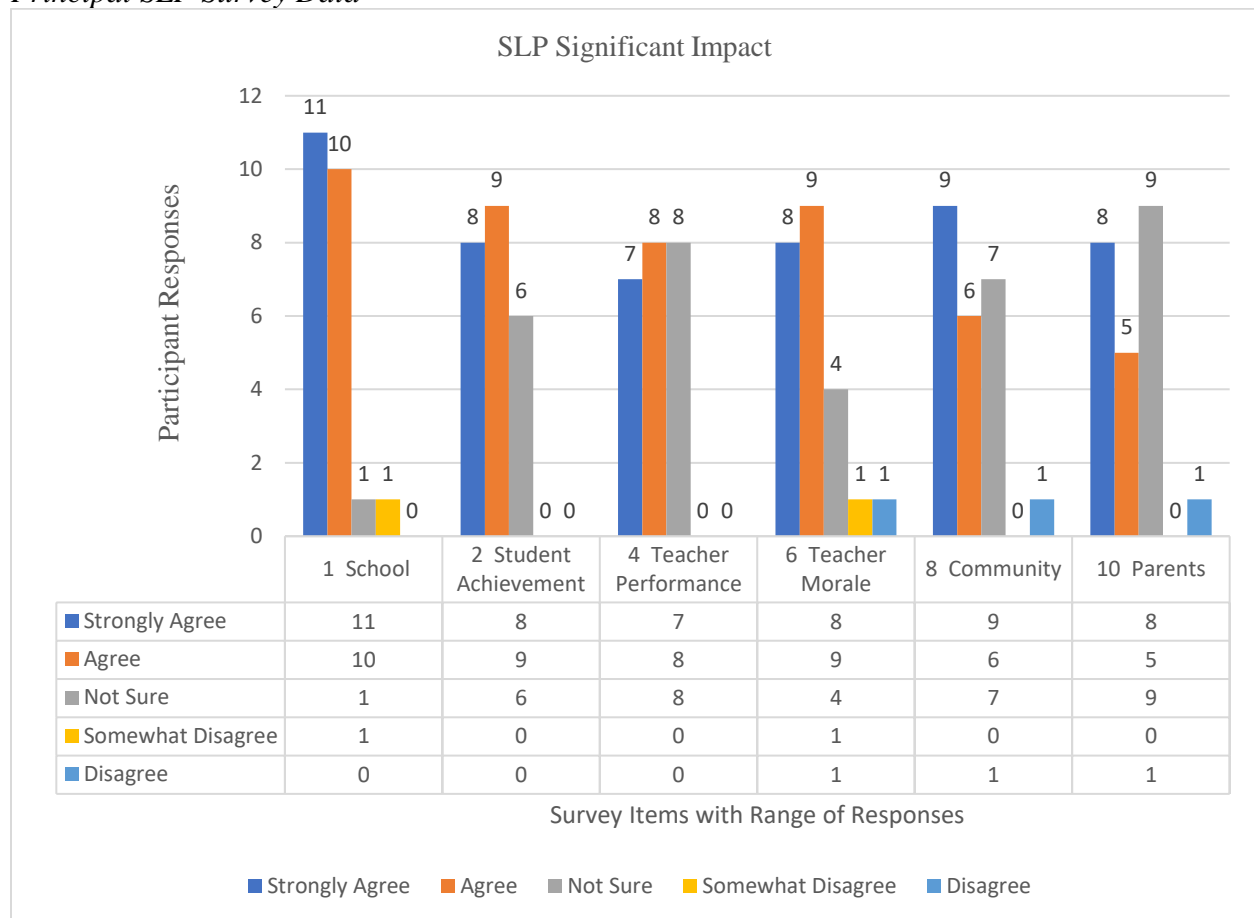
Results

Study Results—SLP Survey

At the end of the study, whose IRB approval officially ended June 30, 2021, 23 (19%) principals completed the survey, responding to the 11-item Qualtrics online survey. Those who have completed the survey have provided their perceptions about SLPs and their impact. (See

Figure 1 for the results.) Figure 1 represents the study's participants' responses based on survey questions in which the Likert responses applied. For instance, participants' perceptions of SLPs having a significant impact on their school are found in column 1 labeled "School." Within the "School" column, the number of responses are listed and depicted in bar graphs ranging from Disagree to Strongly Agree. The responses for SLPs having a Significant Impact on their School total 11 strongly agreed and 10 agreed. One was not sure, and one disagreed. Figure 1 contains the respondents' perceptions for the SLPs Impact on Student Achievement, Teacher Performance, Teacher Morale, Community, and Parents.

Figure 1
Principal SLP Survey Data

	1 School	2 Student Achievement	4 Teacher Performance	6 Teacher Morale	8 Community	10 Parents
Strongly Agree	11	8	7	8	9	8
Agree	10	9	8	9	6	5
Not Sure	1	6	8	4	7	9
Somewhat Disagree	1	0	0	1	0	0
Disagree	0	0	0	1	1	1

Note. Each column reflects the principals' perceptions about measured survey items.

Do PPPs provide value from the SLPs implemented by principals in training to the schools where they are implemented? Principal perceptions on the impact of the SLPs in their schools appear to be positive. For Qualtrics Survey Item 1, the majority of the principals, 21 of 23, at least agreed that the university's principal-in-training interns had provided SLPs that had a significant positive impact on their school.

Results for Research Question One

Results for Sub-Question 1. To what extent do SLPs have a significant positive impact on student achievement in schools where they are implemented? For Qualtrics Survey Item 2, SLPs having a significant positive impact on student achievement, 17 of 23 at least agreed, whereas six were not sure. For this item, 25% of the principals based their conclusions on results from North Carolina's End-of-Grade (EOG) or End-of-Course assessments (EOC). Others, 27%, based their conclusions on local assessments—another 22.45% based their conclusions on standardized tests. Finally, for Item 2, another 25% based their conclusions on a variety of sources: (a) pass rate with a C or better in community college courses taken by their students; (b) attendance and behavioral data with higher rates of success in the classroom; (c) student classroom engagement; and (d) feedback from staff members and parents.

Results for Sub-Question 2. To what extent do SLPs have a significant positive impact on teacher performance in schools where they are implemented? For Qualtrics Survey Item 4, SLPs having a significant positive impact on teacher performance, 15 of 23 at least agreed, while eight were not sure. For this item, principals shared that the MSA intern implementing the SLP provided support for teachers to improve teacher performance based on the following: (a) by mentoring teachers—22%; (b) by coaching teachers—24%; and (c) by providing teachers with instruction in the form of professional development—43%.

Results for Sub-Question 3. To what extent do SLPs have a significant positive impact on teacher morale in schools where they are implemented? For Qualtrics Survey Item 6, SLPs having a significant positive impact on teacher morale, 17 of 23 at least agreed, while four were not sure, one somewhat disagreed, and one disagreed. For this item, principals based their conclusions on a variety of sources: (a) 35% Teacher Working Conditions Survey; (b) 35% Internal Local Survey; and (c) 14% Other—consistent day-to-day conversations and feedback and observations during day-to-day operations.

Results for Sub-Question 4. To what extent do SLPs have a significant positive impact on the school communities where they are implemented? For Item 8, SLPs having a significant positive impact on the school community, 15 of 23 agreed, while seven were unsure, and one disagreed. For this item, principals based their conclusions on a variety of sources: (a) 36% Community Survey; (b) 40% Other including the following: (a) participation in school events, (b) Teacher Working Conditions Survey, (c) formal and informal observations, (d) feedback from parent associations, (e) data collection on parent participation, (f) staff survey, (g) Title 1 events, (h) Advanced Ed Community Feedback from focus groups, (i) attendance at family engagement events, and (j) verbal feedback from stakeholders; and 25% indicated there were no SLPs focused on this topic.

Results for Sub-Question 5. To what extent do SLPs have a significant positive impact on parents in schools where they are implemented? For Item 10, SLPs having a significant positive impact on the school parents, 13 of 23 at least agreed, while nine were not sure, and one disagreed. For this item, principals based their conclusions on a variety of sources: (a) 28% parent survey; (b) 40% Other--including the following: (a) family focus groups, (b) family

engagement events, (c) booster club meetings, (d) parent associations, (e) parent participation, and (f) student and parent groups; and 36% indicated there was no SLP focused on this topic.

Study Results—North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (NC TWCS)

Because I could not invite principals in one large county to participate in the survey, I examined the NC TWCS to provide data on the possible impact of SLPs implemented in the county's schools. NC TWCSs are administered by the State's Department of Public Instruction every two years and are available online for review (http://asqnc.com/). To determine if there was an indication of SLP impact, I matched an SLP theme to the item addressed in the TWCS. For instance, one SLP implemented in 2019 focused on teacher reflection guiding student growth. The TWCS item that could provide data to measure the SLP impact is "Teachers are encouraged to reflect on their own practice." In this case, the teacher baseline strong agreement in 2018 was 84%. In 2020, 96% of teachers strongly agreed. Is a correlation between the professional development administered by the principal in training and the positive TWCS response indicated in the data? A follow-up interview with the principal might provide more context for the stronger teacher response. Unfortunately, because of COVID and the school board's decision to halt all external studies, principal input is not possible at the time of publication.

For each implemented SLP, I recorded how the teachers responded to the corresponding item in the 2018 TWCS for a pre-SLP baseline and then recorded the 2020 response for the post-SLP (see Table 2). I only included teacher responses from schools in which SLPs were administered between the school year 2017 - 2018 and the run-up to the 2020 TWCS. The county teacher participation rate for the 2018 Survey was 93%; the participating schools' rate was 94%. The county teacher participation rate for the 2020 Survey was 87%, exactly the same as the participating schools' rate. In Table 2, I have also connected the TWCS item with the study questions by using the following legend: Overarching Question, school impact—OQ; Sub-Question 1, student achievement—SQ1; Sub-Question 2, teacher performance—SQ2; Sub-Question 3, teacher morale—SQ3; Sub-Question 4, school community—SQ4; and Sub-Question 5, parents—SQ5. If the difference from the NC TWCS administrations were 4 or more percentage points greater, I highlighted the item. Items that increased by more than 4 percentage points are highlighted in green. Items that decreased by more than 4 percentage points are highlighted in red.

Table 2

Teacher Working Conditions Survey Items with Two-year Scores

Number	Teacher Working Conditions Survey Item	2018	2020
1	SQ2—Teachers are allowed to focus on educating students with minimal interruptions.	66	53
2	SQ5 & SQ1—Teachers provide parents with useful information about student learning.	96	95
3	SQ3—Teachers are recognized for accomplishments.	86	91
4	SQ1—Local assessment data are available in time to impact instructional practices.	74	72

Table 2 (continued)

Teacher Working Conditions Survey Items with Two-year Scores

Number	Teacher Working Conditions Survey Item	2018	2020
5	SQ1—Local assessment data are available in time to impact instructional practices.	80	90
6	SQ2 & SQ3—New teacher support.	63	65
7	SQ5—Parents are influential decision-makers in this school.	37	47
8	SQ5—Parents know what is going on in the school.	96	96
9	SQ5—Parents support teachers.	87	81
10	SQ3—School administrators support teachers to maintain discipline.	98	87
11	SQ5—School encourages parent involvement.	84	55
12	SQ2—Sufficient resources for PD.	95	82
13	SQ2 & SQ3—Teachers are encouraged in school leadership roles.	94	93
14	SQ2—Teachers are encouraged to reflect on their own practice.	84	96
15	SQ2—Teachers are encouraged to reflect on their own practice.	91	92
16	SQ2 & SQ3—Teachers are held to a high professional standard.	91	88
17	SQ1 & SQ 2—Teachers collaborate to achieve consistency on how student work is assessed.	85	79
18	SQ2—Teachers have sufficient access to instructional technology.	94	93
19	SQ2 & SQ 3—Teachers have time available to collaborate with colleagues.	74	89
20	OA & SQ 3—The school environment is clean and well maintained.	39	59
21	SQ2 & SQ 3—The school improvement team provides effective leadership at this school.	56	79
22	SQ2 & SQ3—The school leadership consistently supports teachers.	88	89
23	SQ 2—The school leadership facilitates using data to improve student learning.	94	98

Note. Recorded in 2018 and 2020 columns are percentages of teachers who strongly agree with the statement. Also, for duplicate items, a similar SLP in a different school was implemented.

A review of the data from Table 2 shows, except for Item 8, which impacts SQ5—parents, that teachers' perceptions regarding the questions related to the theme of the SLPs in the TWCS changed from 2018 to 2020. Overall, for 11 items, teachers strongly agreed at a higher rate from the 2018 to 2020 survey. Coincidentally, the percentage of teachers who strongly agreed fell for 11 items. Of the 11 items with a higher percentage from the 2018 to 2020 survey, eight of the 11 were at least 4 percentage points or greater, which are highlighted in green. Of those eight items, the increases ranged from 4 to 23 percentage points. Those items and their

increased percentage points impacted the following Questions: OA 20 points; SQ1 10 pts; SQ2 12, 15, 23, and 4 points; SQ3 5, 15, 20, and 23 points; and SQ5 10 points. Conversely, of the 11 items whose percentages fell, six were greater than 4 percentage points. Of those six items, the deficits ranged from 6 to 29 percentage points, which are highlighted in red. Those items and their decreased percentage points impacted the following: SQ1 13 and 6 pts; SQ2 13 and 6 points; SQ3 11 points; and SQ5 6 and 29 points.

Discussion

To answer the study's overarching research question, to what degree do principals perceive SLPs impacted their schools, I found that many of the principals at least agreed that SLPs implemented in their schools had a significant impact on the following: the school, student achievement, teacher performance, teacher morale, the community, and parents. If there were any uncertainty as to the impact of the SLPs, principals responded, "Not Sure." There were only a few instances in which principals disagreed that SLPs had a significant impact. Principals' perceptions from this survey support the literature concerning the impact of project-based learning (Baker & Murray, 2011; Figueredo-Brown, et al., 2015).

The results from the Qualtrics survey that answer the question on the impact of SLPs on the school and the impact on student achievement coincide with the literature. For instance, Bates et al. (2009) found that service learning helped students gain invaluable experience learning to lead K-12 schools. For this study, the students were principals-in-training. Bates et al. (2009) also indicated that the schools in which the service-learning activities were implemented also benefitted. This study's results are in alignment with the latter point from Bates's study.

For another important connection with the literature, this study's results align with results from Edmonds' (2017) study. Edmonds found that principals-in-training were able to make an impact on their schools. Schools led by the PPP's principals-in-training improved student proficiency and growth (Edmonds, 2017). Edmonds used data from North Carolina's EOG and EOC assessments. In my study, I found that 74% of the principals who completed the Qualtrics Survey Item 2, at least agreed that the SLPs improved student achievement. When asked to specify how the principals concluded that the SLPs improved student achievement, many listed North Carolina's EOG and EOC assessments. The principals also listed other assessments, including the following: (a) pass rate with a C or better in community-college courses taken by their students; (b) attendance and behavioral data with higher rates of success in the classroom; (c) student classroom engagement; and (d) feedback from staff members and parents. These extra measures add to the ways that principals monitor student achievement growth. This study's results aligned with Edmonds' study and provide more ways that principals use to determine student achievement.

In one way, the pandemic caused me to seek another data source to measure the impact of SLPs on schools. By utilizing data from the two most recent TWCSs, I reviewed data that represented teacher perceptions on survey items that may have been impacted by SLPs implemented in their schools. Based on the data summarized in Table 2, it appears that a greater number of SLPs addressed by the TWCS item, as far as teachers were concerned had improved. There were eight items with increases at or above 4 percentage points in contrast to six items that

had decreased percentages of at least 4 percentage points. Pogrow (2017) advanced a "Principle of Bigness" when administrators weigh the "potential practical benefit" of an intervention (p. 109). Using Pogrow's thinking, which combines Hattie's and Cohen's cutoff scores, it appears that the range and number of SLPs whose items teachers reviewed more favorably in the TWCS depict SLPs in a more favorable light than those items whose scores dropped. For the eight items that increased, six increased by 10 percentage points or more; conversely, four of the six items decreased by 10 percent or more.

Limitations

Since the initial approval and two extensions, two hurricanes and COVID-19 struck the region, which delayed the completion of the study. The most recent cause of changes was the COVID-19 Pandemic. The pandemic delayed the study when schools were closed in North Carolina in March 2020. Access to principals was limited by school boards and superintendents. Another limitation was that principals who were in the building at the time of the implementation might have had difficulty in measuring the impact of the SLP, despite the questionnaire's prompts. The natural turnover of principals was enhanced, and more new-to-school principals shared their reluctance to complete the survey. School routines changed dramatically with online instruction coupled with face-to-instruction when the state permitted it. Principals were saddled with more avenues of instruction to monitor and lead. One told me, "[t]his is overwhelming. I am not sure I signed up for this."

Trying to generalize study results with only 19% of the population is tenuous at best. The results should be interpreted carefully. Perhaps those who responded were "true believers" and prone to being more positive about the SLPs. In the SLP study, however, principals did list sources on which they based their perceptions of the SLPs implemented. Another reason to be measured in understanding the results of the TWCS has to do with teacher turnover. Teachers retired or resigned between the two administrations of the TWCS. The pandemic may also have exacerbated teacher turnover. One must consider that there may be several new teachers taking the TWCS in 2020 who had not taken the survey in 2018.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future researchers should examine specific SLPs for remedies to address problems of practice in schools. As suggested in the results from the principal survey that there are numerous SLPs that address school improvement, student achievement, teacher performance and morale, school communities, and parents. Utilizing results from the TWCS, a principal may want to improve a school improvement team (SIT). Exploring the SLP dedicated to improving SIT leadership, which earned a 23-percentage-point improvement from one TWCS to the next, would also be worthy. Exploring specific SLPs' impact on rural schools or high-poverty schools is also a possibility.

Conclusion

In the results, the SLP study has shown promise for improving the schools in which they were implemented. The additional TWCS component, likewise, has provided additional data that support SLPs' positive impact on schools. PPPs can rely on the research that the literature shares

to support project-based learning for its principal-in-training candidates. Likewise, this study may provide additional data to support a partnership between universities and K-12 school systems. When K-12 decision-makers ponder opening their doors to PPPs that utilize SLPs, this study provides more positive reasons to enhance that partnership.

In conclusion, in this paper, I described how the collaboration between a regional university and regional superintendents can work to improve K-12 schools. Adding greater validity to the impact of SLPs on the schools in which they are implemented will improve the University's PPP, and the partnership will grow. As for SLPs, one principal did write about her experience as an intern implementing hers:

> I have had the opportunity to see and feel the impacts of SLP's within schools, and it has been one of the greatest methods to prepare future administrators to be servant leaders. I am thankful I had the opportunity to be a part of such a wonderful practice that has had lasting, positive impacts on the students, teachers, and our community. (E. Robbins [pseudonym], personal communication, April 22, 2021)

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Appendix
Study Questions: Effectiveness of the University's Service Leadership Projects

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements by circling the word or phrase that best fits your opinion:

1. The University's principal-in-training students have provided Service Leadership Projects that have had a significant positive impact on this school.

    Disagree   Somewhat Disagree   Not Sure   Agree   Strongly Agree

2. The University's principal-in-training students have provided Service Leadership Projects that have had a significant positive impact on student achievement in this school.

    Disagree   Somewhat Disagree   Not Sure   Agree   Strongly Agree

3. Please check the appropriate item(s) listed as follows that were the basis for your conclusion on the significant impact on student achievement addressed in item 2:

    _____End of course or end of year data
    _____State finals
    _____Local assessments
    _____Standardized assessments/tests
    _____Other

4. The University's principal-in-training students have provided Service Leadership Projects that have had a significant positive impact on teacher performance in this school.

    Disagree   Somewhat Disagree   Not Sure   Agree   Strongly Agree

5. Please check the appropriate item(s) listed as follows that describe how the University's principal-in-training students provided support to impact teacher performance addressed in item 4:

    _____Mentoring
    _____Coaching
    _____Instruction provided for teachers as professional development
    _____Other
    _____No Service Leadership Project related to teacher performance

6. The University's principal-in-training students have provided Service Leadership Projects that have had a significant positive impact on teacher morale in this school.

    Disagree   Somewhat Disagree   Not Sure   Agree   Strongly Agree

7. Please check the appropriate item(s) listed as follows that were the basis for your conclusion on the significant positive impact on teacher morale addressed in item 6:

    _____State teacher working conditions surveys
    _____Internal local survey
    _____Other
    _____No Service Leadership Project related to teacher morale

8. The University's principal-in-training students have provided Service Leadership Projects that have had a significant positive impact on this school's community.

    Disagree   Somewhat Disagree   Not Sure   Agree   Strongly Agree

9. Please check the appropriate item(s) listed as follows that were the basis for your conclusion on the significant positive impact on the school community addressed in item 8:

    _____Community survey.
    _____Other
    _____No Service Leadership Project related to community engagement

10. The University's principal-in-training students have provided Service Leadership Projects that have had a significant positive impact on this school's parents.

    Disagree   Somewhat Disagree   Not Sure   Agree   Strongly Agree

11. Please check the appropriate item(s) listed as follows that were the basis for your conclusion on the significant impact on this school's parents addressed in item 10:

    _____Parent survey
    _____Other
    _____No Service Leadership Project related to parent engagement

Reciprocal Mentoring: A Key to Successful Change Leadership Partnerships

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Abstract

This conceptual paper contains a description of how we fostered reciprocal mentoring within an elementary school and higher education to strengthen the success of their partnership through a change process. Both authors served as the mentor and mentee throughout the process. We explain the partnership and how the positive results provided a stronger and more trusting faculty because of leadership accountability. However, the lack of leadership buy-in can have a disappointing result among the leadership team. Furthermore, we outline the essence of mentoring and current research on multiple types of mentoring amid the collaborative partnership. Lastly, we identify and describe the fundamental aspects of reciprocal or reverse mentoring and why these components worked in the partnership.

Keywords: mentoring, reciprocal mentoring, collective leadership, learning partnerships

Reciprocal Mentoring: A Key to Successful Change Leadership Partnerships

As educational leaders, we have witnessed how reactions to a crisis will impact society, family, friends, school systems, and places of work. Decisions made by leaders have not only influenced our current educational environments but will potentially affect opportunities and the landscape in which people work. With the plethora of problems and issues, it has become apparent that school leadership, leadership resilience, reciprocal leadership mentoring, and learning partnerships are gaining momentum in the role of importance on impacting school and student learning outcomes. These various roles of leadership, partnership, and mentoring and their relationship in implementing change are becoming critical factors in a school leader's effort to improve learning environments.

Schools must be prepared and organized for change. Learning partnerships, especially those with the potential for mentorship can provide valuable experiences and opportunities that support innovation and organizational change (Carlisle, 2011; Cormas & Barufaldi, 2011). Within the context of organizational changes, the writers will describe the evolution of the authors partnership by taking an in-depth look at the characteristics of leadership, reciprocal mentoring, and professional learning communities.

Purpose

Every educational institution has grappled with how to implement innovative learning practices and learning environments that offer powerful learning opportunities for all students. As school leaders find themselves in a new educational landscape, a "silver lining" in this moment may be to establish learning partnerships to create effective change through reciprocal mentoring such as coaching and leadership-based practices. Dreher (2016) described reciprocal mentoring as a symbiotic relationship in which each partner mutually benefits from the other. The dual partnership has individual roles and responsibilities within the relationship, and both gain from the reciprocal mentoring experience (Chandler & Kram, 2007). Reciprocal mentoring has been used in the field of business, pairing tech-savvy millennials with seasoned executives to exchange each party's knowledge and skills (Firestone, 2014).

The need for fostering positive learning environments will require school leaders to establish authentic, collaborative reciprocal partnerships. These partnerships will be fundamental in building school capacity to improve school culture, learning environments, and student learning outcomes. The current educational landscape has the potential to become the foundation for the evolution of higher education and P-12 partnerships. A key element to consider is the reciprocal mentoring approach.

School partnerships with higher education have been implemented in a wide range of learning environments to develop a collegial leadership team and provide professional learning opportunities to foster authentic collaboration. Several researchers indicate collaboration and learning partnerships between schools and universities have tremendous potential to support schools in school improvement efforts (McKoy & Vincent, 2007; Turley & Stevens, 2015). As educators continue to recover from the repercussions of the impact the loss of teaching and learning have had on student growth, partnership development and support may help in

facilitating and implementing improvement efforts. We shared findings from a research project focused on continuous improvement efforts and leadership development through the lens of educational change.

Theoretical Framework

In the wake of the new educational landscape, focused attention on continuous improvement efforts, culture, and sustaining effective change remain topics of importance (Fullan, 2007; Schein, 1983). Change does not occur on its own, it must be initiated (Fullan, 2007). The current pressures of regulations and ever-changing guidelines may serve as initiating factors for schools to deepen partnership development to innovate and lead change. Fullan (2007) explained the complexity of educational change as:

> Thus, on the one hand, we need to keep in mind the values and goals and the consequences associated with specific educational changes; and on the other hand, we need to comprehend the dynamics of educational change as a sociopolitical process involving all kinds of individual, classroom, school, local, regional, and national factors at work in interactive ways. (p. 9)

The basis of this study is designed on Fullan's (2007) Educational Theory and Hord's five attributes of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Fullan (2007) suggested that successful initiatives are developed during three phases of initiation, implementation, and institutionalization. Hord's (2004) five attributes of PLCs are: (a) Shared Values and Vision, (b) Intentional Collective Learning, (c) Supportive and Shared Leadership, (d) Supportive Conditions, and (e) Shared Personal Practice. These attributes are key elements for sustained change and continuous school improvement.

To implement change successfully through innovation, the attributes of PLCs offered an ideal structure to respond to the need for support and collaboration, also it is an approach that offers the potential to provide continuous teacher learning and improvement of instructional practice (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). With a balance of support and cooperation, PLCs are more likely to persist with addressing problems, such as implementing an innovation, long enough to make connections between instructional and organizational changes, and student learning outcomes (Gallimore et al., 2009).

Background

The relationship between the authors developed and flourished over a decade of working together in various roles. The research project and beginning of the partnership, centered around the collective school data, the need for improving the school culture and student learning outcomes, and how to plan strategically for improvement. Initially, the principal of the school identified the problem, based on faculty perceptions, as the school climate lacking in trust, camaraderie, and collaboration.

Literature Review

Leadership in Mentoring

There has been a plethora of written research written on effective leadership from various perspectives (Collins, 2001; Gerstner & Day, 1997; Golberg, 2001; Kanter, 1999; Lytle & Timmerman, 2006). Collins (2001) designated two major areas that separate the great leader from the good leader. These two defining characteristics are personal humility and professional will. Golberg (2001) suggested that the leader has large-minded qualities and not merely small-minded answers when considering the question of effective leadership. Kanter (1999) noted that leaders are direction setters and coherence builders for their organizations. Although there are many variances within each of these, researchers' common themes among the group are fundamental beliefs on what is most important, perseverance during adversity, passion for humanity, and acknowledging others for success.

With the explosion of technological advances and global expansion, leadership researchers have been compelled to examine the role of vision and shared values as the basis of organizational relationships due to the emphasis on partnership development (Skoglund, 2020). Contemporary models of leadership include the transactional leader, the charismatic leader, and the transformational leader. In educational leadership models, the instructional leader is a key player in the organization's success. Additionally, the idea of a shared or distributive leadership model finds its place of significance within the educational system.

Leadership was influenced and dependent on many variables. According to Waters et al. (2003), these factors pertained to areas such as personal style, organizational setting, a leader's attitude, values, and beliefs, cultural norms, and expectations. The different leadership models attempted to construct the fundamental basis of how these factors influence a leader's decision-making processes and practices. Leithwood et al. (2004) elaborated on two models that have a strong connection to educational leadership. These were instructional and transformational leadership. Researchers suggested that transformational leadership can be viewed as a form of shared leadership due to the fact that this style allows for change through the involvement of the entire organization (Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2004). Hallinger (2003) conceptualized leadership as "belonging to the entire organization rather than the property of a single individual" (p. 338).

Leadership is a highly complex idea. There is an abundant amount of research that supported the belief that leadership matters in the change process (Hallinger, 2003; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Leithwood et al., 2004; Murphy, 2008). Leithwood et al. (2004) stated that leadership has two undeniable components attached to its function: "setting directions and exercising influence" (p. 10). The functions of leadership are carried out differently in varying models of leadership styles. With the plethora of accountability issues, local, state, and federal government mandates placed on schools, it has become apparent the school supervisor and the leadership connection are gaining momentum in the role of importance in impacting learning, the relationship it plays in improving an organization's culture, and sustaining implemented change.

According to the newest research from Grissom et al. (2021), the school principal was found to have a high impact factor on student learning outcomes and experiences students and

teachers have in their schools. They suggested that effective principals have mastered the domains of instruction, people, and the organization (Grissom et al., 2021). Goldring et al. (2020) pointed out how important it is for school district leaders to support their principals to move away from supervisory roles related to compliance to developing their skills in coaching and feedback. Empowering principals to strengthen their capacity to lead, foster collaboration, and create organizational structures are necessary components for school improvement (Dhuey & Smith, 2018). These supports can be through work with mentors or PLCs (Grissom et al., 2021).

Collaboration

Lawson (2004) viewed collaborative relationships as mutual learning with a commitment to common outcomes within an organization. In this moment, reeling from the pandemic, organizations need to be exploring ways to develop and strengthen partnerships. Specifically, developing collaborative strategies with learning partners. Working together toward mutually conceived goals and objectives, especially at a time of increasing internal and external pressures on our school environments, will provide a framework to strengthen and build professional capacity to foster meaningful learning (Cummings & Worley, 2005) This type of collaborative learning partnership requires mutually developed strategies, goals, structures, and processes of the partnership to become interdependent, coordinated, and aligned to have the best chance for success (Fullan & Langworthy, 2014).

Schools dedicated to embracing innovation and strengthening partnerships will be the gateway to unleashing a school's potential in overcoming insurmountable barriers. As is often heard on the television and radio, "we are in this together." We described the journey of our learning partnership between a P-12 elementary school and higher education by providing an in-depth look at the various components of leadership, collaboration, and professional learning within the context of improving school learning environments. In particular, we discussed reciprocal mentoring and the role we believe it played in the development of a successful learning partnership.

When considering higher education institutions and learning partnerships, they are well-positioned to provide schools with professional opportunities by investing their acquired knowledge to address school improvement efforts (Magolda & King, 2004). However, bringing learning partnerships together requires a strong common vision (White, 2014) and a collective creation of shared knowledge, practices, and processes (Knight & Pye, 2005). From our perspective, reciprocal mentoring was the transformational factor for our learning partnership as it harnessed the power of mentorship into a mutually beneficial relationship in which each partner cycled through the mentor and mentee roles.

Mentoring

Literature on mentoring illustrates the complex nature and various forms it can assume. There are many descriptions and definitions found in the literature on what mentoring should "look like." However, we chose leadership as the essence of mentoring (Sozzi, 2018). One of the leader's essential tasks is developing the people on his or her team. Mentoring like leadership, is

about relationships, even more specifically about a reciprocal relationship by each giving and receiving. In addition, reciprocal mentoring is a form of cross-training as each partner teaches and learns (Gunn, 2016). During the mentoring process, there is a sense of urgency and motivation. The mentor is highly motivated and wants to share. However, the mentor does not do all the sharing. The mentor provides resources and connects the mentee to other people. Gunn (2016) stated coaching is also a relationship-based approach and a subset of mentoring. Coaching helps people learn through reflection and brings a focus to the forefront. Coaches model and provide a safe environment for learning.

There is an abundance of research on traditional forms of mentoring that focuses on the pairing of a knowledgeable and experienced team member (mentor) with a novice member (mentee) of an organization to assist in the development of their role within the organization (Higgins & Kram, 2001; Payne & Huffman, 2005). This type of mentoring has been the predominant form of mentoring in most organizations. Dziczkowski (2013) suggested that the mentor functioned to address the needs of the mentee but could be transformed and the role could match what the mentor needed. This type of transformation suggested mentoring expands into different, versatile, and unique forms of mentoring, including reverse mentoring. In many businesses and organizations reverse mentoring has taken root and is being implemented due to a younger, technically savvy workforce (Murrell et al., 2008). This was primarily due to leadership wanting to assist seasoned employees in understanding new ideas, technology, and the changing global marketplace (Kram & Hall 1996; Mirvis, 1996). As the practicality of reverse mentoring grew, teaching other tasks have expanded as technology and media platforms have grown (Morris, 2017). Murphy (2012) explained a different take on traditional mentoring, like reverse mentoring, could heighten organizational success, foster unique mentoring relationships, and increase motivation and innovation within the organization. However, due to the age differences often found between the reverse mentor and the mentee have a difficult time trusting and respective reverse mentors due to the age differences and years of experience the mentee has compared to their reverse mentors (Chen, 2013, 2014).

Reciprocal Mentoring

Haggard et al. (2011) suggested there were three attributes distinguished mentoring from other kinds of relationships: reciprocity (mutuality of social exchanges as opposed to a one-way relationship); lasting benefits as a result of a learning partnership; and consistent interactions over time. In the educational arena, reciprocal mentoring, also known as co-mentoring and reverse mentoring, is referenced as a form of peer mentoring in which peers interact as both mentor and mentee, allowing peers to maintain an equal status (Bruffee, 1999). When engaging in reverse mentoring, Richardson (2021) explains that the junior teacher takes on the role of mentor while the senior teacher is the mentee. Reverse mentoring addresses the areas of technology, addressing generational gaps, employee retention, and addressing equity awareness. However, the belief that mentor teachers must be older or more senior, than the mentee is not necessarily true, especially when using the reciprocal or reverse mentoring process (Richardson, 2021). Bessette's (2015) article, *Reciprocal mentoring: Rethinking the Traditional Model,* was based on the research of Maki and Preston (2015), presented at the NASPA conference in Baltimore on reciprocal mentoring. She states that even though the concept of reciprocal mentoring was not new in education, Maki and Preston (2015), established it had not been

incorporated into higher education. Their problem of study focused on the lack of women leaders in higher education, which they thought was corrected using informal mentoring rather than hierarchical mentoring. They clarified reciprocal mentoring could eliminate the burden that hitherto was on the mentor in a hierarchical mentorship setting as the relationship is mutually beneficial to the mentor and mentee (Bessette, 2015).

In one longitudinal study, Paris (2013) described a reciprocal mentoring program that was developed within the School of Education at Edith Cowan University (ECU), Perth, over the period 2005 to 2010. In her research, she defined reciprocal mentoring as a "departure from traditional mentoring in that two skilled professionals are matched with each other according to skills set and needs. Each participant in the partnership has something valuable to offer the other, and each act in the twin roles of mentor and mentee at various times during the relationship" (p. 14). Additionally, she reported a departure from the mentoring relationship that existed in 2004–2005, in which a graduating teacher received support during his/her first year of teaching. Beyond this first year, however, this relationship began to wane and there was a need for the feature of reciprocity during the 2006–2007 school year. For every year of implementation, the mentoring model kept transforming to the extent that by 2009, other students other than those from visual arts were included, and "the concept of two equal participants mentoring and being mentored by the other" emerged (p. 19). For the purpose of this article, reciprocal mentoring is defined as a learning partnership between individuals of equal status, who share common visions, and goals, and contribute to the learning experience of one another. Of important to note this symbiotic relationship exhibits a willingness to share knowledge and skills, expertise, and joint accountability for learning outcomes.

Methods

We used a mixed-method case study utilizing a convergent design. The school, which was the area of study, was implementing a school leadership team and innovative practices in an attempt to improve school culture, student outcomes, and learning environments. In addition, the selected school site implemented the different components of PLCs in an effort to strengthen collaboration and improve school culture. Through this study reciprocal mentoring emerged as the key to the internal partnership success. Purposefully sampled participants were used based on the faculty of the school. Only 18 of the 23 surveys were returned.

The study was conducted to determine perceived program outcomes and if school culture and student learning outcomes improved by determining the perceptions of faculty regarding collegial relationships, trust, and team-building skills as a foundation for authentic collaboration. The qualitative data used in this case study were collected through in-depth interviews and surveys. The quantitative data were collected over a 13-month period. The principal routinely requested the same survey at the end of each school year to assist with the effectiveness of the principal in areas of leadership, management, communication, and community relations. The survey contained 39 questions: however, for the purpose of this project, only seven questions from the survey were relevant relating to school climate. An example question included "Whether or not the school was a good place to work" and "Opportunity to provide input on school matters that affect them." The options included 1=*rarely*, 2=*sometimes*, 3=*usually*, and 4=*almost always*, on a Likert-type scale.

Findings

The "heart of the study" is based on the findings regarding the cooperation and collaboration data analysis from the previous year. Regarding the area of cooperation and collaboration with questions 4–7, 44% of respondents report *almost always* and 13% report *usually* spending time with the grade level to plan lessons for a total of 69%. Interestingly, a total of 67% also revealed they *almost always* and *usually* plan in isolation revealing a startling contradiction of planning time. Furthermore, 43% of the respondents revealed they *sometimes* or *rarely* spent time planning with resource teachers supporting isolation planning. This revelation from the data analysis prompted the building of the PLC and reciprocal mentoring.

The most relevant findings from this project stemmed from a new positive school climate, an atmosphere of trust and camaraderie, and the building of teams through reciprocal mentoring and coaching. The internal and external partnerships were strong and solid demonstrating the willingness to support each other by giving up their own planning period to allow a peer to learn from another team member through vertical planning and peer coaching.

Reciprocal Mentoring Partnership

The beginning of this reciprocal mentoring partnership was initiated through school-improvement efforts and the need to deepen the understanding of the relationship between implementing change, school culture, and student learning. Initially, the partnership was formed with the purpose of improving the school climate by determining the perceptions of the faculty concerning collegial relationships, camaraderie, and team-building skills each partner believed that an equal sense of internal accountability must be established for building educator capacity for change, innovation, and continuous improvement required a significant amount of professional learning among all parties. To accomplish this capacity building, commitment to creating PLCs and fostering a collaborative culture were identified as the keys to changing practice and ultimately affected student learning. The vision, investment, and dedication of the partnership in building professional capacity supported the sustainability of implemented innovations and change efforts over time (Andrews & Crowther, 2006; Booth & Roswell, 2007; Louis, 2007).

Professional Goals Alignment

Partner agreement on common areas of improvement, goals, and steps to accomplish change successfully within the school was critical. School data lead the partners to focus on how to improve teaching and learning. Together, the emphasis was decidedly on building positive relationships, trust, and learning communities within the organization. Providing networking opportunities for teachers to connect through collegial planning, analyzing evidence of student learning, and developing strategies for improvement was imperative. This type of collaborative inquiry strengthened their skills to build capacity for change. We believed that PLCs would foster efforts toward collegial involvement and the development of collaborative cultures (DuFour et al., 2005; Fullan, 2007; Louis, 2007).

Through this mutual understanding, professional learning communities were created and designed as an ongoing process that helped refine individual and collective practices (DuFour, 2004; Fullan et al., 2014; Hord, 2004; Louis, 2007) Of greater importance, the partners diligently linked the idea of collective efficacy of the teachers to improve their practice and for them to realize that professional learning impacted student outcomes. Professional learning was organized around shared goals to foster a collaborative culture on increasing the effectiveness of their teaching practice and become a community of learners.

Having shared goals and a bridge of trust between partners and between administrators and teachers is essential. We had a long professional career together and shared a personal level of friendship. Working together and implementing reciprocal mentoring with each other was easy because of a trusting relationship. However, not all mentors/mentees can be paired with someone they trust or even know. Partnerships may start with a blank slate. If they have respect at the human level for one another and find each other credible, the trust will begin to grow. Integrity is the main staple for credibility and "trust is the glue of life. It is the most essential ingredient in effective communication and remains the foundational principle that holds all relationships together (Covey, 2013).

Collective Leadership

Leadership is a highly complex idea. With the plethora of accountability issues and spawning of a global pandemic, it has become apparent the school leadership connection is gaining momentum in the role of importance in impacting student learning, and the relationship it plays in improving the school's culture and sustaining educational change. Ultimately, leadership and leadership styles influenced the formation of school goals, culture, structures, and classroom conditions (Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood et al., 2006). These factors were connected to the success of the school and directly responsible for the learning experiences of students.

The partnership agreed transformational leadership was the form of shared leadership to invest our effort in and would impact change through the involvement of the entire organization (Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2004). Leithwood et al. (2004) stated that a transformational leader's desire is to increase the capacity of others to produce organizational learning. This creates a climate conducive to collegial engagement in continuous learning within the organization. Through this idea of shared leadership between the partners that a developed plan emerged which included job-embedded professional development based on the practice of authentic collaboration among the faculty we were training. The professional development would consist of specifics on how to collaborate effectively with each other based on commitment, building trust, collegial relationships, and team development skills. In addition, participants would be asked to collaborate by reviewing student work samples, observing peers teaching, and completing instructional rounds with a focus on student learning.

Collaborative Learning Relationships

Collaborative learning and collaboration provided the path the partners used in conceptualizing the learning needs of the schools and the co-construction of shared meaning

(Johnson, 2013). The key aspect to the success of the partnership revolved around collaboration and consensus around shared knowledge and skills. An example of this collaboration was evident during a debriefing and discussion, the researchers realized the building leadership team did not understand the difference between collaboration and cooperation. Being cooperative is collegial; whereas, collaboration is when two or more share a common goal and work together to accomplish it. Collaboration is a much deeper process and is supported by reflective thinking. Throughout the research projects, this practice of reflective thinking played a strategic role in solving problems and developing solutions for change and innovation. The reciprocal mentoring process allowed both the mentor and mentee to guide the reflective learning process at various times and stages of the research projects. The results we found through reciprocal mentoring in our partnership provided teachers and administrators with information to improve and model effective cooperative and collaborative practices to sustain positive and effective learning environments.

Conclusion

As researchers, we found reciprocal mentoring removed the hierarchical layers attached to traditional mentoring and stimulated a synergistic effect allowing the partners to draw experience and expertise from one another. Ideas, issues, topics, and even solutions to problems were generated through this process and is our belief that the reciprocal approach increased our individual knowledge base and made a difference in our collective practices as we conducted our research. In the past, school leaders have worked independently within their schools, often lacking a mentor or reaching out as a resource. Through the approach, rather than working in isolation, reciprocal mentoring promotes networking, professional learning and growth, leadership knowledge, and skill development which can help to foster collaborative problem-solving. Learning from each other about our practice provided growth opportunities to apply our knowledge in other contexts. Of importance to note, there was no level of power or power struggle between the researchers, and both shared the belief that fostering a collaborative relationship was necessary to increase our effectiveness in establishing productive learning environments. The strong ties embedded in reciprocal mentoring which are connected to mutual expectations, trust, and obligations of respective responsibilities promote positive norms leading to relational trust in our collective work.

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