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The purpose of this study was to learn about athletic coaches' and principals' visions, beliefs, philosophies, and wisdom, as well as to examine what I, as a principal transforming a low performing school, could learn from them.

I conducted in-depth interviews with six coaches and six principals and observed two principals. During my observations, I focused on collecting data that pertained to philosophies and beliefs, vision, and wisdom of their work. I was also a participant in my study, keeping a personal journey of my work and how the interviews and observations were impacting that work.

The participants' data showed common themes that reflect items to which successful coaches and principals attend. Themes included the importance of communication; a philosophy of "kids first"; and a focus on modeling, leading, and teaching. Additionally, a theme from the principals was the importance of relationships. Coaches regularly cited the necessity of accountability.

The study concludes with lessons for principals and recommendation for future research.

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM COACHES AND PRINCIPALS

by

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Committee Chair

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To Mary Nelson See and Colleen Thomas,
strong ladies who taught their children to never give up

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation, written by Jennifer Reed, has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

As educators, our tendency is to primarily read literature in our own field. Similarly, as educational leaders we are likely to primarily read about leaders and leadership in education. This likely holds true whether we serve as principals, superintendents, or in other educational leadership positions. Yet it seems that for all of our reading about educational leadership, the leadership of schools and school districts is not improving significantly. Perhaps this is because leadership is not about the leader *per se*. Leadership is not about the leader alone. Leadership is about the connection the leader and the leader's teammates have with each other. It is about the emotional bonds that exist between the leader and their constituents. Exemplary leaders know that they must attend to the needs, and focus on the capabilities of their constituents if they are going to get extraordinary things accomplished (Kouzes & Posner, 2010). Good leaders also know that they must coach constituents, "because no one ever got to be the best at anything without the constructive feedback, probing questions, and active teaching of respected coaches" (Kouzes & Posner, 2010, p. 264). Research shows that coaching is one of the most effective strategies for accelerating the development of high potentials (Kouzes & Posner, 2010). If coaching has such a strong impact, then further study of athletic coaches may well be warranted. Additionally, similar to how leaders cannot lead alone, they cannot learn alone either. Leaders need to learn from one another and thus,

further study of the principal sector is also warranted. This study will examine what can be learned about educational leadership from studying the leadership of athletic coaches and the leadership of principals.

The leadership literature contains a number of theorists who have greatly influenced leadership practice in K-12 education. Peter Block frames leadership as the act of effective questioning. For Block, critical leadership skills include convening critical discussions, naming the question, focusing discussion on learning as opposed to premature closure on solutions, and using strategies for participative design of solutions (Block, 2003). Marcus Buckingham and Donald Clifton (2001) suggest that to build a “strengths based” organization, a leader should spend a great deal of time selecting the right people up front, focus training on building identified strengths, and avoid promoting people to positions where their strengths are not an asset. Michael Fullan’s contribution to the theory on leadership is expansive but has also focused on the process of change and leadership for change. Fullan (2001) identifies five characteristics of effective leadership for change: moral purpose; understanding the change process; strong relationship; knowledge sharing; and coherence. Richard Elmore (2000) provides a unique perspective on the role of leadership. Elmore’s solution is an organization that distributes the responsibility of leadership. Elmore calls for the use of distributed models of leadership as opposed to models that look only to the principal to provide all of the leadership for the school. The respected leadership theorists all see the need to focus on developing people around the leader in some capacity. Just as coaches lead and develop those around them in the athletic sector.

Leadership is essential in the athletic sector. John Wooden is one of the most respected coaches in the history of sports. He is respected not only for his coaching abilities but his leadership abilities as well. Wooden believed that a leader shapes--even sets--the fundamental values and ideals, attitudes, and behavior that flow through and then define an organization (Wooden & Jamison, 2007). Wooden utilized his Pyramid of Success that contains 15 blocks of personal characteristics to explain and model leadership. When interested individuals asked him what his leadership was all about at its core, he replied, "My definition of success and the Pyramid that defines how to achieve it encompass everything I do as a coach, teacher, and leader" (Wooden & Jamison, 2007, p. 35). Wooden's Pyramid of Success has valuable leadership lessons for leaders in all sectors.

Dean Smith is another very well respected coach. In 2000, an ESPN panel of experts named him one of the seven greatest coaches of the 20th century in any sport (Smith, Bell, & Kilgo, 2004). Dean Smith had many principles that he stood for as a coach but one of the most important to him was practicing. He believed that practicing was the most important part of the North Carolina basketball program. Dean also believed that the best leaders insist on practice time that consists of training and development, coaching, mentoring, and performance improvement of their people and themselves (Smith et al., 2005). Dean Smith believed in continuous practice and learning. The principle of continuous practice and learning can be applied to school leadership. Leadership can be a difficult subject to master because often there are no specifics that can be taught (Phillips, 1992). Skilled leadership can be even more arduous

to implement because it involves failure, pain, and discomfort (Phillips, 1992). The study of leadership remains incomplete. There are no sets of rules or formulas for leaders to follow, there are only guidelines and concepts, perceptions and ideas, abstractions and generalities (Phillips, 1992). The art of leading people is difficult to master and teach. Successful leadership can be found in various sectors. A study of leadership in the principal and athletic coaching sectors can provide principals with new wisdom and different beliefs that can help them improve their practice. This study investigated the following research questions:

1. What are the leadership vision, beliefs, philosophies, and wisdom of the selected coaches?
2. What are the leadership beliefs and philosophies, vision and wisdom of the selected school principals?
3. What can be learned from the leadership beliefs and philosophies, vision and wisdom of the selected coaches that can inform the work of a principal transforming a school?
4. What can be learned from the leadership beliefs and philosophies, vision and wisdom of the selected principals that can inform the work of a principal transforming a school?
5. How do my leadership beliefs and philosophies, vision and wisdom compare to the beliefs and philosophies, vision and wisdom of the coaches?
6. How do my leadership beliefs and philosophies, vision, and wisdom compare to the beliefs and philosophies, vision and wisdom of the selected principals?

In Chapter II, I review the need for leadership, the types of leadership, key characteristics of educational leaders, the effective 21st Century principal, and examine coaches as leaders. Chapter III describes my research questions, conceptual framework, research, and data analysis. In Chapter IV I present and analyze the data collected from the principals and coaches. Chapter V is the composite of my real world leadership experience while transforming a low performing elementary school.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

The Need for Leadership

The evidence of the need for leadership is all around us. The need for leadership can be seen in various places in our daily lives. Bernard M. Bass authored *The Bass Handbook of Leadership* and he was one of the founders of the social scientific investigation of leaders and leadership. Bass's knowledge of leadership and related topics were truly encyclopedic. He understood the need for leadership in our schools, businesses, social groups, religious organizations and public agencies. It is clear that leadership makes the difference (Bass, 2008). Leadership can be good, as when a CEO of a company calls a department together to announce that a quota was met but another company is beginning to produce challenges. Leadership can be better, as when a coach sums up what he and his team feel will be needed to win a game. It can be best, as when a school leader senses and articulates the school's pressing needs and mobilizes the teachers into effective action. Groups of people in organizations need a person to take a leadership role. It is good for human beings that "leadership has been built into the human psyche because of the long period we need to be nurtured by parents for our survival" (Bass, 2008, p. 3). Bernard Bass (2008) also explains that how we think and behave as leaders and followers when we reach adulthood is still likely to be affected by our earlier relations with our parents, as well as by our genetic makeup. Thus, it is not

surprising that leadership is a universal phenomenon. Leadership is a universal phenomenon that involves the study of patterns of behavior.

A Historical Overview of Leadership Behaviors

Bass found that the patterns of behavior that are regarded as acceptable in leaders differ from time to time and from one culture to another, although there are some surprising commonalities. H. L. Smith and Krueger (1933) cited various anthropological reports on primitive groups in Australia, Fiji, New Guinea, the Congo, and elsewhere and concluded that leadership occurs among all people, regardless of culture, be they isolated Indian villagers, nomads of the Eurasian steppes, or Polynesian fisher folk. Lewis (1974) determined from an anthropological review, that even when a society does not have institutionalized chiefs, rulers, or elected officials, there are always leaders who initiate action and play central roles in the group's decision making. So, we know from history that no societies are known that do not have leadership in some aspects of their social life, although many may lack a single overall leader to make and enforce decisions (Bass, 2008). Such shared leadership is now representative of many scholarly and practical ideas about organizational life in the twenty-first century (Bass, 2008). The twenty-first century seems to be the age of information, when no member of a group has all the expertise and experience to help the group to reach its goals (Bass, 2008). Examining types of leadership can help a group reach its goals. Leadership in organizations has changed drastically in the history of leadership.

A Historical Overview of the Various Types of Leadership in Organizations

Throughout history, the presentations of types of leaders in organizations and institutions coincided with the appearance of essays on effective management (Bass, 2008). J. H. Burns (1934) proposed the following types of leaders: the intellectual, the business type, the adroit diplomat, the leader of a small group, the mass leader, and the administrator. Bogardus (1918) distinguished four types of organizational and institutional leaders: (1) the autocratic type, who is in the office in a powerful organization; (2) the democratic type, who represents the interests of a group; (3) the executive type, who is granted leadership because they get things done; and (4) the reflective-intellectual type, who may find it challenging to get a group to follow them. Sanderson and Nafe (1929) proposed four types of leaders: (1) the static leader who is a professional or scientific person and their work influences the thoughts of others; (2) the executive leader exercises control through authority and the power of the position; (3) the professional leader stimulates followers to develop and use their own abilities; (4) the group leader represents the interests of group members. Bartlett (1926) proposed a threefold classification.

Bartlett's (1926) threefold classification was as follows: (1) institutional leaders are established because of the prestige of their position; (2) dominative leaders gain and maintain their position with the use of power and influence; and (3) persuasive leaders are able to sway their followers with their influence. Weber (1947) delineated three types of legitimate authority in organizations and institutions. Each type was associated with a specific type of leadership:

- Bureaucratic leaders: their authority is based on the legality of normative rules and they operate with a staff of deputized officials.
- Patrimonial leaders: these leaders operate with a staff of family or relatives rather than officials. They are supported by traditional authority that rests on immemorial traditions.
- Charismatic leaders: these leaders operate with a staff of disciples and enthusiasts. These leaders tend to sponsor causes and revolutions. They are supported by the normative pattern revealed by them.

“House and Adidas (1995) equated charismatic with transformational leaders” (Bass, 2008, p. 3), but Bass (1985) suggested that “charismatic and inspirational leaders formed a single factor differentiated from the transformational factors of intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration” (as cited in Bass, 2008, p. 30). Jennings (1960) typed these charismatic and patrimonial leaders differently. Jennings believed that the great men who break rules and value creativity are supermen. Jennings also believed that those who are dedicated to great and noble causes are heroes; and those who are motivated to dominate others are princes. Jennings thought that princes could maximize their power or be manipulators. Jennings also thought that heroes come in many varieties, including heroes of consumption, labor, production, risk-taking, and even war heroes. According to Jennings, supermen did not always seek power to dominate others. Commentators have noted that types of leadership are classifiable “according to the model of organization in which the leadership occurs” (Bass, 2008, p. 30).

Golembiewski (1967) proposed that the collegial model of organization permits leadership to pass from one individual to another within the organization. The traditional model of leadership implies that there is a hierarchy of authoritative relationships and leadership is retained within the positions established by the hierarchy. On the basis of John Dewey's philosophy and a search of the literature, Lippitt (1999) proposed six types of leaders of organizations, according to their priorities:

1. Inventor: developing new ideas, services, and products
2. Catalyst: gaining market share and customers
3. Developer: creating systems for high performance
4. Performer: improving processes for effective use of resources
5. Protector: building a committed workforce and supporting culture, values, and identity
6. Challenger: identifying strategic options and positioning the organization for the future

Bass (2008) found that in the U.S. industry, task-oriented leaders dominated production in the 1940s because everything that was produced could be easily sold. In the 1950s these types of leaders gave way to relations-oriented leaders. Relations-oriented leaders had to find markets for what was produced "in an 'other-oriented' nation of conformists" (Bass, 2008, p. 31). In the late 1960s and 1970s self-oriented leaders emerged during the "me too" generation of drugs and flower children. Between 1980 and 2005, increased task-orientation was reflected in the start-ups in electronics and biotech firms (Bass, 2008). What will the ideal 21st century organizational leader look like? The

ideal 21st century organizational leader will need to think locally and act globally, replace bureaucracy with a community of responsibility, communicate a very strong sense of mission, and still value the distribution of power, inclusiveness, and diversity (Bass, 2008). Educational leaders in the twenty first century could benefit from analyzing different leadership concepts and definitions.

Leadership Definitions

Different definitions and concepts of leadership have been presented in countless essays and discussions (Bass, 2008). Rost (1993) found 221 definitions of leadership in 587 publications he examined. From the 1920s to the 21st century, the definitions of leadership have changed:

- 1920s: the leader focused on inducing obedience, respect, loyalty and cooperation
- 1930s: leadership was a process through which many were organized to move in a specific direction
- 1940s: the leader focused on the ability to persuade and direct beyond the effects of power, position, or circumstances
- 1950s: leaders focused on groups and the authority was accorded to leaders by the group members
- 1960s: the leader focused on influence to move others in a shared direction
- 1970s: the leader's influence was seen as discretionary and as varying from one member to another

- 1980s: leadership was considered as inspiring others to take some purposeful action
- 1990s: leadership was based on influence and the followers who intended to make real changes that reflected their common purposes
- First decade of the 21st century: the leader is seen as the person most responsible and accountable for the organization's actions (Bass, 2008)

It is important to examine the changes of the definition of leadership throughout history because defining leadership can help a group reach its goals. McFarland, Senn, and Childress (1993) considered six themes of leadership that are most appropriate for the 21st century: (a) Leadership is no longer the exclusive domain of the top boss; (b) Leadership facilitates excellence in others; (c) Leadership is not the same as management; (d) Leadership has a sensitive, humanistic dimension; (e) Leaders need to take a holistic approach, applying a variety of qualities, skills, and capabilities; and (f). Leadership is the mastery of anticipating, initiating, and implementing change.

Regardless of all the definitions from the 1920s to the 21st century, the definitions most commonly used tend to concentrate on the leader as a person, on the behavior of the leader, on the effects of the leader, and on the interaction process between the leader and the led (Bass, 2008). While there are well over 200 definitions of leadership, there is much more to leadership than a simple definition. According to Bass (2008), a simple model of leadership may be a list of different types of leaders grouped according to one or more characteristics about them. This leads to the discussion of types and taxonomies of leadership.

Types and Taxonomies of Leadership

Taxonomy classifies leadership according to their mutual relationships, similarities, and differences (Bass, 2008). Bass also explains that the model or taxonomy describes but does not explain the relationships, as would a theory. Early scholars defined leadership and then usually developed a handy classification (Bass, 2008). The classification was either a simple typing of leaders or a multilayered taxonomy with formal rules for classifying the leaders by their roles, perceptions, cognitions, behaviors, traits, characteristics, qualities, and abilities (Bass, 2008). The understanding of behaviors, traits, characteristics, qualities, and abilities is important because a leader possesses all of these and this affects the organization. There are many different types of leaders. Typology has been utilized in leadership as far back in history as Plato.

In *The Republic* Plato offered three types of leaders of the polity:

1. The philosopher-statesman: to rule the republic with reason and justice
2. The military commander: to defend the state and enforce its will
3. The businessman: to provide for citizens' material needs and to satisfy their lower appetites (Bass, 2008).

According to Bass (2008), this early taxonomy has been followed by a long line of taxonomies of leadership, some of which are probably currently being formulated at this moment. However, a respite from new leadership typologies is unlikely in the foreseeable future, for although typologies lack rigor, they are appealing, convenient, easy to discuss, comprehend, and easy to remember (Bass, 2008). One typology that continues to survive is formal leaders versus informal leaders.

Bass (2008) explains that formal leaders are in positions that provide them with legitimacy and the power to lead. Informal leaders “influence others as a consequence of their personal attributes and the esteem they are accorded” (Bass, 2008, p. 27). Pielstick (2000) found that when formal leaders are compared to informal leaders, informal leaders are seen to be somewhat more communicative, relations-oriented, authentic, and self-confident. The informal leader is one who has a tendency to adapt his or her style of performance to the group’s needs (Bass, 2008). There are times when the school principal has to adapt to the needs of the stakeholders and needs to be an informal leader. Informal leaders may emerge in newly formed groups without structure-in small groups and in organizations independently of their positions (Bryman, 1992). There are various types of leadership in small groups.

Small Group Leadership

Bass (2008) found that leaders of small groups have been classified in many ways. Leaders of small groups are often classified according to their different functions, roles, and behaviors. Pigors (1936) observed that leaders in groups either act as masters or educators. Cattell and Stice (1954) identified four types of leader in experimental groups: (1) persistent, momentary problem solvers, who have a high rate of interaction; (2) salient leaders, who observers think exert the most powerful influence on the group; (3) sociometric leaders, who are nominated by their peers; and (4) elected leaders. Bales and Slater (1955) observed that the leader performs two essential functions; one function is associated with productivity, and the second function is concerned with socioemotional support of the group members. Benne and Sheats (1948) proposed that group members

who exert leadership play three types of functional roles: (a) group-task roles, such as an initiator, gatekeeper, and summarizer; (b) group-building and group-maintenance roles, such as harmonizer, supporter, and tension reducer; and (c) individual roles, such as blocker, pleader, and monopolizer. Bales (1958) found that the first two roles are the major functions of leadership in small experimental groups. According to Hemphill (1949), the leader's behavior could be typed depending on how much the leader set group goals with the members, helped them to reach the goals, coordinated their efforts, helped them fit in to the group, expressed interest in the group, and showed humanness.

Another point of view was developed by Roby in 1961. Roby developed a mathematical model of the functions of leadership. The mathematical model was based on response units and information load. Roby developed the following classification of leadership functions: (a) to bring about congruence of goals among the members; (b) to balance the group's resources and capabilities with environmental demands; (c) to provide group structure that would focus information effectively on solving the problems; and (d) to make certain that all needed information is available at a decision center when required. Schutz (1961) felt the functions of leadership could be classified as:

1. To establish and recognize a hierarchy of group goals and values
2. To recognize and integrate the various cognitive styles that exist in group members
3. To maximize the utilization of different group members' abilities
4. To help members solve problems that involve adapting to external realities as well as fulfilling interpersonal needs of group members.

In 1949, Levine identified four types of leaders: (a) the charismatic leader, who helps the group to rally around a common goal but tends to be dogmatically rigid; (b) the organizational leader, who emphasizes effective action and focuses on driving people; (c) the intellectual leader, who usually lacks skills in attracting people; and (d) the informal leader, a leader who adapts their style to the group's needs. In 1951, Clarke proposed three types of leaders that could be applicable to small groups: (a) popular leaders who would influence people because of their unique combination of personality traits or their ability; (b) group leaders, who understand different personalities of group members and enable the group members to achieve satisfying experiences; and (c) indigenous leaders who help in specific situations when group members seek support and guidance.

Getzels and Cuba (1957) offered three types of leadership. Two of the types of leadership are associated with separate dimensions of group activity: (a) nomothetic leadership, which is involved with the expectations and roles that help to define the normative dimensions of activities groups are involved in; (b) ideographic leadership, which is associated with individual needs and dispositions of group members that define the personal dimensions of the group activity; and (c) synthetic leadership, which reconciles conflicting demands that arise from the two contrasting subgroups within a group. Bowers and Seashore (1967) maintained that the functions of leadership are to support members, facilitate interaction of work, and place and emphasis on goals. Cattell (1957) observed that the leader performs the following functions:

- Maintaining the group
- Upholding roles and status satisfaction

- Maintaining task satisfaction
- Keeping ethical (norm) satisfaction
- Selecting and clarifying goals
- Finding and clarifying means of attaining goals

In 1976 Oliverson utilized a factor analysis of behavioral ratings. Oliverson's factor analysis identified four types of leaders in 24 encounter groups: (a) technical, (b) charismatic, (c) caring-interpersonal, and (d) peer-oriented. The technical leader focuses on a cognitive approach, the charismatic leader focuses on their impressive attributes, and the caring-interpersonal and peer-oriented leader focuses on caring, friendship, and the facilitation of interpersonal relations. Lieberman, Yalom, and Miles (1973) formulated three types of group leaders after observing 16 group-therapy leaders of various theoretical persuasions.

The three types of group leaders that Lieberman et al. (1973) formulated are (a) charismatic energizers who emphasize stimulation; (b) providers, who exhibit high levels of caring and cognitive behavior; and (c) social engineers who stress management of the group as a social system for finding intellectual meaning. There were three other styles (manager, impersonal, and laissez-faire) that were variants of the initial three.

Observations from the study showed that therapeutic change in participants was highest with providers and lowest with managers. Observations also showed that casualties were highest with energizers and impersonals and lowest with providers. Redl (1948) also studied observations of therapy groups and suggested that the leader may play the role of patriarch, tyrant, ideal, scapegoat, organizer, seducer, hero, and good or bad influence. In

1986 Komaki, Zlotnick, and Jensen provided a very sophisticated and rigorous approach to classifying the behavior of leaders on the basis of a minute-by-minute time sampling of coded observations in a small group setting. Their taxonomy was constructed to provide observers a way to categorize specific supervisory behaviors and it includes seven categories. The first three categories are derived from operant-conditioning theory and are related to effective supervision. The seven categories are (a) consequences of supervisees' performance, indicating knowledge of performance; (b) monitors of performance, involving collecting information; (c) performance antecedents, providing instructions for performance; (d) "own performance," referring to the supervisor's performance; (e) "work-related," referring to work but not performance; (f) "non-work-related," not pertaining to work; and (g) solitary, not interacting with others. The categories are all linked together. Analyses of the behavior of leaders are beneficial to how an organization functions. Much of the leadership in small groups has relevance for the leaders of a group within a larger organization (Bass, 2008). Also, there is a history regarding the various types of leadership in organizations and institutions.

Transformational leadership is another type of leadership.

James MacGregor Burns (1978) took perspectives from Maslow's needs hierarchy and from writing biographical studies of President Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy and first wrote about transformational and transactional leadership in his book entitled *Leadership*. Burns defined a transforming leader as one who:

1. Raises the followers' level of consciousness about the importance and value of designated outcomes and ways of reaching them;

2. Gets their followers to transcend their own self-interests for the sake of the team or organization;
3. Raises the follower's level of need on Maslow's hierarchy. The focus goes from lower-level concerns for safety and security to higher-level needs for achievement and self-actualization. (Bass, 2008).

Transforming leadership focuses on the organization, society, and the well-being of others. Transforming leaders focus on mutual interests with followers. They engage followers without using power, they use moral leadership. Transformational leaders transform individuals, groups, societies, and organizations (Bass, 2008). The transformational leader addresses the follower's sense of self-worth. Transformational leaders motivate their followers to do more than the followers originally intended or thought possible. The transformational leader achieves higher standards of performance and sets challenging expectations. Transformational leadership looks to higher purposes (Bass, 2008). Transactional leadership emphasizes the exchange that occurs between a leader and followers (Bass, 2008).

Transactional leadership involves direction from the leader or mutual discussion with the followers about requirements to reach desired objectives. Transactional leadership involves reaching objectives and it will appear psychologically or materially rewarding (Bass, 2008). If failure is not overlooked or forgiven, failure will bring disappointment, excuses, and dissatisfaction. If the transaction occurs and the needs of the leader and follower are met, and if the leader has the power to do so, he or she reinforces the successful performance (Bass, 2008). Up to the late 1970's, leadership

theory and empirical work were concentrated almost solely on the equivalent of transactional leadership. Today both transformational and transactional leadership have a wide range of applications, from police work and personal selling to teaching and nursing (Jolson, Dubinsky, & Yammarino et al. 1993). Educational leaders working to transform low performing schools are likely to focus on transformative characteristics.

Key Characteristics of Educational Leaders

Repeatedly, studies of school effectiveness have shown that the principal's ability to manage and lead is the key to a school's effectiveness (Austin & Reynold, 1990). Studies have also shown that the school leader is the key person to initiate improvement and change (Fullan, 1991). Effective school leaders must contend with multiple demands placed on them each day. School leaders must be instructional leaders, administrators, lead teachers, moral leaders, role models, community workers, social service providers, and even fundraisers (Tewel, 1986). The leader will find that time for reflection on needed systematic changes in the school is hard to find (Tewel, 1986). The school leader must also be knowledgeable about effective instruction and be able to evaluate it (Schlechty, 2005). The school leader must understand that commitment to continuous improvement requires a commitment to continuous learning (Schlechty, 2005). Peter Drucker (1996) defined a leader as "someone with followers. Without followers there can be no leader" (p. xii). Thus, leadership is as "simple and as complex" as establishing a clear direction for people throughout the organization and influencing them to move in that direction (Seashore Louis, Leithwood, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2010, p. 6). School principals must be able to manage and lead.

Manager and Leader

A line of reasoning draws a sharp distinction between leadership and management (Bass, 2008). Leadership can be seen as the discretionary activities and processes that are beyond the manager's role requirements as mandated by regulations, rules, and procedures (Bass, 2008). According to Osborn, Hunt, & Jauch (1980), leadership is whatever discretionary actions are needed to solve the problems that a group faces within the large system. Leadership can also fit with an organismic view of organizations and management with a mechanistic view (Terry, 1995). The environment of managers is more static and stable while the environment of leaders is more hectic (Bhatia, 1995). Managers are more transactional and leaders are more transformational (Bass, 2008). Managers do things correctly and leaders do more correct things (Parry, 1996). However, in 1986, Grove rejected these distinctions, stating that the manager who is effective must have the clarity of purpose and motivation of the effective leader. Gardner (1986) agreed:

Every time I encounter an utterly first-class manager, he turns out to have quite a lot of leader in him . . . even the most visionary leader will be faced on occasion with decisions every manager faces: when to take a short-term loss to achieve a long-term gain, how to allocate scarce resources among important goals, whom to trust with delicate assignment. (p. 7)

According to Gardner (1993), there is a distinction between the leader-manager and the routine manager.

Gardner's leader manager, unlike the routine manager, thinks long-term, can look beyond the organization he or she heads in order to influence others, and can look beyond

the organization he or she serves to see its relation to the larger system. The leader-manager emphasizes vision, values, motivation, and can cope with conflict. Gardner summed up leader-managers' tasks as: envisioning the goals for the organization; affirming values; motivating members of the organization; managing; achieving unity among members; explaining goals that need to be achieved; serving as a symbol; representing the group; and renewing the group. Gardner believed that leaders must be able to mediate, resolve conflicts, compromise, build teams, and build trust among people. For this, leaders required political skills as well as socioemotional competencies (Gardner, 1988). One can compare and contrast Gardner's leader, leader manager, and manager characteristics, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Leader, Leader Manager, and Manager Characteristics (Gardner, 1988)

Leader	Manager	Leader-Manager
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mediates • Resolves conflict • Compromises • Builds teams • Possesses political skills • Possesses socioemotional competencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deals with short-term loss • Allocates scarce resources • Deals with assignments • Task oriented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Envisions • Values • Motivates members • Copes with conflict • Manages • Achieves unity • Explains goals • Serves as a symbol • Represents the group • Renews the group • Thinks long-term • Influences others

Krantz and Gilmore (1990) suggested that management and leadership are completely different. Management is idealized as the technique for achieving and organization's objectives. Leadership is idealized as visionary, heroic, and mission-oriented. The modern leader-manager is more like a team coach who expects 100% team effort, seeks talented members for the organization, and motivates individuals (Conway, 1993). Parry (1996) also listed additional differences between leaders and managers. Leaders manage and managers lead, however, the two activities are not synonymous (Bass, 2008). Research has shown how the two are not synonymous.

Leaders facilitate interpersonal interaction and positive working relations; they also promote work that needs to be accomplished and the structuring of the task (Mann, 1965). Management functions of staffing, coordinating, and planning can provide leadership and all of the leadership activities can contribute to managing (Bass, 2008). However, if trust is a key to leadership, and competence in decision making is essential to building trust, then trust and competence are important in managing resource allocations (Ulmer, 1996). According to Zaleznik (1977), some managers do not lead and some leaders do not manage. Some leaders are authentic leaders and some are not (Bass, 2008). In the past century, there has been a decided change in both management and leadership (Bass, 2008). Leadership is path-finding and management is path-following (Bass, 2008). Leaders do the right things and managers do things right (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). According to Bennis (1989) and Bennis and Nanus (1985), leaders ask why and what while managers ask when and how. Leaders originate while managers imitate. Leaders challenge the status quo while managers accept the status quo.

Leaders tend to function in a higher domain of cognitive analysis, synthesis, and evaluation while managers tend to function in a lower cognitive domain of knowledge, comprehension, and application (Capozzoli, 1995). Leadership is concerned with adaptive or constructive change, establishing and changing directions, inspiring and motivating people, and aligning people (Kotter, 1990). According to Bass (2008), leaders' behaviors arouse followers' motives. Leaders are relations oriented and they set the direction for the organization. Leaders articulate a collective vision, infuse values, and set examples. Leaders take risks to further the organization's vision and they appeal to the self-concepts of their followers. Leaders inspire followers by exhibiting persistence, determination, and self-confidence. They influence their followers through the esteem their followers attribute to them. They show how much they value the group and they speak for the group. House (1995) found that followers internalize the leader's values, and identify with the group. This makes them more likely to continue with the leader. Management looks different than leadership.

House (1995) found that managers organize, plan, and arrange systems of control and administration. Managers hold positions of authority that is formal. The manager's position provides them with power to influence and obtain compliance from their subordinates. The subordinates follow directions from the manager and accept the manager's authority as long as the manager has legitimate power. Management is concerned with order and consistency, details, timelines, and resources needed for results. Managers plan, budget, and allocate staff members to fulfill goals (Kotter, 1990). The

school leader must be a leader and a manager. The school leader must also be strategic with their planning.

Strategic Leader

Strategic leadership is behavior that depends on combining perceptions of opportunities, analyses, cognitions, threats, and risk preferences (Bass, 2008). Some strategies that leaders use are from emergent perspectives that evolve (Bass, 2008). Mintzberg and Jorgenson (1987) found that other strategies used by leaders result from deliberate planning. It is possible that these may be only implicit in the minds of the leaders (Lewis, Morkel, et al., 1993). To classify strategic leaders, Lord and Maher (1993) applied the same taxonomy of four organizational strategies that were posited by Miles and Snow (1978). The four organizational strategies are:

1. Defenders: defenders stress efficiency and product stability
2. Prospectors: prospectors focus on product innovation and development
3. Analyzers: analyzers produce and market products developed by other organizations
4. Reactors: reactors fall behind their industry in adopting new products (Miles & Snow, 1978)

Organizations are more likely to be successful when their type of strategy matches the leaders' personality. Transferring this to school leadership, a defender school leader would focus on a school building that runs efficiently and focus on stability throughout the organization.

Farkas and De Backer (1996) put forth five strategies that could be pursued by the chief executive to manage success:

1. Act as the organization's number one strategist, envisioning the future and planning on how to get there
2. Focus on the organization's human assets. Analyze policies, programs, and principles about people
3. Find specific expertise to focus the organization's human assets
4. Create systems, rules, and procedures. Have values to control behavior and outcomes within boundaries
5. Act as a change agent to transform the organization from a bureaucracy into an organization that embraces change (Farkas & De Backer, 1996).

An important executive function is to remain alert to trends in one's own organization.

The school leader helps set and clarify the missions and goals for the organization (Bass, 2008). The school leader is responsible for establishing a vision for the school.

Leading with a Shared Educational Vision

Anyone can write a vision statement describing a better future for an organization. Developing a shared vision is more challenging because it requires dialogue, not monologue, and conversations, not presentations (Dufour & Marzano, 2011). Shared vision requires leaders who position themselves among those they serve rather than above those they serve (Dufour & Marzano, 2011). The effective leader must have the ability to articulate a realistic, credible, attractive vision of the future that connects to the hopes and dreams of those in the organization. Kouzes and Posner conducted a study of thousands

of people and they asked people to describe what they want in a leader. The answers from the people were very similar: honesty, competence, intelligence, supportiveness, and many other characteristics. However, the only striking difference in the responses came in one area: forward thinking. People want leaders who are thinking ahead and defining a better future (Kouzes & Posner, 2010).

A shared vision will impact the day-to-day work of people in an organization if people understand how their work contributes to a larger purpose. Effective leaders must continuously remind people of the importance of their work. The leader must remember that one of the most important motivators in any organization is the belief that the work being done is valuable and worthwhile (Dufour & Marzano, 2011). Effective leaders give the “gift of significance” (Bolman & Deal, 2001, p. 95) by helping people in the organization find meaning in their work. Effective leaders also help people in the organization understand that their work is linked to a higher purpose and then they celebrate its importance (Amabile & Kramer, 2010). The leader must also maintain constancy and clarity of purpose.

Maintaining Constancy and Clarity of Purpose

Maintaining clarity and constancy of purpose allows the leader to accomplish two major goals. First, it helps to reduce stress among staff, stress that arises from multiple priorities coupled with insufficient time to accomplish them (Blankstein, 2010). Tom Williams (2001) conducted a survey of elementary and secondary principals in Ontario and found that more than 80% will retire by 2009. Three of five of their top

“dissatisfiers” had to do with lack of time to perform their jobs properly. Most of them have since retired (Blankstein, 2010). Connelly and Tirozzi (2008) note that

Traditionally, assistant principals and teachers have stepped up to the plate, ready and willing to fill the shoes of a former principal. Now, in the face of an ever-increasing amount of responsibility placed on the shoulders of school leaders, many assistant principals and teachers are foregoing the opportunity to take over the top spot. (p. 1)

Reports from Australia also indicate that there are similar challenges as applications for the principalship continue to decline (Barty, Thomson, Blackmore, & Sachs, 2005). As one principal shared, “I feel like I need to be all things to all people, and district priorities shift like the desert sands. It can be overwhelming at times” (Blankstein, 2010, p. 43). Thus, it is important to adhere to the axiom of clarity and constancy of purpose. Clarity and constancy of purpose help provide continuity and coherence in an ever-changing landscape (Blankstein, 2010).

Clarity and constancy of purpose lead to greater success within the areas of focus. According to Alan Blankstein, there are several ways for school leaders to keep a clear and constant focus:

1. Focus on the positives of a project. Focus on milestones reached during a project. Celebrate successes along the way. Allow for experimentation and refinements when necessary. Empower people to continue efforts on their own in order to build momentum.
2. Systematically drop what should *not* be pursued. Involve stakeholders in creating a list of ideas to determine “what needs to be done that is not being

done now, and what can we quit doing so we can do what we need to do?”

(Schlechty, 1992, p. 106).

3. Develop a sense of urgency to the area of desired focus. Help people to “reframe” so they can focus on desired outcomes.
4. Provide continuous feedback utilizing data. Ensure that pertinent data flow directly to those involved because this is more powerful and focusing.
5. When it is necessary, timelines can be stretched to meet goals. It is better for the project to be completed successfully than to have many half-completed projects (Blankstein, 2010).

Effective school leaders continually clarify and focus on priorities that are aligned with a clear purpose. Effective school leaders must be aware of their external environment and how they influence those around them.

Leading with Influence

Successful leaders influence their followers and this brings about changes in their followers’ behavior and attitudes (Bass, 2008). In the same way, followers can influence the leader’s behavior and attitudes by modifying, accepting, or rejecting the leader’s influence (Bass, 2008). Leaders and followers matter to each other and their relationships with each other matter also (Bass, 2008). Good followers are like good leaders, good followers are transformational and committed to principles and purposes beyond themselves. It is suggested that to be a good leader, one needs to be a good follower (Bass, 2008). Litzinger and Schaefer (1982) suggest that the school for leadership is indeed followership, followership that is fully preserved within leadership,

but transformed for having moved beyond itself. The study of followers has always been second to the study of leaders (Bass, 2008). According to critical incidents obtained from 81 respondents in a study, good leadership is distinguished from bad leadership by the quality of the leaders' relations with the followers (Hollander & Kelly, 1990). Leaders need to be helped by their followers to understand the tasks and challenges they face (Bass, 2008). Followers should learn to challenge their leaders while respecting the leaders' authority (Hirschhorn, 1990).

The leader should understand that followers will give or withdraw their support (Hollander, 1997). Different leaders have different relationships with their followers and followers have different relationships with their leaders, so the exchanges will vary considerably. According to a survey in three British companies, the organizational culture affects what types of leaders are dominant and the leaders affect what types of followers are dominant (Brown & Thornborrow, 1996). Leaders command attention from their followers but followers can affect and constrain what the leader can do (Hollander, 1992). According to Rost (1993), leadership is not what the leader does but what the leaders and members of the organization do together to change the organization. Bennis (1999) agreed and explained that effective change in organizations requires an alliance between the leader and the members of the organization. Leadership and followership are reciprocal (Bass, 2008). It is important for the school leader to remember this as they want to influence the members of their organization in ways that bring about positive changes for students. The school leader should also be aware of external factors that could affect the internal organization.

Assessing the External Environment

Leader-follower relations within a group depend on real outside relationships, reference groups in the minds of both, and societal influences (Bass, 2008). According to Bass (2008), leaders who see economic externalities as most important tend to be more directive leaders. Leaders who believe social or political influences from the outside to be more important tend to be more participative. The surrounding organization and its size, structures, policies, and culture are important to consider in the leader-follower interactions. An organization and its culture influence what is expected of the leaders and what the leaders will do, the leaders also shape the organization and its culture to fit their needs. Environmental factors and cultural factors that are both external and internal influence how the leader interacts with members of the organization (Bass, 2008). The leader's discretionary and non-discretionary behaviors depend on environmental and organizational considerations (Bass, 2008). The leader must understand that equally important is assessing the culture within the organization.

Assessing the Culture

Culture is intertwined with the philosophy, purposes, functions, and structure of the organization (Bass, 2008). According to Schein (1992), an organizational culture is the language, stories, customs, traditions, and rites shared or held by its members. Schein also includes implicit standards and norms. An organization's culture contains values that are espoused, formal philosophy, and rules for getting along within the organization (Schein, 1992).

Schein also felt that organizational climate was a part of the organizational culture. Organizational climate is how members feel about how they interact with one another as well as others outside of the organization. Also included are the integrating of symbols, ideas, feelings, and images that represent the organization (Schein, 1992). Regardless of the research regarding organizational culture, one must understand that basic assumptions about the nature of time, space, reality, the environment, and human nature are often taken for granted by those who are embedded in an organization's culture (Bass, 2008). It is interesting to note that early in its development, an organization's culture is often the "glue" that holds the organization together as a source of identity and distinctive competence (Bass, 2008). However, in an organization's decline, it is often the culture that can become a constraint on innovation because the culture is focused on the organization's past glories (Schein, 1985). In 1993 Hatch provided a model of cultural dynamics that was based on a framework.

Hatch's framework involved the processes of manifestation, realization, symbolism, and interpretation. Hatch believed what members of the organization assumed to be true influenced their values. Their values would affect their assumptions and their assumptions are realized in artifacts. Symbols and interpretations would follow. A visionary culture is able to align its core values and their preservation in order "to reinforce its purposes and to stimulate progress towards its aspirations" (Collins, 1996, p. 19). In order to stimulate progress towards aspirations, a leader must have a strong understanding for working with people and empowering others. Empowerment is seen to

be of benefit to the empowering leader, their organization, and their followers (Bass, 2008).

Nurturing the Human Resource Side of Leadership

Empowering people benefits the organization because every member is valued for providing ideas, initiatives, and influence (Bass, 2008). Empowered people feel that they have a greater impact on their work and are often more satisfied with their work (Thomas & Tymon, 1994). Empowered people feel they have a greater impact on the organization (Brossoit, 2001). Burdett (1991) suggested that successful empowerment of others happens when leaders manage the context and not the individuals. Burdett (1991) also suggested that a common vision is required, organizational values have to be enunciated, and leaders must provide opportunities for action. An environment of support must be created and values such as high quality, good service, and excellence must be a focus (Bass, 2008). Randolph (1995) proposed that the most important factors in successful empowerment were sharing information about the organization, promoting an understanding of the information, building trust about sensitive information, and replacing “top down” administration with teams. School leaders must reflect on the role empowerment plays in their organization.

School leaders know that the majority of work in schools is accomplished through the efforts of the people working there. It is the leader’s responsibility to build capacity in individuals and teams to be leaders and learners. A risk free environment should be created so that teachers can be engaged in conversations and explore issues that are challenging, such opportunities develop teacher leaders. James Kouzes and Barry Posner

(2011) have researched leaders for over three decades with thousands of people regarding the following question: Just how do the leaders who are liked and admired make people feel? In analyzing themes expressed in over a thousand case examples Kouzes and Posner (2011) found ten words that were used most frequently:

1. Valued
2. Motivated
3. Enthusiastic
4. Challenged
5. Inspired
6. Capable
7. Supported
8. Powerful
9. Respected
10. Proud. (p. 27)

Every case was about a leader who uplifted a person's spirits. Every example was about how leaders who were admired strengthened people around them. Kouzes and Posner found that making people feel strong and capable is a clear action that leaders should take. Kouzes and Posner also found that people did not report a sense of awe because of the leader's personal brilliance. The people felt empowered because the leader was committed to helping them be successful in their work (Kouzes & Posner, 2010). The leader must create conditions that help people succeed. The leader also does not play a blame game when students are not learning, they have the strength to look at the problem and take responsibility (Collins, 2011). Teamwork helps create a culture of collegiality among teachers and also helps teachers to take responsibility for students' learning. Learning communities facilitate teamwork amongst teachers.

Empowering Learning Communities

The concept of a learning community can be found in the work of organizational theorists such as Peter Senge (1990), who articulates a view of the workplace as an organization. Learning communities in schools have key attributes that improve student achievement because there is a constant focus on enhancing student learning. According to Hirsh and Killion (2009), attributes of a learning community include: shared purpose, collaborative teams focused on learning, protocols as tools, action with experimentation and reflection, continuous improvement, and results orientation. Each of these key attributes enhances the learning community's success and improves student achievement.

Learning communities implemented correctly have an end result that is powerful because student achievement is affected in a positive way (Hirsch & Killion, 2009). Teachers collaborate together to improve instruction for *all* students. Hirsh and Killion's research has found that learning communities should meet a minimum of twice a week to discuss data and instructional strategies. Conversations should be heard about teaching, learning, students, and curriculum. The dialogue is about what students are supposed to learn. Teachers trust each other and feel comfortable sharing different perspectives. Teams should continually reflect on their practice. Teachers actually move beyond talk and focus on improving student achievement. The principal can continue to build the capacity of teachers by becoming a coach to teachers.

Coaching to Improve Instruction for Students

Successful leaders influence their followers and bring about changes in their followers' behavior and attitudes (Bass, 2008). At the same time, the leader's behavior

and attitude can be influenced by followers, depending upon whether the followers accept, modify, or reject the leader's influence. Leaders and followers matter to each other and the quality of relations between them matter (Bass, 2008). The principal can serve as a coach to teachers in the school building. The principal can provide strategies and feedback to improve instruction for students. The way the principal interacts with teachers can make or break the coaching relationship (Knight, 2011). Staff members should feel comfortable discussing changes that need to take place to improve student achievement. Staff members will feel more comfortable when the principal works beside them as an equal, "even if we know a lot about content and pedagogy and have impressive qualifications, experience, or post graduate degrees, people will not embrace learning with us unless they're comfortable working with us" (Knight, 2011, p. 18). Taking a partnership approach to leadership is a relatively new approach to school leaders.

The partnership approach grew out of themes that Jim Knight and colleagues repeatedly found in the literature from the fields of education, business, psychology, philosophy of science, and cultural anthropology (Knight, 2011). The repeated themes in the variety of literature were synthesized into seven partnership principles that describe a theory of interactions currently utilized by hundreds of coaches across North America and around the world (Knight, 2011). Identifying the seven partnership principles is important because the way a person acts grows naturally out of what they believe (Knight, 2011). The seven partnership principles are:

- Equality: the principal listens attentively as an equal
- Choice: ensuring that teachers have meaningful choices about learning
- Voice: teachers are free to express their enthusiasm and concerns
- Reflection: reflecting on what one is learning, with individual thought
- Dialogue: letting go of opinions and having open dialogue
- Praxis: applying new knowledge and skills
- Reciprocity: each learning interaction is an opportunity to learn

The principal as coach is an important topic for school improvement and improving student achievement. In fact, it can be viewed as simple as: schools won't improve until the average building leader begins to work cooperatively with teachers to meaningfully oversee and improve instruction (Schmoker, 2006). Mutual trust is a crucial component to developing relationships and in turn, improving instruction. The principal becomes the coach to the teacher when he actively listens, ensures that teachers have choices in making decisions, allows teachers to express concerns, and lets go of opinions. When the principal does this, open dialogue occurs, new knowledge can be applied, and each learning interaction can be an opportunity to learn. The principal should model reflection and continue to build trust with teachers.

Mutual trust should exist between all stakeholders and the leader. Leaders should trust their teachers to speak the truth and teachers must trust their leader to lead with integrity. Teachers will not openly express themselves if they fear their leader, "when blind spots exist, trusting and productive relationships make it possible for the unknown to be shared for the good of the team" (Hirsch & Killian, 2009, p. 465). Colleagues need

to be viewed as caring, cooperative, and intellectually curious. Upon listening to conversations among colleagues it should be clear that understanding and embracing differences is honored. There should be a continuous focus on developing people (Hirsch & Killian, 2009), just as a coach continues to develop team members. Offering intellectual stimulation supports the performance of all staff members in a school. The leader should encourage reflections and challenge staff members to examine assumptions about their work. Staff members need to be focused on rethinking how their work can be performed in order to improve student achievement. The principal should work to be a lead learner.

Coaching the Team

In Michael Fullan's (2014) book, *The Principal: Three Keys to Maximizing Impact*, Fullan makes a compelling case for principals to focus primarily on creating cultures of learning in their schools. Fullan explains that working with *teams* rather than individual teachers helps to create this culture (Fullan, 2014). Fullan's argument is backed by research conducted by the highly respected educators Richard Dufour and Robert Marzano (2009) who argue, "Time devoted to building the capacity of teachers to work in teams is far better spent than time devoted to observing individual teachers" (p. 67, as cited in Fullan, 2014, p. 40). Building the capacity of teacher teams is what Elena Aguilar advocates for in her latest book, *The Art of Coaching Teams*. Aguilar worked in the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) in Oakland, California, for almost 20 years. During those years she was a part of dysfunctional teams and a part of successful transformational teams.

Aguilar shares that when she thinks back on the places where change was made and children got more of what they deserved, “those were uniformly places where the adults at the site worked in high-functioning teams together and where there was respect and trust between teachers and between teachers and administrators” (Aguilar, 2016, p. xxv). Aguilar explains that the schools where she experienced this, teacher and administrator retention was high, institutional memory was preserved, and a culture of learning was maintained. The teams in those communities collaborated on projects and initiatives in innovative ways and with admirable results. Aguilar shares it was at those moments, from within those healthy communities, she observed firsthand the positive impact of good teams on children (Aguilar, 2016). Aguilar believes we cannot create what we want to see for our children without also attending to the adults that work for them, “building high-functioning, healthy teams is a means to an end-to being able to improve student learning-but it is also the end itself, because at the core of a high-functioning healthy team is a beloved community” (Aguilar, 2016, p. xxv). It can be challenging for school leaders to bring teams together. The poem, “An Elephant in the Dark” by Rumi offers a metaphor for the potential of a team working together.

AN ELEPHANT IN THE DARK

Some Hindus have an elephant to show.
 No one here has ever seen an elephant.
 They bring it at night to a dark room.
 One by one, we go in the dark and come out
 Saying how we experience the animal.
 A water-pipe kind of creature.
 Another, the ear. A very strong moving
 Back and forth, fan animal. Another, the leg.
 I find it still, like a column on a temple.

Another touches the curved back.
 A leathery throne. Another the cleverest,
 Feels the tusk. A rounded sword made of porcelain.
 He is proud of his description.
 Each of us touches one place
 And understands the whole that way.
 The palm and the fingers feeling in the dark
 Are how the senses explore the reality of the elephant.
 If each of us held a candle there,
 And if we went in together, we could see it.

By Rumi

Aguilar explains that she remembers the day one of the coaches shared the poem with her and she remembers the wave of gratitude she experienced as she took in the poem's meaning, "alone we can only see one part of the big something we can't understand, and if we each hold a candle, we might be able to see what we cannot even yet imagine" (Aguilar, 2016, p. xxvi). What makes an effective team for principals to coach? Aguilar utilized J. Richard Hackman's (2011) work to assist her in defining the following three dimensions of great teams:

1. Product: A great team gets something done that is valuable, useful, and appreciated
2. Process: A great team's collaboration skills increase as a result of working together
3. Learning: Members of a great team learn (as cited in Aguilar, 2016)

Aguilar explains that members of a great team know that they must work together in certain ways to produce results and to be effective. "How a team functions is inseparable from its potential for success. Members of an effective team know, in the moment,

whether a meeting will lead them down a path to results or whether their efforts will be derailed or stalled” (Aguilar, 2016, p. 6). Harvard education professor Richard F. Elmore has observed that virtually every school he has visited has had some kind of team structure in place and a regular schedule of meetings for the teams. However, Elmore further explains that “only about one in ten teacher teams that I observe functions at a level that would result in any improvement of instructional practice and student learning in the classroom” (Troen & Boles, 2012, p. xv). Aguilar shares that this is a startling observation and demands that we direct attention to *how* we function in teams. In addition, she explains that for a team to be effective, high performing, and successful then a concrete definition of what makes a team effective is necessary. Aguilar shares the following indicators of an effective team:

1. Purpose: Team members understand and agree on the team’s purpose and goals.
2. Results: The team accomplishes what it sets out to achieve.
3. Meeting Process: Meetings are well facilitated and focused and result in clear outcomes.
4. Decisions: There are clear and articulated agreements about how decisions will be made.
5. Commitment: Team members buy in to decisions without hidden reservations or hesitation; actions reflect their commitment.
6. Contributions: Member contributions (ideas or information) are recognized and utilized. Different styles are embraced.

7. Creativity: Team members experiment with different ways of doing things and are creative in their approach.
8. Collaboration: Team members share their experience and expertise in ways that enhance team productivity and development.
9. Respect: Team members feel valued as an individual member. All members are treated with respect.
10. Interpersonal Communication: Communication between members is open and balanced at meetings.
11. Productive Conflict: Members engage in unfiltered debate around ideas and issues related to work.
12. Unproductive Conflict: Members work constructively on issues until they are resolved.
13. Procedures: There are effective procedures to guide team functioning both during meetings and outside of meetings.
14. Accountability: Team members hold each other accountable.
15. Evaluation: The team regularly evaluates its process and productivity.

Aguilar shares that utilizing the indicators of effective teams can help school leaders to build teams in order to transform schools,

no individual alone can transform our schools into places where all children get what they need every day. Many of us are acutely aware of how much work needs to be done and of how far we are from an ideal of education. (Aguilar, 2016, p. 7)

Teams have the potential for solving hard problems in challenging contexts and they can bring together more knowledge, skill, and experience than a single individual can bring. The challenge of creating effective teams is to identify what it takes for teams to maximize their potential (Aguilar, 2016). Aguilar explains that team building is hard work because there is not a prescriptive route to take. Building effective teams requires exploring different approaches, plans that may need to be modified and sometimes unexpected turns and twists (Aguilar, 2016). Aguilar does believe there are 10 truths about building teams:

1. Teams that work in or with schools exist to serve the social, emotional, and academic needs of children.
2. Learning is the primary work of all teams.
3. Who you are as a leader has the greatest influence on a team.
4. All teams exist within systems and power structures.
5. Teams thrive with trust.
6. Building teams takes time.
7. The health of a meeting reflects the health of the team.
8. A team's collective emotional intelligence is the key factor in its level of performance.
9. Communication between team members is the thread that connects everything.
10. Conflict can be healthy, but unhealthy conflict needs to be managed.

Aguilar suggests that leaders should think of which of these truths resonates with them based on experiences. Which of the truths would one like to take steps toward implementing? Aguilar explains that the overarching truth is that we need to build teams. She explains that teams need to be healthy teams so that together we can figure out the challenges facing our schools. Aguilar also shares that teams help with emotional resilience for the difficult work of transforming schools,

The work of transformation is hard. It is emotionally, cognitively, and sometimes physically demanding. We all need communities of resistance, places in which we know we are not alone; we need communities that nurture and hold us, that will sustain us as we create equitable schools that attend to the need of each and every child. (Aguilar, 2016, p. 294)

Aguilar also explains that building resilient teams may be the greatest challenge that is faced in transformation efforts at schools. Why? It entails leaders attending to their emotions, developing themselves as transformational leaders, prioritizing time, slowing things down, listening to each other, and speaking skillfully (Aguilar, 2016). The work of the 21st century principal and their ability to transform schools receives much attention and the most current research should be examined.

The Effective 21st Century Principal

A major reason for the attention being paid to principals today is the emergence of research that has found an empirical link between school leadership and student achievement (Mendels, 2012). A seminal 2004 study, *How Leadership Influences Student Learning*, asserted that leadership was the second most important school-based factor in children's academic achievement and noted there were few, if any, cases of

troubled schools turning around without effective leaders (Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). In 2010, the authors of that study, a team of researchers from the University of Minnesota and the University of Toronto, published a detailed sequel to probe school leadership in depth (Mendels, 2012). The researchers reaffirmed their earlier conclusion, declaring that

In developing a starting point for this six year study, we claimed, based on a preliminary review of research, that leadership is second only to classroom instruction as an influence on student learning. After six years of additional research, we are even more confident about this claim. (Seashore Louis et al., 2010, p. 9)

The researchers found, further, that although school leadership does not make its impact directly, its indirect workings have a statistically significant effect on student achievement (Seashore Louis et al., 2010, p. 37)

What do effective principals do that increases student achievement, especially in schools that are failing? Since 2000, The Wallace Foundation, which has supported projects to promote education leadership in 24 states and published 70 reports on the subject has been trying to answer the question (Mendels, 2012). A recently published Wallace Perspective report that takes a look back at the foundation's research and field experiences finds that five practices in particular seem central to effective school leadership (The Wallace Foundation, 2012). The five practices are:

1. Shaping a vision of academic success for all students, one based on high standards.

2. Creating a climate hospitable to education in order that safety, a cooperative spirit and other foundations of fruitful interaction prevail.
3. Cultivating leadership in others so that teachers and other adults assume their part in realizing the school vision.
4. Improving instruction to enable teachers to teach at their best and students to learn at their utmost.
5. Managing people, data and processes to foster school improvement.

The Wallace Foundation has found that when principals put each of these elements in place and in harmony then principals have a fighting chance of making a real difference.

Shaping a Vision

The effective school leader begins with the development of a school wide vision of commitment to high standards and the success of all students (Mendels, 2012). The principal helps to explain the vision and get all others on board with it.

The research literature over the last quarter-century has consistently supported the notion that having high expectations for all, including clear and public standards, is one key to closing the achievement gap between advantaged and less advantaged students and for raising the overall achievement of all students. (Porter et al., 2008, p. 13)

The Wallace Foundation also found that there was a correlation between principals nurturing a strong vision that all students can learn and teachers having created a good instructional climate or taken sound instructional actions. In addition, the highly rated principals have a vision that all students can achieve at high levels, they emphasize the value of research based strategies, they speak about the amount of time that is invested in

developing the school's vision, gather research information, and then apply it to their local setting. Highly rated principals also create climates in schools that are hospitable to education for all students.

Creating a Climate Hospitable to Education

Effective principals ensure that school buildings are safe and orderly but they also see that schools have an atmosphere in which students feel supported and responded to. Effective principals create a climate that is non-bureaucratic and teachers work in a professional community that is “deeply rooted in the academic and social learning goals of the schools” (Goldring, Porter, Murphy, Elliot, & Cravens, 2007, pp. 7–8). Effective principals ensure that teachers do not work in isolation from one another, but work collaboratively, giving each other help and guidance to improve instructional practices (Seashore Louis et al., 2010, p. 50). University of Washington researchers found in an examination of leadership in urban schools that culture was a focus for principals, “Alongside their efforts to prioritize collaboration and address trust in the building, the principals, aided by other administrative staff, made improvements of the work culture a central target of their efforts to lead a learning improvement agenda” (Portin et al., 2009, p. 59). The University of Washington researchers also found other key elements of a climate hospitable to learning:

- A sense of student and staff safety
- Respect for all member of the school community
- An upbeat, welcoming, solution-oriented, no-blame, professional environment
- An effort to invite and involve staff in various school wide functions

- A parallel outreach to students that engage and involved them in a variety of activities (Portin et al., 2009, p. 59)

Effective principals cultivate leadership in those around them.

Cultivating Leadership in Others

The most effective principals realize they cannot lead alone. Effective principals utilize the skills and knowledge of all faculty members and those around them. They encourage the adults in the school community to move into leadership roles and responsibilities (Mendels, 2012). When a school principal is open to spreading leadership then it is better for student learning, a particularly notable finding of the Minnesota and Toronto researchers. Effective leadership comes from a variety of resources, staff teams, teachers, and principals. In addition, it is associated with better student performance on math and reading tests, “Compared with lower-achieving schools, higher achieving schools provided all stakeholders with greater influence on decisions” (Seashore Louis et al., 2010, p. 35). The explanation for this could be related to the adage about two (or more) heads being better than one can help students achieve more, “The higher performance of these schools might be explained as a consequence of the greater access they have to collective knowledge and wisdom embedded within their communities” (Seashore Louis et al., 2010, p. 35). It is also important to note that leaders do not lose influence as others gain influence (Seashore Louis et al., 2010, p. 19). Effective leaders should utilize their influence to improve instruction.

Improving Instruction

Effective school leaders maintain a laser-like focus on the quality of instruction in their schools. They emphasize research-based strategies to improve teaching and learning. They initiate discussions about improving teaching and learning both with teams and individuals and “they pursue these strategies despite the preference of many teachers to be left alone” (The Wallace Foundation, 2012, p. 11). The effective principals spend time in classrooms to evaluate instruction. They observe what is working in the classrooms and what is not working. The principals make sure to have discussions with their teachers about their findings (Mendel, 2012). The principals that are most effective also take advantage of creating a collaborative culture where teachers work together and help one another. The leaders create school schedules that ensure teachers have large blocks of time to collaborate together in order to improve instruction for students. The effective school leaders also utilized the blocks of time in their school schedule for professional development activities, peer observations, and grade level meetings (Portin et al., 2009, p. 59). The effective school leader must manage time and processes well in order to improve instruction for students.

Managing People, Data, and Processes

Effective leaders hire well and they retain their teachers who are high performers. Principals that are most effective also understand how to give their teachers the support they need to grow as teachers (Mendel, 2012). Linda Darling Hammond, a Stanford University education policy analyst shares, “the number one reason for teachers’ decisions about whether to stay in a school is the quality of administrative support and it

is the leader who must develop this organization” (Darling-Hammond, 2007, p. 17). The effective school leader also knows how to make the best use of data and asks purposeful and meaningful questions of the data. Collaborative inquiry takes place among teachers and helpful feedback is provided to students (Portin et al., 2009). In addition to managing data, the most effective school leaders know how to go about their jobs systematically. Vanderbilt researchers have developed a tool known as VAL-ED for assessing principals. The researchers have found six key steps that effective school leaders should follow in carrying out their responsibilities:

1. Planning
2. Implementing
3. Supporting
4. Advocating
5. Communicating
6. Monitoring (Porter et al., 2008, p. 15)

Michael Fullan has also researched and written about the changes that school leaders must make due to so many formalized achievement standards and technology that is transforming schools. In his book, *The Principal: Three Keys to Maximizing Impact*, Fullan (2016) explains how the principal’s role itself must change.

Fullan explains that the principal must play three roles, a learning leader or lead learner, a system player, and an agent of change. The principal as the lead learner is supported with authors who have examined the role in detail over the last three decades. Their findings are consistent: “principals affect student learning indirectly but nonetheless explicitly” (Fullan, 2016, p. 57). Viviane Robinson examined the lead learner as the key domain. Viviane Robinson and her colleagues conducted a large-scale

“best evidence synthesis” (BES) of research on the impact of school principals on student achievement. Robinson (2011) summarizes their conclusions in a book titled *Student-Centered Leadership*. She found five leadership domains that had significant effect sizes on student achievement:

1. Establishing goals and expectations (0.42)
2. Resourcing strategically (0.31)
3. Ensuring quality teaching (0.42)
4. Leading teacher learning and development (0.84)
5. Ensuring an orderly and safe environment (0.27)

The most significant factor, twice as powerful as any other is leading teacher learning and development. Robinson also found that the principal who makes the biggest impact on learning is the one who attends to other matters as well but most importantly participates as a learner with teachers in helping move the school forward. Principals who do not take the learner stance for themselves do not learn as much on a day to day basis as those principals who take a learning stance (Fullan, 2014). Principals should chart and reflect on their own learning if they are going to get better at leading and “they do this best through helping teachers learn” (Fullan, 2014, p. 59). In addition to helping teachers learn, Robinson also identified three key leadership capabilities:

1. Applying relevant knowledge
2. Solving complex problems
3. Building relational trust

Fullan believes that Robinson's research on the five leadership domains and the three key leadership capabilities combined are an example of the lead learner at work. Helen Timperley has also been a longtime researcher of the role of the principal and of teacher learning. She conducted a parallel BES study on teacher learning. She examined the relationship between teacher learning and student achievement. In Timperley's book, *Realizing the Power of Professional Learning*, she drew similar conclusions:

“Coherence across professional learning environments was not achieved through the completion of checklists and scripted lessons but rather through creating learning situations that promoted inquiry habits of mind throughout the school” (Timperley, 2011, p. 104). With this in mind, Timperley created the following question for principals: “Who is my class?” With this, Timperley means, “Who is the principal teaching?” She discovered from one principal that she was so busy developing individual teachers that she was not attending to team leaders and their learning needs. This particular principal concluded that “her class” of learners included team leaders who in turn could leverage the learning of other teachers in their group and generate greater learning in the school (Timperley, 2011). Learning with others is part of mastering the principalship. Ken Leithwood at the University of Toronto and Karen Seashore Louis at Minnesota and their colleagues have become masters of the principalship over the last four decades (Fullan, 2014).

In their book *Linking Leadership to Student Learning*, Leithwood and Seashore Louis (2012) conclude that principals who had the greatest impact on student learning in the school focused on instruction. Instruction included teacher knowledge, skills,

motivation and on ensuring supportive working conditions. Supportive working conditions meant time for teachers to collaborate together. Leithwood and Seashore Louis (2012) say that “leadership affects student learning when it is targeted at working relationships, improving instruction and, indirectly, student achievement” (p. 234). This is orchestrated by hands on principals which Fullan explains is something that is seen time and time again. Tony Byrk has researched successful principals that are hands on and focus on capacity, climate, community, and instruction.

Tony Byrk is the president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. He is leading work on bringing researchers and practitioners together to improve teaching and learning. Byrk and his colleagues’ longitudinal research in 477 elementary schools in Chicago is especially informative for purposes of examining the principalship and improving instruction (Byrk, Bender-Sebring, Allensworth, Lupescu, & Easton, 2010). In a microcosm comparison of two schools that started out at similar levels of low performance, one school (Hancock) improved significantly over a six-year period, compared to another school (Alexander). What was the main difference in the two schools? The main difference was strong and strategic principal leadership

Strong principal leadership at Hancock School fostered the development of a vigorous professional community that was both actively reaching out to parents and sustaining a focus on improving instruction. In contrast, reform efforts at Alexander remained fragmented, suffering from both poor coordination and a lack of follow through. (Byrk et al., 2010, p. 40)

There were major reform activities at both schools. Alexander actually declined in reading by 9% and made no improvement in math over the years. Hancock gained 10

percent in reading and 19% in math. These are just two schools that Byrk and his colleagues researched but they gathered data on most all of the 477 elementary schools in Chicago. Byrk and his colleagues considered a comprehensive picture when comparing the schools. For the hundred or so schools that made significant progress there was a key explanation, “school leadership as the driver for change” (Byrk et al., 2010, p. 62). The school leaders that focused on a drive for change also focused on the development of four interrelated forces:

1. The professional capacity of teachers (individually and collectively)
2. School climate (ensuring safety and orderliness in the aid of learning)
3. Parent and community ties
4. Instructional guidance system (instructional practices that engage students in relation to key learning goals (Byrk et al., 2010).

The problem though with Byrk’s research findings is that he and his research team only found the four elements in less than 20 percent of the total of schools researched. So, despite the consistency of the findings from Byrk’s research team, the message is not getting across or sticking with those who are involved in developing school leadership (Fullan, 2014).

Success at the school level is a function of the principals acting as lead learners (Fullan, 2014). The principals acting as lead learners focus on the following:

1. Specific goals for students
2. Data that enable clear diagnosis of individual learning needs
3. Instructional practices that address those learning needs

4. Teachers learning from each other
5. Monitoring overall progress
6. Making adjustments accordingly (Fullan, 2014)

According to Fullan, all of this is carried out in a school climate that is developmental and not judgmental and there are norms of transparency within the school and external to the school. In addition, accountability measures occur but they are conducted within a culture that focuses on collaborative improvement. Principals that are lead learners also focus on content and organization. Lyle Kirtman addresses content and organization in his book, *Leadership and Teams*.

Lyle Kirtman has worked with several hundred public and private sector organizations over the course of 30 years. Kirtman's research about leaders and instruction is of direct interest to the principal being a learning leader. Kirtman found that the role of the principal needs to be balanced between content leadership and organizational leadership. The competencies of content leadership and organizational leadership involve building instructional leadership into the culture of the school and building strong leadership in teachers. (Kirtman, 2013). The principal is the educational leader and overall leader of instruction but he or she needs to have time and skills to motivate and build teams. In addition, the principal must develop leadership capacity in his or her school for change, "the educational leader should try not to do too much on his or her own in the instructional arena" (Kirtman, 2013, p. 8). Some people can misinterpret what the emphasis on the instructional leadership of the principal actually means (Fullan, 2014). People can mistakenly assume that instructional leadership means

that principals must spend much of their time in classrooms working directly with individual teachers (Fullan, 2014). The findings about effectiveness of the best principals does indicate that they spend several days a week in classrooms but instead that they do it enough to maintain and develop their instructional expertise. The most effective principals understand and realize that if they work with other leaders in the school, then together, they affect teachers more in groups than they do individually. An effective school principal is a learning leader and a system player (Fullan, 2014). What does it mean to be a system player?

The principal as a system player is a principal that focuses on building external networks and partnerships. This can prove to be challenging for a principal because of the consistent focus on improving instruction internally. When the principal is focusing on improving instruction internally, the time they have for networking and building partnerships is decreasing (Fullan, 2014). The internal focus can actually be detrimental to strong leadership. The high performing leaders build teams and delegate work. They find time to spend with parents, teachers, students, community members, school system leaders, and any other leaders inside and outside of education (Fullan, 2014). The networks that the leaders develop produce new ideas, practices, and materials that “can be effectively used to improve results in their own schools” (Kirtman, 2013, p. 8). The principal has to pay attention to intraschool matters and engage outside in order to increase learning within the school. The principal must also engage externally in order to support the work of building internal capacity. The internal capacity is human, social, and decisional capital. (Fullan, 2014). The principal must ensure that internal and

external forces are aligned. The principal must ensure that his or her school is part of a school system and not a system of individual schools. The principal should be open to learning from leaders in other schools and understand what a successful school district looks like. Ken Leithwood (2004) studied in detail what the characteristics of a high performing school districts look like. High performing districts develop four key capacities:

1. Core processes: widely shared goals, instructional expertise, data, and evidence
2. Supporting conditions: implementation plans, professional development, alignment of policies
3. Relationships: collaboration within and outside the school district
4. Leadership: at the district and school level

Successful school leaders understand what a high performing school district looks like. Successful school leaders see him or herself as a system player that is open to seeking ideas from other similar schools that may have had more success. A successful school leader is a system player who understands that learning with other principals and sharing resources is important to success. A successful school leader is also a change agent. (Fullan, 2014).

Successful school leaders that are change agents are good at moving people and organizations forward under very difficult circumstances. Successful school leaders also understand the competencies necessary for working through change. According to Kirtman, a competent leader:

1. Challenges the status quo.
2. Builds trust through clear communications and expectations.
3. Creates a commonly owned plan for success.
4. Focuses on team over self.
5. Has a sense of urgency for sustainable results.
6. Commits to continuous improvement for self.
7. Builds external networks and partnerships (Kirtman, 2013).

The effective school leader will spend time on getting better at all seven domains and focus on their interconnections in order that the whole organization generates measurable instructional improvement (Fullan, 2014). James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner's latest book focuses on leaders getting better and continuous learning.

James M. Kouzes is the Dean's Executive Fellow of Leadership at the Leavey School of Business, Santa Clara University. He lectures on leadership around the world to corporations, governments, and nonprofits. Barry Z. Posner is the Accolti Endowed Professor of Leadership at the Leavey School of Business. He is an accomplished scholar and provides leadership workshops and seminars around the world. Together they have been writing and speaking about leadership for more than 30 years. Their latest book is titled *Learning Leadership*. In *Learning Leadership* Kouzes and Posner explain that the world needs exemplary leaders. Kouzes and Posner believe that leaders are made, not born and they believe exemplary leadership is what makes a difference. Kouzes and Posner recommend the following five fundamentals to leading:

1. Believe you can
2. Aspire to Excel
3. Challenge Yourself
4. Engage Support
5. Practice Deliberately (Kouzes & Posner, 2016).

Kouzes and Posner admit that exemplary leadership is a challenge and thus, the importance of leaders continually learning about leadership.

Coaches as Leaders

The History of Coaching and Mentoring

Coaching and mentoring are often associated together. *Coaching* refers to guidance and feedback about specific knowledge, skills, and abilities involved in a task, the performance of a job, and the handling of assignments (Bass, 2008). *Mentoring* involves advising, guiding education, career development, and relationships (Bass, 2008). One can see how closely linked coaching and mentoring are and this is because a coach often serves as a mentor. There are some differences between coaching and mentoring; coaches provide support and help to analyze, improve, and practice; mentors provide advice and opportunities for development, identify needs for improvement, and promote a person (Yukl, 1988). Years of research have proved that coaching is likely to work well if the learner can identify with the coach and the learner and coach are open and trusting with each other (Levinson, 1962). The coach and the learner have to both accept responsibilities fully and the learner should be recognized for his or her improvement (Levinson, 1962). Goodacre (1963) found that coaches are most effective if they set clear

standards, appreciate their learners' abilities and interests, encourage learners to complete assignments, and practice delegation along with appropriate follow-up.

Coaching is best in a climate of confidence in which trainees respect the capability and integrity of their coaches (Bass, 2008). Coaching should take the greatest advantage of providing individualized instruction and concentrate on specific problems that learners find hardest to deal with (Bass, 2008). Coaching may provide the kind of quality feedback that can have a great impact on learning (Mace, 1950). A look at some of the best professional and college coaches supports this research.

Selected Well-known Coaches and Their Leadership

John Wooden. John Wooden is known across twentieth-century sports in America as a preeminent and most revered coach, teacher, and leader (Wooden & Jamison, 2009). Wooden's historic UCLA basketball dynasty won 10 NCAA basketball championships, including seven in consecutive years. Under Wooden's leadership the UCLA Bruins had four perfect seasons and set the all-time record for consecutive victories: 88. Experts generally agree these records will stand forever (Wooden & Jamison, 2009). John Wooden was also named Coach of the Century by ESPN and hailed as a leadership genius by corporate America (Wooden & Jamison, 2007).

Wooden also became famous for his Pyramid of Success. He was a teacher at one time and he learned it was necessary to help those under his supervision know how to achieve success as he had defined it, thus he began "constructing" the Pyramid of Success. Wooden's Pyramid of Success identified personal qualities and values that he believed were intrinsic to reaching one's potential as a person, whether that was in

leadership or as part of a team (Wooden & Jamison, 2009). The foundation of Wooden's Pyramid of Success is industriousness. Hard work and hard physical labor was a constant in Wooden's childhood. Industriousness as Wooden understood it meant true work at your highest capacity; fully engaged, totally focused, and completely absorbed (Wooden & Jamison, 2009). The first tier of Wooden's Pyramid consists of the following:

- Industriousness: success comes with hard work and there is no easy way or trick to success
- Friendship: build a team filled with camaraderie and respect teammates
- Loyalty: be true to yourself and be true to the people you lead
- Cooperation: focus on what is right rather than who is right
- Enthusiasm: energy, drive, dedication, and enjoyment for the job will stimulate others and inspire others (Wooden & Jamison, 2009).

John Wooden chose four traits for the Pyramid's second tier. The four traits for the second tier primarily involve control and direction of one's mental and emotional faculties. Wooden believed that the first quality block (self-control) was the most explicit in this regard. The second tier of Wooden's Pyramid consists of:

- Self-control: control of one's organization begins with control of one's self, be disciplined
- Alertness: constantly be aware and observe, seek to improve yourself and your team
- Initiative: make a decision when it is necessary, failure to act is often the biggest failure one can make

- Intentness: stay the course and when thwarted try again; smarter and harder.

One must persevere relentlessly (Wooden & Jamison, 2009).

Wooden believed that intentness was one of the most important blocks in his pyramid because without it he believed one would fade, falter, and fall (Wooden & Jamison, 2009). Wooden felt that ability may get you to the top “but character keeps you there: mental, moral, and physical” (Wooden & Jamison, 2009, p. 54). Wooden knew that physical conditioning was necessary but in choosing condition as a block in the heart of the third tier of the Pyramid, Wooden also meant moral condition. The third tier of Wooden’s Pyramid revolved around the condition of the overall team:

- Condition: ability can get you to the top but character will keep you there
- Skill: what a leader learns after he/she thinks they have learned it all counts most. Mastery is a lifelong process of learning
- Team Spirit: the star of the team is the team; this means “we” supersedes “me”

Wooden believed if one had all of the other tiers of the Pyramid in place then the blocks in the fourth tier would follow. The blocks in the fourth tier are:

- Poise: be yourself and do not be thrown off by events, whether they are good or bad events
- Confidence: well-founded self- belief is the strongest steel but it is earned and not given

The top of Wooden’s Pyramid is Competitive Greatness and Wooden defines

Competitive Greatness as follows: “performing at your best when your best is needed; a

real love for the hard battle” (Wooden & Jamison, 2009, p. 67). The first four tiers of the Pyramid of Success are the prelude to being at your best when your best is needed (Wooden & Jamison, 2009). Wooden also added “mortar” at the top of the pyramid. Wooden added Patience and Faith at the top of the pyramid. He believed that a leader must have faith that things would work out as they should while having a belief in the future. Wooden also understood that a wise leader knows that good things take time. However, most people—many leaders—lack patience (Wooden & Jamison, 2009). The 15 personal qualities of the Pyramid illustrate what Wooden expected of his team. Wooden utilized the Pyramid of Success as his textbook for teaching. While Wooden utilized the Pyramid of Success to drive his coaching and teaching, Pat Summitt utilized the Definite Dozen to make coaching history.

Pat Summitt. Pat Summitt became the head coach of women’s basketball at the University of Tennessee in 1974. Summitt was only 22 years old when she took the head coaching job for the Lady Vols. Pat Summitt was the first coach in NCAA history to reach 1,000 wins (Summitt & Jenkins, 2013). Pat Summitt also won more national championships than any coach except the legendary John Wooden (Summitt & Jenkins, 2013). Whenever Summitt was asked to explain her remarkable accomplishments, she referred to the Definite Dozen. The Definite Dozen remains on a placard in the most central place in the Tennessee Vols locker room. Summitt viewed the Definite Dozen as a set of commandments (Summit & Jenkins, 1998). The Definite Dozen serve as the Vols most basic set of rules and the blueprint for winning. Pat Summitt also viewed the Definite Dozen as a set of principles that evolved over her years at Tennessee. Summitt

felt very strongly about the Definite Dozen being principles that enabled her to coach the Vols successfully, “long-term, repetitive success is a matter of building a principled system and sticking to it. Principles are anchors; without them you will drift” (Summitt & Jenkins, 1998, p. 7). Summitt kept the Definite Dozen nearby her as a refresher. The Definite Dozen are:

1. Respect yourself and others
2. Take full responsibility
3. Develop and demonstrate loyalty
4. Learn to be a great communicator
5. Discipline yourself so no one else has to
6. Make hard work your passion
7. Don’t just work hard, work smart
8. Put the team before yourself
9. Make winning an attitude
10. Be a competitor
11. Change is a must
12. Handle success like you handle failure

Mike Krzyzewski. Mike Krzyzewski has been the head basketball coach at Duke University since the 1980–1981 season. He has led the Blue Devils to ten Atlantic Coast Conference championships, ten Final Fours, and three NCAA National Championships in 1991, 1992, and 2001 (Krzyzewski & Spatola, 2006). Krzyzewski, known as Coach K, was inducted into the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame in 2001. Coach K has also

served as the head coach of the USA Men's National team for competition in the Olympics. Coach K is an executive-in-residence at Duke's Fuqua School of Business and the Coach K Center for Leadership & Ethics (Krzyszewski & Spatola, 2006). Coach K is a believer in the power of words.

Coach K starts many of his team's practices and games by writing a single word or two on the whiteboard in the locker room. He believes the words speak more than any lengthy speech. Coach K wants to have each player picture himself doing these words: having passion, striving for excellence, and playing with poise (Krzyszewski & Spatola, 2006). He believes when the players take the court and momentarily lose sight of the team's goal for that game, they can think back on that one word. Players regain focus and can look around at their teammates and know that the word resonates in their minds as well. Players may even repeat that word in a huddle or Coach K may say it on the bench during a time-out. The words keep the team together and committed to a common goal, even in the heat of a basketball game (Krzyszewski & Spatola, 2006). Coach K believes in not merely using or borrowing words; he believes life is about owning them. (Krzyszewski & Spatola, 2006). Some of the words that Coach K finds powerful are: adversity, communication, standards, trust, and commitment.

Coach K has a story he has learned from all forty words and he utilizes these stories and experiences to coach his team. He believes you should never stop learning to own words. Coach K believes coming to understand and own each individual word is a great beginning. He believes the concepts behind the words come together to form an individual's character or the collective character of a team, business, or family

(Krzyzewski & Spatola, 2006). Coach K has also utilized the analogy of The Fist to describe how five vital words can come together and help to create teamwork.

Coach K sees the fist as five fingers held together in a tight formation, “a fist is far more effective and powerful than five fingers held outstretched and alone” (Krzyzewski & Spatola, 2006, p. 170). In basketball, the five individuals on the court must act as one, as a fist, in this way, the players achieve success that they could not find acting as five independent players. Each separate finger that makes up The Fist symbolizes a fundamental quality that renders a great team. For Coach K’s team, he emphasizes five words: communication, trust, collective responsibility, care and pride. Coach K believes that any of these traits alone are important but that all five together are tough to beat (Krzyzewski & Spatola, 2006). He believes that in life, those five fingers can represent any five words that one wishes to emphasize with their team, business or family. The goal of The Fist is five people playing together for one purpose (Krzyzewski & Spatola, 2006). Many successful and well respected coaches understand that working towards a shared purpose together is a priority. Mike Smith is one of those coaches.

Mike Smith. Mike Smith is the former head coach for the National Football League’s Atlanta Falcons. He held that position from 2008 to 2014. Mike Smith is the all-time winningest coach in franchise history. In Smith’s first season as the Falcons head coach he was the recipient of the NFL Coach of the Year Award by the Associated Press. Smith was also named NFL coach of the Year three times (2008, 2010, 2012) by *Pro Football Weekly* (Gordon & Smith, 2015). Mike Smith was a coach for 32 years and he spent half of his coaching time with the NFL. Smith was on the staff of the Baltimore

Ravens when they won the Super Bowl. Smith was also the head coach of the Atlanta Falcons when his team was one play away from going to the Super Bowl. In the book, *You Win in the Locker Room First*, Smith also shares,

I'm also a coach that was fired because during my last two seasons with the Falcons we only had 10 wins combined. Looking back, I can see clearly the difference between those first five seasons and the last two. I understand why we won and why we lost. (Gordon & Smith, 2015, p. xi)

Jon Gordon and Mike Smith have collaborated together to author the book, *You Win in the Locker Room First*. The purpose of the book is to help build a winning team. Smith says you win by “cultivating the right culture, leadership, expectations, beliefs, mindset, relationships, and habits before you even play the game. You win in the locker room first. Then you win on the field” (Gordon & Smith, 2015, p. xi). Smith learned about building a winning team during his coaching tenure with the Atlanta Falcons.

Mike Smith knew from the moment he took over as the head coach of the Atlanta Falcons that he needed to focus on building a positive culture and defining that for the team (Gordon & Smith, 2015). Smith also believes that knowing what you stand for is essential in coaching a successful team. Smith had seven responsibilities that all team members had to follow:

1. Have fun, work hard, and enjoy the journey.
2. Show respect for every person you have contact with in the organization.
3. Put the team first. Successful teams have teammates that are unselfish and willing to put their individual goals behind the team's goals.
4. Do your job. It is defined, but you must always be prepared for it to change (especially if you're a player).
5. Appropriately handle victory and defeat, adulation and humiliation. Do not get too high in victory or too low in defeat. Be the same person every day.

6. Understand that all organizational decisions aim to make the team better, stronger, and more efficient.
7. Have a positive attitude. Use positive language (both verbal and body language). (Gordon & Smith, 2015, p. 12)

Mike Smith told his team each year that if they were able to consistently meet these expectations then “we would be well on our way to establishing a culture where team members can thrive in the ultimately competitive NFL” (pp. 12–13).

Tony Dungy. Tony Dungy was the head coach for the Indianapolis Colts. He led the Indianapolis Colts to Super Bowl victory in 2007 and this was the first such win for an African American head coach. Dungy also established another first by becoming the first head coach to lead his teams to the playoffs for ten consecutive years (Dungy & Whitaker, 2009). Tony Dungy joined the Colts in 2002 after serving as the most successful head coach in Tampa Bay Buccaneers history. Dungy held assistant coaching positions with the University of Minnesota, Pittsburgh Steelers, Kansas City Chiefs, and Minnesota Vikings. Prior to becoming a head coach Dungy played three seasons in the NFL.

Tony Dungy retired from coaching in 2009 and he now serves as a studio analyst for NBC’s Football Night in America. Dungy has been involved in a wide variety of charitable organizations, including All Pro Dad, Abe Brown Ministries, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Athletes in Action, Mentors for Life, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and Boys & Girls Clubs (Dungy & Whitaker, 2009). He also works with Basket of Hope, Impact for Living, the Black Coaches Association National Convention, Indiana Black Expo, the United Way of Central Indiana, and the American Diabetes Association

(Dungy & Whitaker, 2009). Tony Dungy is the coauthor of the book, *UnCommon* which has been a #1 New York Times bestselling book. In the book Tony Dungy provides seven things that he believes are keys to being uncommon:

1. Develop your core
2. Love your family
3. Lift your friends and others
4. Your full potential
5. Establish a mission that matters
6. Choose influence over image
7. Live your faith

Dean Smith. Dean Edwards Smith became the head coach of the University of North Carolina's basketball team at the age of thirty. In his 36 years in that position, he established coaching records that will likely long remain unbroken (Smith et al., 2004). Dean Smith's teams won more than 75% of their games. His teams won 13 Atlantic Coast Conference tournament championships and 17 ACC regular season titles. In the year 2000, a panel of ESPN experts named him one of the seven greatest coaches of the twentieth century in any sport (Smith et al., 2004). Smith also coached the 1976 U.S. Olympic basketball team and they won the gold medal. He wrote *A Coach's Life* and coauthored *The Carolina Way* with Gerald Bell. *The Carolina Way* explains Smith's coaching philosophy and provides leadership lessons from a life in coaching. Dean Smith utilized the following for his coaching philosophy:

- The Foundations: First Principles, Play Hard; Play Together; Play Smart, Winning, Losing
- Playing Hard: Caring, Practicing, Recruiting the Players, Honesty, Breaking Bad Habits, Fun, Fatigue, and the Long Season
- Playing Together: Teamwork, Defining and Understanding the Roles, Why Unselfishness Works, Team-Building Techniques
- Playing Smart: Every Man on the Team is Important, Taking Care of Little Things, One-on-One Meetings, Goals and Expectations, Building Confidence, Earning the Support of the Bigger Team, Discipline Must be Fair, Continuous Learning
- Lessons Learned: Don't Dwell on the Past, Don't Fear Change, When Winning Was the Goal, Hopes for the Future (Smith et al., 2004)

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Research Questions

This study investigated the following research questions:

1. What are the leadership vision, beliefs, philosophies, and wisdom of the selected coaches?
2. What are the leadership beliefs and philosophies, vision and wisdom of the selected school principals?
3. What can be learned from the leadership beliefs and philosophies, vision and wisdom of the selected coaches that can inform the work of a principal transforming a school?
4. What can be learned from the leadership beliefs and philosophies, vision and wisdom of the selected principals that can inform the work of a principal transforming a school?
5. How do my leadership beliefs and philosophies, vision and wisdom compare to the beliefs and philosophies, vision and wisdom of the coaches?
6. How do my leadership beliefs and philosophies, vision, and wisdom compare to the beliefs and philosophies, vision and wisdom of the selected principals?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this qualitative study, as illustrated in Figure 1, examined what athletic coaches and other school leaders could share about leadership that can be utilized by a principal transforming an elementary school. Topics discussed with the principals and coaches included beliefs and philosophies, wisdom, and vision. I was also a part of this study. I maintained a journal of my real-world leadership experiences and key events at Hill Elementary. School leaders are faced with the challenges of managing and leading. As a school leader working to transform a low performing school I have learned how challenging it can be to balance managing versus leading while also maintaining a vision for all stakeholders. A positive school culture has to be maintained while also dealing with human resource issues. Being an instructional leader and coaching teachers is a top priority for leaders trying to transform schools. My journals explain the real-life challenges I have faced in the three years of transforming our school. Transforming a school is tough work for a leader and it is often lonely work. My journals contain real world leadership experiences. I have learned in my years of transforming schools that my beliefs, vision, and wisdom drive my leadership practice. Athletic coaches and other principals shared their beliefs and philosophies, wisdom, and their visions with me via interviews.

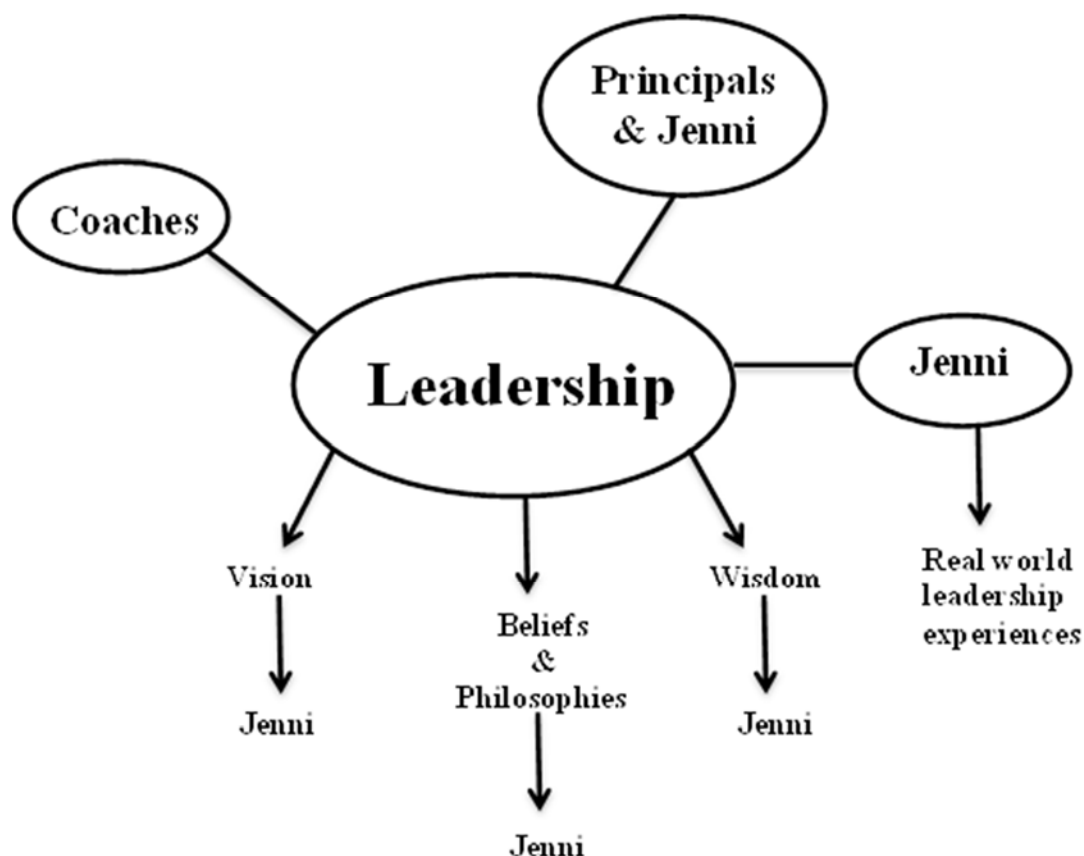


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework.

Description of Key Concepts

The following terms were defined for the purpose of this study:

- **Athletic coach:** A coach is a person who provides guidance and feedback about specific knowledge, skills, and abilities involved in a certain task. A coach also provides advice regarding performance of a job and the handling of assignments (Bass, 2008). An athletic coach is a person who provides guidance and feedback about sports knowledge, skills, and abilities involved in a certain sport. An athletic coach also provides advice regarding a particular sport.

- Principal: A principal is a person who is in charge of managing and leading a K-12 school. A principal must also be an instructional leader. Instructional leaders coach teachers in a variety of ways and focus on improving student achievement.
- Vision: what the principals want their schools to become. The end goal for the athletes. The very best leaders inspire a shared vision (Kouzes & Posner, 2010).
- Beliefs: what drives the principals and coaches. The beliefs drive their decision making.
- Philosophy: the thoughts of the coaches and athletes.
- Wisdom: learned from a specific person or experience in the past

Research Setting

This qualitative study took place at the participant's places of work or in some cases, the coaches offered to come to the school. I maintained journal reflections based on my leadership at Hill Elementary. The purpose of my journal entries was to document how my also made me reflect on my practice as a leader. In addition, my journal entries made me aware of how my personal life experiences have shaped me to be the leader I am today.

Research Participants

I identified six coaches and six principals to participate in the study. I was also a participant in the study. The participants have a variety of backgrounds and have varying years of experience in their field, come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, and were

participants that I anticipated would be willing to share their perspectives on effective leadership. The participants ranged in age and their own personal educational experience. The principals and athletic coaches selected all have a specific rationale for being chosen. I felt that utilizing a specific rationale for each participant allowed my qualitative study to have more depth.

Athletic coaches were the only types of coaches utilized in this study. Athletic coaches were chosen because of their athletic records, their ability to turn programs around, their coaching philosophies, or another rationale. Each athletic coach that is chosen for the study will have a specific rationale. Principals were chosen because of their ability to transform a school, their ability to improve student achievement, or their ability to coach teachers. Each principal chosen for the study has a specific rationale.

Data Collection

The qualitative method of data collection utilized semi-structured interviews. I sought data from the participants that represents their personal leadership experiences in their field. The process for data collection included:

1. Six athletic coaches were selected and the specific rationale for their selection is explained thoroughly. Six principals were selected and the specific rationale is explained thoroughly. I am participated in the study as a practicing principal who is working to transform an elementary school. The participants' level of diversity (race, gender, age, and years of experience) was considered during the process of selecting participants. The participants were invited to participate in a semi structured interview.

2. Participants were contacted with an email and at times, follow-up phone call to request their participation in a semi-structured, face-to face interview, lasting approximately one hour.
3. During the semi-structured face-to-face interviews, respondents were asked to share their perspectives on their philosophies and beliefs, vision, and wisdom within their sector of leadership. Interviews were taped and transcribed.
4. In addition to the interviews, I had an opportunity to shadow 2 principals. During my informal observations I focused on collecting data that pertained to philosophies and beliefs, vision and wisdom of their work. I also focused on the real-life experiences of the principal.
5. I maintained journals since my arrival as principal at Hill Elementary school. My journal focuses on the real-world leadership experiences of a leader. Real world leadership experiences in this sense means, every day leadership experiences of transforming a low performing elementary school. The real stories of leading a low performing school include stories about confronting brutal truths of poor practices, not making excuses for students, and narrowing the focus to priorities that will improve a school for students. My journals also contain stories that pull a leader away from improving instruction, stories about managing versus leading, stories about reflecting on leadership, and stories about how lonely leading a low performing school can be. Some of the journal entries examples include stories about:

- meeting students' basic physical and emotional needs before they can start learning;
 - maintaining a positive school culture when in a low performing school
 - maintaining positive teacher morale in a low performing school
 - coaching teachers with professional and personal issues;
 - taking care of yourself as a leader so you are prepared to lead each day
 - how to maintain a support system as a leader.
6. The interview questions I utilized focused on ensuring that some standardized information was obtained regarding the participants' philosophies, beliefs, vision, and wisdom. However, open-ended questions were also used so I could ensure some time was spent in an unstructured mode so that fresh insights and new information would emerge.

Interview Questions

1. Talk to me about the work you do each day.
2. How did you get to be in the position you are in?
3. Please describe what a typical day is like for you.
4. What significant events or critical incidents have taken place during your career?
5. What are your leadership philosophies?
6. What do you think are important characteristics for a leader to have?
7. What values and beliefs do you stand by as a leader?
8. How do you convey your vision to those around you?

9. In what ways do you instill your vision and philosophies in those you work closest with?
10. What drives you to stay in a leadership role?
11. Who inspired you to become a leader? What was inspiring about this person?
12. How do you empower others around you to lead?
13. How do you balance improving your organization with good leadership?
14. How does your leadership approach change when you communicate in a team setting?
15. What is the best leadership wisdom you have ever received? Why?
16. What is the most difficult challenge you have ever encountered as a leader?
17. What do you think sets an average leader apart from a great leader?
18. I am a principal involved in transforming a low performing school, what advice do you have for me?

Data Analysis

Data analysis occurred by coding the interview data into categories that included but were not limited to: beliefs, philosophies, vision, and wisdom. Data for each participant was coded in relationship to the conceptual framework. My goal was to generate data from the principal sector and athletic coaching sector that is applicable to transforming elementary schools. As noted previously, I have maintained daily journals since my arrival at Hill Elementary in January 2013. The journals contain real world leadership experiences of transforming an elementary school. The journals also contain

stories and important events in the transformation process. It should be noted that my journaling was ongoing while I was conducting my interviews. I wanted to know if other leaders in the principal sector and coaching sector could provide philosophies, beliefs, and wisdom that could be applied to everyday leadership experiences in a low performing school. For example, could a basketball coach provide me with wisdom to coach my teachers? Could another principal provide me with new ideas to coach teachers? I coded data from the interview transcripts into categories. The categories created were beliefs and philosophies, wisdom, and vision. I also asked for advice for principals transforming low performing schools. Subcategories were not necessary to define in order to reflect data more accurately. I coded data from my journal and personal experiences. The data has been compared/contrasted with the other principals and coaches.

During this process, I understood that it would be important for me to acknowledge when data did not fit into one of the categories noted above, what that would mean, and what new categories may develop as a result of the data analysis process. I understand that qualitative researchers should not begin with preconceived hypotheses but rather seek to discover them in the data collection and analysis. Thus, the possibility existed that additional categories would have to be added. One additional piece of data that came about was my own personal reflections so personal reflections and a personal story evolved out of this study.

Researcher Subjectivity

My leadership style has a direct impact on how I lead within my school. I must remember that as a school leader I have my own beliefs and philosophies about

leadership. I believe my early experiences in life have had a major impact on the type of leader I am today. I was born and raised in a white middle class family in Harrisonburg, Virginia. It would have appeared that I had the perfect family but others did not know that my mother suffered from alcoholism. My mother died of a massive heart attack prior to my 16th birthday. The loss of my mother taught me how to overcome adversity, be empathetic to others, and to be a leader and not a follower. I learned an early commandment: life is not fair. My grandparents raised me and my brother. I must credit them for pushing me along the way to be successful.

My grandparents instilled in me the values of working hard, truth, and love. I continue to share these values in my teaching and administrative career. I began my teaching career at a Title I school as a second-grade teacher and have never been at a school that is not a Title I school. I taught for 9 years and have been working as an administrator for 12 years. I don't believe I was born a leader. I believe I was made a leader through various adverse circumstances: "Adversity has a great deal to do with the development of leaders. Either it knocks you out or you become a bigger and better person" (Bennis, 2009, p. 139). I have become a better person and a better leader through all of my experiences and I now realize that my personality type has helped me through this. I also realize that my values, beliefs, and personality type contribute to my subjectivity.

I have a strong belief in leading by example. I don't ask my teachers to do anything I wouldn't do for students or have not done for students in the past. I also do not do anything I do not want my staff members to do. I follow protocols and procedures

just as I expect them to. I see myself as part of the larger team and like to collaborate with others. I believe developing relationships with students and teachers is a key to success. I am honest with teachers and have face to face conversations about issues that need to be handled. I am typically able to discern very well and this enables me to understand people. I often foresee a problem before it snowballs. I am a lifelong learner. I stand up for what I believe in and I believe in doing what is right for kids. When I make decisions I always ask myself the following questions in order: Is this right for students? Is this fair for students? My teachers know that I base my decisions based on what is right for students.

I think decisions through but I always remember that students and staff members are affected by my decisions. I can be judgmental and I am often critical of others who are not performing at the highest standards possible. I often find myself asking, why doesn't she have a sense of urgency about this? I also worry a lot about our school making growth. Worrying and judging are definitely areas I can work on as a leader. It is probably not surprising that along with worrying comes the human drive profile of being a perfectionist. It is important for me to realize that my areas of growth that I continue to reflect on are also subjectivities for me.

Trustworthiness

Establishing the trustworthiness and quality of my study resulted from providing rich narrative accounts from the interviews. My interviews with the research participants attempted to move beyond the surface of their position and get to know the stories that go along with their work. The leaders and coaches told me about their work and what a

typical day is like for them. The discussion of their daily work helped me to learn their real stories. This helped me gain deeper insight about their work and the beliefs, values, and vision that guide their actions. Establishing trustworthiness involved extensive coding of the leaders' and coaches' different beliefs and philosophies, wisdom, and vision that are significant in their work.

Analysis and interpretation support the data collected. Acknowledging and making sense of any outliers that leaders shared was a part of the data analysis process. In order to provide a stronger sense of trustworthiness, member checks were also conducted with the leaders and coaches interviewed to ensure an accurate depiction of the overall analysis. Member checks ensured that the research participants agree with the interpretation of the data. Peer reviews and debriefing was utilized to ensure that another knowledgeable researcher agrees with the interpretation of the data. It is important that adequacy of the data collected be maintained. In order to maintain adequacy of the written account I have ensured that I utilized sufficient quotes and field notes so the stories and voices of the leaders and coaches are descriptive. The meaning and significance of the quotes and field notes was also analyzed. Reflecting on the implications of the study will conclude with recommendations for school leaders transforming low performing elementary schools.

Benefits and Risks of the Study

Participants benefited from participating in the study because they learned more about the commonalities and differences in personal leadership advice across different

professional categories. I will protect all participants' confidentiality and protect them from risks per the human consent form.

Limitations

As with all research studies, this study has limitations that should be acknowledged when interpreting data and considering implications. The primary limitations that exist are: (a) small sample size, (b) gender make-up of coaching participants (c) geographic location of participants. First, six principals and six coaches that were considered successful were interviewed for this study. The total sample size for the study is relatively small. The participants are also affiliated with one school system within driving distance of the primary researcher. All of the coaches that were considered successful are male coaches. The perspective of only male coaches could skew the findings of the coaches.

The visions, beliefs and philosophies, and wisdom captured from the principals and coaches certainly does not reflect all principals and coaches, however, it is reflective of underlying beliefs and philosophies and wisdom that may affect principals' daily decisions. There is still much more that can be learned about principals transforming low performing schools and becoming lead learners.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF PRINCIPALS' AND COACHES' VISIONS, WISDOM, BELIEFS, AND PHILOSOPHIES

Chapter IV presents and analyzes the data collected from the principals and coaches. The charts present the participants' data about vision, beliefs and philosophies, and wisdom. In this chapter I also share an analysis of each participant's vision, beliefs and philosophies, and wisdom as well as resulting themes from the study itself.

Principal Smith

Principal Smith was chosen for the interview process because of her reputation for being a successful leader. She is also leading at a school where parents are very involved and can be very demanding. It is quite the opposite of the Title I school I lead. I thought the perspective into a school that is quite the opposite would provide interesting data.

Principal Smith is a 38-year-old white Caucasian female. She is the principal at a predominantly white middle to upper class school. There are approximately 690 students at her school. This is her second year as the principal at this school. Principal Smith was previously an assistant principal with me at a Title I elementary school for two years. She was also my intern for a full year. She shared with me that her second year as the principal has been more challenging than her first year because she knows more about what has to be accomplished. Principal Smith is now starting her third year as principal of her school.

Principal Smith shared that the belief she always stands by is doing what is best for kids, “I think that most decisions you make, even those quick ones that happen on a daily basis always come back to what is the best thing to do for this child or for this group of kids.” She also stated that while she always does what is best for kids, she has also worked very hard to value her entire staff, and that she says to the staff, “you know when I am talking about teachers, I’m talking about every single person here, our custodian, he is a teacher here.” It is clear that she works to create a culture where everyone feels valued and everyone is responsible for student learning. She wants her staff members to feel comfortable in taking risks and owning their strengths and weaknesses. Principal Smith feels that it very important that she support her staff because she has families that can be quite critical and have high expectations, while this is a good thing, there have been times when parents have crossed the line to almost badgering teachers and teacher assistants, Principal Smith said,

I think that it’s important as a leader to let your staff know expectations but also to stand by them when they need support as well. . . . Again, it comes back to the child, if there’s a complaint and it’s about a child, that’s what we need to focus on and move forward from that.”

Principal Smith focuses on doing what is right for kids and valuing her staff members.

Principal Smith believes that she still struggles at times with conveying the vision: “I think there are different pieces of my vision that because I’m a new leader, sometimes I feel like it’s still coming together . . . all the things I believe are not always aligned perfectly.” She explained that she has asked for a lot of feedback from teachers and staff members regarding what they are doing and why they are doing it, things that are

changing and why they are changing. She shared she has received positive feedback from the teachers and staff members regarding communication. Some of the other things she has done to help the entire staff come together is to have hard conversations in small groups and in large groups:

I think our staff has been uncomfortable at times where we are having conversations in those groups, and when I'm talking about groups I'm talking about our grade level meetings where it's just the grade level, myself, or assistant principal and our academic coach, sometimes a group might be our leadership team.

Principal Smith utilizes empowered groups of teachers and difficult conversations to keep moving forward:

There have been some difficult conversations and the staff was not always comfortable, but I think sometimes change can only happen when people are a little bit uncomfortable, and then we all can work together to move in a direction that we're all moving in. That's been a process this year.

Principal Smith utilizes communication and difficult conversations to instill her vision and philosophies with others. She shared that she works closely together with her assistant principal and academic coach:

I think sometimes they would take pause and want to hear what I thought first, to align themselves with what I thought, that's really not what I wanted, I wanted them to be able to tell me what they *really* think.

Principal Smith explained that she does not want "yes" people, she wants people to challenge her thoughts because she thinks those conversations help people align with the

vision. Principal Smith said the best leadership wisdom she ever received was “do not let things sit for another time.”

She said this means as a leader she has to go forward and address difficult matters and issues, things that she often does not want to deal with:

Take care of what you need to take care of while you need to take care of it. Obviously setting priorities and sometimes things end up falling lower on the priority list, but the things that you really don't want to do, or that you really don't want to have a conversation with a certain staff member or parent or what have you, those are the conversations for me that I need to do first, so that I can problem solve or get past it, or make things better, or whatever it is I need to do.

Principal Smith shared that the best leadership advice she had for me was to remember that “when you're in a school that has things that need to be changed, and I think probably all schools do, that it all can't happen at once, it's like growing a garden, you have to cultivate it.” Principal Smith said this is not easy advice to follow and she reminds herself of this a lot. Principal Smith is one of the principals I had the opportunity to shadow. I was able to observe that her actions aligned with her vision, beliefs and philosophies, and wisdom. I spent a full school day observing Principal Smith.

Principal Smith began her day at the car rider line having open conversations with students and parents as she greeted them and welcomed them to school. Upon entering the school to do morning announcements, she stopped and had several conversations with teachers. Principal Smith attended a parent conference the day I was there and she discussed with the team any changes that would be important to do what was best for the student. She then conducted classroom walkthroughs with her assistant principal for several hours. After the classroom walkthroughs, the principal helped with medical

needs of an exceptional student in a self-contained classroom. Principal Smith then had another parent meeting where she listened attentively to the parent's concerns. At the end of the day she made several parent phone calls and prepared for a staff meeting. The staff meeting focused on making changes to the master school schedule and the principal had sought input from all staff members. I was able to observe Principal Smith having open conversations and open communication with students, parents, and staff members. She made decisions throughout the day that were best for kids and she supported her staff members.

In summary, Principal Smith believes in always putting kids first. She values and supports staff members and honors their strengths and weaknesses. She believes in having clear communication and open conversations with staff members. Principal Smith believes it is important to set priorities and deal with conflict quickly.

Principal Brown

Mr. Brown was chosen because he is leading a Title I school that is very similar to my Title I school and he has a reputation for persevering and being dedicated to students and teachers. Mr. Brown is a middle aged white male. There are approximately 475 kids at his school and the population is a transient population made up of mostly black and Hispanic students. Mr. Brown is in his fourth year as the principal at the school and he was previously an assistant principal for almost two years. He shared with me that he believes that leading a Title I school is more challenging now than it has ever been before.

Mr. Brown explained that he believes relationships, and, as a principal, serving and thinking like a teacher are very important. He shared that he does not ask anyone to do anything that he has not done himself,

so I will do a group, I will clean up the cafeteria, I'll put a desk together, I'll go on a field trip, the things that I want them to make sure that they know that I know how important it is that they get done.

When it comes to thinking like a teacher Mr. Brown said having been a teacher is helpful when he is making decisions and he thinks of it as "putting myself in someone else's shoes and I think that is important." Mr. Brown involves others when developing his vision.

Mr. Brown first asks those he is leading, what is their vision, what they want to see, or what they think could be better and then they work on building the vision together. He provides teachers opportunities to be leaders or puts them in situations where they can reflect on the way things are aligned with the mission and vision of the school. He often puts teachers in situations to make decisions, provide feedback and give input. He believes modeling is important, "I show how we do things, why we do things and talk through things with people." Mr. Brown shared that the children and people he works with drive him to stay in his leadership role. He thinks it is important the children have someone to believe in them,

somebody who believes in them, and the children need someone that will fight for them, and get mad and fight back if someone's trying to say that they can't do something or someone is trying to treat a certain group inequitably or unfair.

He believes helping teachers advocate for students while holding the children to high expectations simultaneously is important. He also helps families advocate for their children.

Mr. Brown believes that you cannot, “love children smart.” He said this is the best leadership wisdom he has ever received. He explained that you can love children and love people and care about children and care about people but “it is not going to meet any kind of academic, instructional, behavioral, emotional, or social goals, it’s not going to do anything if you don’t hold them to high expectations.” The principal believes in high expectations for teachers and for himself, “If somebody really cares about teaching and cares about children, you can help them get better. If they don’t care about getting better, then they don’t need to be part of your organization.” The other leadership wisdom he shared is that “tenure does not protect, does not keep poorly performing teachers around, weak administrators do.” He explained that dealing with poorly performing teachers can be difficult as a leader because you are making a decision that affects someone’s livelihood. Principal Brown shared that the leadership advice he could provide me is to hold people to high expectations but to also realize that teaching is harder now than it has ever been before. He also shared that he felt the job of a teacher is less respected now than it’s ever been.

In summary, Mr. Brown believes in developing relationships with his teachers and he values thinking like a teacher. He believes in servant leadership. Principal Brown believes that seeking feedback and input are important and he clearly communicates with

his staff members. He values working together as a staff. He has high expectations for himself and his staff members.

Mrs. Martin

Mrs. Martin was chosen because she was leading a challenging Title I elementary school and has a strength in developing relationships with diverse students. Mrs. Martin is a middle aged African American female. There are approximately 590 students and the majority of the students are black and Hispanic. Mrs. Martin was in her third year as principal at the school and she was an assistant principal for almost two years. Mrs. Martin shared that she thought my interview questions were “loaded” because of the words I chose to use, particularly the words values and beliefs.

Mrs. Martin considers herself a servant leader. She believes in being a servant leader for each moment. She does not believe in asking people to do things that she would not do herself. She also believes it is important that her team sees her as one of them,

it is not uncommon to see me sweeping or cleaning or washing windows, or taking care of students or helping kids change. It is nothing for me to walk into a classroom and see a teacher in need of a break and just take over the situation and teach in the moment.

Mrs. Martin values all people around her and thinks that everyone has something they can contribute.

Mrs. Martin believes it is important for a leader to recognize that while they have their own values and beliefs, that every person they come in contact with also has their own values and beliefs, thus, it is important to navigate among the commonalities and

differences and “figure out ways to value others’ beliefs and values while still holding true to your own.” She believes that education really is the business of people.

Mrs. Martin believes she has the gift of “gab” and storytelling and utilizes this in leading and getting others to understand the vision. She conveys the vision with telling a lot of stories, having conversations, using visuals and pictures, and she believes silent movies are powerful. She also believes that it is important to engage the staff in activities that will mirror what is being said in the vision:

A lot of times we say things in words but people really can’t actualize or visualize what that is going to look like, and so engaging them in activities that would do that is another way to kind of get that across.

Mrs. Martin also models when conveying the vision:

I really believe that if I have said that we’re going to take this route, if we see someone that’s not taking that route then being willing to have a conversation about why that’s not happening and how I can help support you on getting back on that route.

She believes it is important to have action steps in following up and following through.

She also supports her staff members and empowers them. Mrs. Martin believes empowering staff members is especially important when they are willing to take risks and try new things. She shared it is important to support staff members when they try something they are not used to trying and encouraging them when it does not work out.

Mrs. Martin shared that the best leadership wisdom she has ever received is, “‘what you don’t address, you bless’ and ‘listen for as long as it takes.’” Mrs. Martin shared that a leader transforming a school needs to give themselves time:

My advice would be to listen for as long as it takes, and to recognize that it's not going to happen overnight, it's not going to happen within a year. . . . There are going to be some things that you would like to see immediate changes in that are going to take some time. . . . Give yourself permission to have the time, so taking the time to really—take the time is what I would say.

In summary, Principal Martin believes in being a servant leader. She believes her main job as a principal is serving students, families, and teachers. She communicates her vision for the school with storytelling and modeling. She also has conversations with staff members about the vision for the school. Mrs. Martin believes it is important for a leader to listen. She believes in addressing adult behaviors.

Mr. Wood

Mr. Wood is a 52-year-old Caucasian male who often jokes that he can retire at any time. Mr. Wood shared that he believes that all children can learn, “I know that’s the sickest cliché in education but I think a lot of times the mistakes made in the classrooms is that we try to teach from chapter one to chapter twelve because we have to cover the curriculum.” He explained that he thinks this creates a variety of problems for students; lack of mastery, lack of motivation, and lack of engagement. He believes it is important for educators to learn about their students and create relationships with students. He utilized an example of a particular student he had been working with and getting to know.

The particular student is in tenth grade and is repeating tenth grade. The principal reviewed his records thoroughly from his previous schools and noted to himself that the student had struggled consistently with reading but was close to being on grade level in mathematics. The principal called the counselor from the student’s school and the counselor reported that the student was “no trouble at all.” Mr. Wood shared that this is

the frustrating part of leading at times, “the kid is in academic trouble because he cannot comprehend what he is reading.” Prior to the student being at his school, the principal did not feel that anyone had advocated for the student,

you have to stand up for children and be their advocate because you know, even when I spoke to these parents, they did not know the options for their student, so the belief that all children must learn is the first thing.

Mr. Wood values advocating for students and relationships.

Mr. Wood believes in what he called “distributed leadership” among staff members. He shared one of his biggest pet peeves, “I don’t like to hear people say ‘at my school, or my teachers, or my staff, or my children.’” He shared that this is a possessive pronoun that shows ownership and that he focuses on distributing leadership and finding the “silent” leaders within the school. He believes it is important to find the “silent” leaders because they can be valuable team players who may never “step up to the plate” but still may try to “run the school” from behind the scenes if they are not identified quickly. Mr. Wood utilizes his leadership team and focuses on being transparent, “I will take budget things to leadership and say ‘hey, we’ve got \$6,000 that has to be spent by Friday. What do you need? Let’s prioritize.’” He gets everyone involved, including the custodian of the building,

The classified employees in a school building have more information about what’s going on in your school culture than any teacher or any administrator on campus . . . They are the ones in the hallways with kids every single day and can tell you what is on kids’ minds.

Mr. Wood does not believe anyone should be left out of the leadership realm and that includes creating the vision for the school.

Mr. Wood assesses the school culture prior to creating the vision with his staff members,

When I came here for the first time I assessed the culture of what it looked like here, talked to people so I could get a true assessment of what is really going on and then I put out a form and asked if the school could be anything, what would it look like.

Mr. Wood also sat down with kids and asked kids what they thought the school should look like. He shared that he believes it is important to get “buy in” from all stakeholders when creating a vision for the school, “I don’t really think a principal can take a vision in a building and implement that vision without input from the staff members and giving staff members a voice.” He instills the vision and his philosophies of people he works closest with by modeling:

I don’t ask people to do anything I won’t do myself and that’s anything from mopping a floor, doing bus duty, answering the phones . . . there’s nothing on this campus I ask anybody to do that I do not try to do first.

Mr. Wood believes modeling has an impact on stakeholders and the vision process.

Mr. Wood shared his leadership wisdom with an analogy of a tree and its limbs. He explained,

One should never be afraid to walk out so far on the limb to where the branches are sagging and you stop before the crack, because if you can get that far out of your comfort zone to see what else is out there that could impact what is going on within your organization.

He explained that the broader one's perspective can be, the greater the accomplishments can be for the organization. He also shared,

most people tend to stay close to the base of the tree because that is where the roots are, the limbs are the strongest, and that's where people can set up house and be more comfortable. I don't like to be comfortable because comfort means stagnant to me, and so the biggest advice was to walk out on that limb.

Mr. Wood shared that leaders transforming low performing schools in this era of accountability have to learn to ignore their critics:

my advice is ignore the critics, because 95% of the critics have never walked in your shoes, and when I talk about walk in your shoes I'm not talking about visiting the building, walking in your shoes is showing up weekly and saying how can I help.

Mr. Wood shared that advice should be taken from those who you work with on a regular basis. He also shared that as a leader, it is important to separate your work life from your personal life because working at an at-risk school can drive you 24/7 and it becomes a thankless job that is never ending. He shared it is important to take make time for your family and personal life,

Do something fun for yourself, otherwise it's going to drag you so far into the doldrums that your charisma as a leader—what's coming out of your mouth and what your body is saying—it will not match and people will see straight through it. . . . So you've got to maintain the health and drive from within that you can only build by doing things for yourself.

In summary, Mr. Wood believes that all children can learn. He believes in relationships and distributing leadership to others. Principal Wood continually assesses

the school culture and models. He believes it is important for leaders to get out of their comfort zone.

Mr. Jones

Mr. Jones was chosen because of his passion for serving students. He is leading a very challenging Title I school. Mr. Jones is a 55-year-old Caucasian male. He has been the principal at his school for six years. He was an assistant principal for 6 years prior to his principalship. The demographics of his school are predominantly African American and Hispanic and approximately 620 students are enrolled. The population is a very transient population. Mr. Jones considers himself a servant leader.

Mr. Jones shared that his main philosophy is serving others without wanting to be paid back, “you are in a calling that requires you to serve others unselfishly.” He shared that he does not believe he has a job description and does everything purposefully because he wants to. He explained that serving sometimes means cleaning the school and even cleaning the toilets if necessary. Mr. Jones also believes in leading by example and letting your actions speak louder than your words. He explained that the theme at their school is not to complain, to make it better, “I think if we all pointed the finger at ourselves we would get to a better place.” He said he gets joy out of doing things for others and “spreading sunshine.” Mr. Jones values serving kids.

Mr. Jones explained that kids come first and he is here to serve them. He is aware of the interactions he has daily with others. He explained that one person can have over 200 interactions a day with people, “All 200 better be valuable, better be sunshine and making people feel good, finding the good in people, and finding the good in the

universe.” Mr. Jones values building on strengths that people have and also values forgiveness. He shared that he believes we all should be able to forgive, to apologize, and to say I’m sorry. He believes forgiveness is a powerful thing when it is used correctly. He values people who are good to people regardless of who they are or where they come from, people who are nonjudgmental and purely just want to help other people,

It doesn’t matter if you are a homeless person, a doctor, or a lawyer, you just have to help. To have a hand in someone else’s life is cool, spreading happiness and all those things does not take super powers. You don’t have to be six feet tall; you don’t have to be able to lift two hundred pounds. You just have to have a heart that has desire and anybody can do that.

Mr. Jones feels that making student’s lives better is contagious and that other people will follow that.

Mr. Jones believes that he conveys his vision with the way he walks, talks, and acts with others. He shared that he believes teachers watch and listen to him when he speaks during staff meetings or when he is speaking to organizations. He is aware he represents his school and needs to sell the vision to others. He does this by explaining how he is leading and sharing what he wants to accomplish, “It is through actions and through painting a picture for teachers and spending a lot of one on one time with them because they get comfortable with that.” The principal believes that he accomplishes the most in grade level meetings and data team meetings with teachers. During these meetings he asks critical questions such as: Are we getting there? Is everything we are doing moving us towards that? Are we changing? Are we getting better? The principal

shared that “getting there” is not through some great vision statement. He said the vision statement is the easy part, “You have to live it—we do!” Mr. Jones uses relationships and conversations to share his vision.

Mr. Jones shared that his father provided him with the best leadership wisdom he has ever received. He explained that his father told him a story before he began his teaching career. His father asked him, “who is the greatest teacher?” He replied, “I don’t know” and then guessed a few teachers who had taught him in school and in college. He had not answered correctly. His father said, “let’s think about this, you have known this teacher for over 3,000 years—Jesus Christ was the greatest teacher!” The principal’s father proceeded to ask questions and explain. Did Jesus Christ have small groups? Yes, he had 12 disciples. Did Jesus Christ differentiate His message or was it the same every day? Yes, he differentiated because he met with carpenters, hookers, and worshipers. Was he in his church all of the time? No, he was out talking to people and he was leading by example. Mr. Jones father proceeded to advise him to be loving, passionate, and have forgiveness. He told him he would experience abuse and people would throw stones at him but not to let that get him down but to use it as motivation to work harder. Mr. Jones says his father’s advice before he started teaching still stands true today, “we don’t need any more research or education. We need more doing, more positive, more small groups, more differentiation. We need to bond like crazy with our students, interact, do home visits.” Mr. Jones said everything was figured out for us 3,000 years ago. He believes leaders should follow that and let people follow along. He says if you give unselfishly than you will never get tired. There will be continuous joy and an

incredible journey that will transform many lives. Mr. Jones shared that is the greatest advice he has ever received and he will never forget it, “26 years ago and it’s all proven true! I also read a book called Living, Loving and Learning. It is phenomenal book, totally transformed my life and my future. I pass the book onto teachers.”

In summary, Mr. Jones believes in putting kids first. He believes in servant leadership. He leads by example. Mr. Jones believes in forgiveness and does not judge people. He conveys his vision for the school by modeling and “living” the vision. He develops relationships with staff members and has conversations with them. Mr. Jones’ father taught him that Jesus Christ is the best teacher.

Principal Clark

Principal Clark was chosen for the interview process because of his reputation in successfully leading an alternative school. The alternative school serves students in sixth to eighth grade. The school also has a specialized program for exceptional children in grades kindergarten through eighth grade.

Principal Clark is a 40-year-old white Caucasian male. The enrollment at the school varies depending upon the referrals to the school. The enrollment rarely goes over approximately 100 students. Principal Clark was previously the assistant principal at the school for one year. He is beginning his third year as the principal of the school.

Principal Clark shared that he believes that kids should come first, “everything else must center around them.” He noted that seeing kids succeed is what drives him to stay in a leadership role. Principal Clark shared that when it comes to leadership philosophies he “wears several hats and not all of them are academic.” He said his

approach to leadership is much like his approach to classroom management, “I am part drill instructor and part entertainer. I have found that being a great storyteller certainly benefits me in this current environment.” He shared that his main goal is to enable all students in his charge the opportunity to perform at a high level. He promotes democratic principles with an emphasis on respect for authority and the rights of others. Principal Clark instills his vision and philosophies in those around him by demonstrating expectations and building on the school culture that was there when he first arrived. He feels his vision is conveyed by modeling and speaking it. Principal Clark shared that the best leadership wisdom he ever received had to deal with making major decisions. Whenever Mr. Clark has to make major decisions he asks himself: “Is it safe? Is it legal? Is it good for kids?” The advice that Mr. Clark shared with me is that perseverance is the key to success. He explained that leading involves discouragement but to stick with the plan for success, regardless of how discouraged one gets. Principal Clark is one of the principals I had the opportunity to shadow for the day. He deals with many challenges at the alternative school so one could see how he may get discouraged.

Principal Clark began his day by setting up interviews for a social studies vacancy. He shared with me that it can be challenging to fill vacancies at his school because it is an alternative school. He explained that all but 40 students had transitioned back to their traditional high schools. Principal Clark had staff members calling students who were not in attendance so that they would not fail their courses. He had a long parent meeting for a high school student who was transitioning back to a traditional high school setting. The majority of Principal Clark’s day was spent working one on one with

students. He often has parent meetings to help the students. I observed Mr. Clark give a student money for a haircut before the student left for the day. Mr. Clark's actions show that he puts kids first and works to build a culture that is best for kids.

In summary, Principal Clark believes in doing what is best for kids. He believes in democratic principles, respect for the rights of others, and respect for authority. He often shares his beliefs with others through storytelling. Principal Clark speaks about his vision for the school each day and builds on the culture of the school. He models his vision for others. Mr. Clark asks himself three questions before he makes decisions: "Is it safe?"; "Is it legal?"; "Is it good for kids?"

Coach Roberts

Coach Roberts was chosen for the interview process because of his success coaching softball. In addition, he is very well known and well respected in the community. He is coaching at a school where parents are very involved and can be very demanding.

Coach Roberts is a 50-year-old Caucasian male. He is a girls assistant softball coach at a predominantly white middle class high school. His coaching career consists of 5 years of coaching. In addition to coaching, he is the chaplain for a high school football team and the mascot for the same high school football team. He is also a licensed minister who conducts weddings and funerals. He believes it is important to be well rounded as a leader. Coach Roberts considers himself to be a Christian guy and he stands on those beliefs. He shared that he believes God created us all, loves us all, forgives us

all, and asks us to love each other. Coach Roberts considers himself to be a very enthusiastic person and he believes this helps him to convey his vision.

Coach Roberts believes if you tell somebody something enough then they will start believing it, “like we’re going to win a state championship, at some point we’re going to win one. Sometimes it can be as simple as you’re going to make that play before this year is out, you’re going to make that play.” He also thinks that repetition is a key to success as well. He explained that if your task is the same then repetition and believing in his players will bring success. Mr. Roberts instills his vision and philosophies by modeling. He shared that this can be challenging for him because not everyone believes and feels the same way he does and he works in so many different arenas. He explained that many of the kids he coaches are in youth groups at church, singing on a praise team at church, or on a mission trip, “so the person that they see on the field has to be the same person that they see at church, and the same person they see on the mission trip.” Coach Roberts shared that he is the same person all the time and in order to instill his vision in others you have to live the life you talk about and be the person you say you are.

Coach Roberts shared that he is “belief led” and therefore he leads by what he believes. He also explained that he leads by example and believes the best leaders are those that are seen doing what they say they are going to do outside of the school or practice facility, “for example, if I tell you that I don’t want you going out being crazy every night, you won’t see me out at a local bar drinking.” In addition, the coach thinks it is important for leaders to be compassionate and knowledgeable. He also believes that

mentoring young people involves the mind, body, and soul. The best leadership wisdom Coach Roberts ever received is to be passionate about what you are doing and who you are doing it with. He also shared that his parents always taught him, if you ever start anything, you have to finish it: “If you are going to commit, be committed.” Coach Roberts explained that the best advice he would have for me as a leader is to stay the course, “know that it is a marathon and not a sprint, because it’s not, and it’s not going to change overnight.” Coach Roberts feels it is also important for communities and community leaders to get involved with supporting schools and school leaders.

In summary, Coach Roberts leads based on his beliefs and knowledge. He believes in leading by example and being compassionate. Coach Roberts shares his vision by living the life he talks about and by modeling. He believes in being passionate and being committed to completing something one starts.

Coach Williams

Coach Williams was chosen because of his successful football record at the high school. He is well known and well respected in the school community. The parents in the school community are very involved in the football program.

Coach Williams is a 54-year-old white Caucasian male. He is the head football coach at a predominantly white middle class high school. His coaching career consists of 31 years of coaching. He was also chosen as a Shrine Bowl Coach for the state of North Carolina. Coach Williams values and believes that one should “do what’s right.” He goes on to say, “doing what’s right sometimes is hard but it’s what you’re supposed to

do.” He models this for his football players and involves them in projects that give to the local community,

I think you’ve got to give back to the community as well, and I think that’s something that has promoted or has made our football team and our athletic department, we try to be visible, you know, like coming up here to be involved in your career day, I want to do that.

The coach takes the football players to elementary school events to volunteer because he believes it is important for his players to give back to their local community. He believes in being a pillar in the community and being visible. The coach also believes in leading by example and he models that at football practices.

Coach Williams shared that he makes practices as open and friendly as possible,

If your kid or somebody’s kid wanted to come and be a part then we want that atmosphere to be friendly, where my daughter was at practice yesterday, so she doesn’t have to hear anything that she shouldn’t hear, I think that’s what we want and we expect our coaches to act like that too.

The coach explained that as the head coach he encourages the other coaches to maintain clear communication with the athletes, “If they’ve had something with a kid that day, they need to get with that kid before they leave to go home just to talk and make it right, just make sure they are on the same page before they leave.” The coach believes communication is a key to success. Some of the best leadership wisdom he ever received was related to communication.

Coach Williams shared that his parents had a huge influence on him when he was growing up. The coach shared that growing up he always listened to his mother and

father. His mother always reminded him not to do things he was not supposed to do and his father always told the coach to call him if he needed him. He shared that he remembered asking his mom one day when he had grown up why she told him that every day and she said, “I hoped every day you would listen to it.” The coach believes parents, coaches and other adults influence students’ lives even when they may not realize it. Coach Williams shared an example from one of his assistant coaches. He shared that this particular assistant coach could be “ornery” at times when it came to interacting with a particular player.

There was a player on the team that would wear his shirt over the top of his pads. Coach Williams shared that this could be dangerous because the pads can cut you. The assistant coach would tell the player every day, “_____, pull your shirt down, _____, pull your shirt down.” He then asked the player, “why do I have to tell you that every day?” The player responded one day, “Coach, that’s the only reason you speak to me, that’s the only way you speak to me, is when you tell me that every day.” Coach Williams shared that he thinks the assistant coach learned a lot from those interactions with that player, “So you never know, I mean we don’t know what they go through, we don’t know what these kids live in, we just get them through it.” Coach Williams feels that interactions with players and communication with players is important for their success. The advice he shared with me was that I reach out to get resources for my students and collaborate with other leaders in order to get mentors for my elementary students.

In summary, Coach Williams believes in doing what is right. He believes in giving back to others in the community. He shares his vision by communicating and leading by example. Coach Williams believes kids should listen to their parents' advice and wisdom.

Coach Gonzalez

Coach Gonzalez was chosen because of his successful softball record at his high school. He actually helped to re-build the girls softball program at his high school. He is well known in the school community and well respected. He is known for setting high expectations for the girls on his team.

Coach Gonzalez is a 53-year-old Caucasian male. He is the head softball coach at a predominantly white middle class high school. This is his eighth year in coaching. Coach Gonzalez's philosophy is to work hard and to have a good work ethic. He believes one way to build a hard-working team is to build confidence in players. He shared the way he builds confidence in female athletes:

We build their confidence first, and then because I want this kid to play outfield for me, she has to believe in me . . . How is she going to believe in me if she has no confidence? So we put her into the weight room, we put her into mental toughness, physically tough and confidence.

He shared that this does not start on the field but in the weight room. Coach Gonzalez shared that he expects his girls to work harder than any team at the school. He values work and his players getting an education.

Coach Gonzalez shared that he believes it is most important for the player to be a student first and then a softball player: "My main goal at our school is not winning a state

championship . . . My main goal is for the kids to go to school and do well plus play softball.” He shared that the main beliefs he stands by is having a good work ethic in all that you do and setting good examples. He believes that has worked out well for his team. He admitted that he believes it is hard for his assistant coaches to coach with him: “It’s hard coaching with me because that’s all I think about is softball and so I put a lot of pressure on them.” He shared that his previous year of coaching involved over 2,000 hours in the softball program. He understands that he is demanding: “I want something just right . . . We’re not going to do it just half, we’re going to do it right.” The coach instills this in those around him by showing them that the system works. He spoke of girls that continued through college and girls that went to college and played softball: “You have to show that what you’re trying to do works and believe in what we do.” He shared that the kids he coaches drive him to stay in his coaching role. Some of the best leadership advice he has ever received was based on what he has read about other respected coaches.

Coach Gonzalez noted that he thinks a lot of Coach K at Duke University. He explained that he had read books about Coach K, Dean Smith, John Wooten, Pat Summit, Patty Gasso, and Patrick Murphy. Coach Gonzalez share that the best advice he could give me is to not ever give up on a kid, “Don’t ever give up on a kid, just don’t ever, no matter how bad, or what he or she does, don’t ever give up on them.” He said he feels as if there are some adults that give up on kids, “if all of us adults would save one kid, just one, look how much better the world would be.”

In summary, kids drive Coach Gonzalez to continue coaching. He believes in having a good work ethic and setting a good example. He conveys his vision by teaching his athletes to do the best in everything that they do. Coach Gonzalez shows athletes that the hard work they do pays off. He believes coaches can continue to learn by reading about successful coaches.

Coach Johnson

Coach Johnson was chosen because he is an elementary physical education teacher with whom I have worked and he has experienced a variety of successful coaching roles. The majority of his coaching is with girls softball. He is well known and well respected in the school community. Coach Johnson is a 61-year-old white Caucasian male. He is currently coaching girls softball for a middle school. This is his ninth year in coaching with a school district. He previously coached recreational softball for 31 years.

Coach Johnson shared that he values honesty and hard work and that he models this in his gym classes as well, “I need to show that, I need to be that example.” Coach Johnson explained that he wants his girls to be good winners and good losers. He thinks that all comes from being a good role model for them. When I asked him how he shared his vision with his girls he was very honest, “poorly at times, unfortunately—well you want honesty, right?” He brings his girls together and talks with them as a team, sets team goals, and then individual goals for athletes. Coach Johnson shared that he explains what he expects from his girls and areas in which he would like for them to succeed. He also shared that it is not about winning, “If I can teach these girls the fundamentals, let

them have some fun learning about it, then they'll be successful whether they win or lose, it's all about giving effort." He emphasized the importance of continuing to learn as a coach so he could help his players grow.

The best leadership wisdom Coach Johnson said he has ever received is to be yourself,

because as a leader we're going to make mistakes, and be honest if we make a mistake, not to hide a mistake or let our players or anybody else think we're perfect, because I'm still learning about this thing called coaching and teaching, honestly.

Coach Johnson shared that he hopes to continue to learn until he retires. He believes that teachers and coaches need to continue to learn and grow in order to grow their teams. He shared with me some strengths he felt I had as a leader and he said, "honestly, my advice to you, keep doing what you're doing, keep putting the kids first."

In summary, Coach Johnson believes in being a good role model for his athletes. He believes in hard work and leading by example. Coach Johnson conveys his vision by communicating with his athletes and setting goals for his athletes. He believes that it is important to continue to learn and grow. He believes it is important to be honest about mistakes and to learn from them.

Coach Miller

Coach Miller was chosen because of his successful high school girls track coaching. He is well known in the school community and well respected. He is known for setting high expectations for the girls on his team. Coach Miller is an older African

American male coach. He is the head track coach at a high school that is predominantly African American and Latino. This is his 24th year in coaching.

Coach Miller has an interesting perspective on his leadership philosophies, “I have my own way of doing things and if we can’t do them my way then it can’t be part of the team, it’s just that simple.” He feels it is the coach’s responsibility to lead the athletes. He explained that the leaders on the track team are the ones that come to practice and do what they are supposed to do. Coach Miller values being a good person and expects other coaches to model that as well,

you have to be a good person, in fact oftentimes I hear of coaches using profanity and in fact, one of the football coaches was up in the hall a few minutes ago just cussing and all that, and I just told him straight up, you don’t need to be cussing in here.

Coach Miller believes that his players need to be of good character so he models that and expects other coaches to do the same. He conveys his vision to his team by accepting no less than their best.

Coach Miller shared that sometimes he has to talk to his girls about their best not being good enough,

we’re going to accept no less than your best and sometimes your best isn’t good enough. You have to do what’s necessary, so you know, when you say, ‘well I’m doing the best I can’, I oftentimes tell them I have more faith and more confidence in yourself than you do, and it’s not supposed to be that way.

The coach said he does not leave anything to chance so everything that is done is geared toward helping his athletes get in a position where later on they will have a higher quality

of life than what they are currently experiencing. Coach Miller shared that he instills his vision in his athletes by holding them accountable.

He explained that his athletes know that he will be there every day for them. He talks with them about how they may not be able to control the situation they are born into and what they live in but they are going to be held accountable, “they’re going to be held accountable for their behavior, their efforts in their classroom, their efforts out here, the way they respect people and all of that, those are things they can control.” He explained that his vision every day is to let them know that these are the things that are important, it doesn’t matter what they have financially, it is where they want to go and what they want to do. The coach shared that he coached many successful athletes that believed and followed the plan and they are doing well. The coach shared that the best leadership wisdom he has ever received was “don’t coach the athlete out of being good.” Coach Miller explained that if the athlete is naturally good at something, you should add to that and not take it away from them. He also explained it is important for coaches to listen to their athletes. He shared with me that it is important that I understand that kids cannot help the situation they are born into or forced into but there are certain things they need to be held accountable for: “the way they act, their respect for people, their ethics and all that and anything else we’re supposed to take care of it, economics should never be a reason that these kids should fail or shouldn’t get a chance.” Coach Miller is the coach that I had an opportunity to observe because I conducted his interview at his practice site.

When I arrived to interview Coach Miller the office staff informed me that he was at the track. I eventually found Coach Miller and he continued to coach his track athletes

while I asked my interview questions. I was able to see that Coach Miller is so passionate about coaching, he was not going to stop for my interview. I could see that the athletes understood their plan for their daily practice and they knew that Coach Miller had high expectations for them. Coach Miller truly modeled that his athletes come first at all times.

In summary, Coach Miller believes in being a good person. He maintains high expectations for himself and for his athletes. He models good character for his athletes and teaches them about preparing for their future. Coach Miller conveys his vision by holding his athletes accountable and having them follow his plan. He teaches athletes to be respectful and believe in themselves. Coach Miller believes in listening to his athletes. He believes it is important that coaches understand that they do not know everything.

Coach Taylor

Coach Taylor was chosen because of his successful basketball coaching record at the high school level and because he recently transitioned to being an athletic director for all athletics. I thought the perspective of transitioning from a head coach to an athletic director would provide interesting data. Coach Taylor had five state championships in his tenure as a basketball coach. He is well known in the school community and well respected. He has always been known for setting high expectations for the athletes on his teams. Coach Taylor is a 46-year-old African American male. The majority of his coaching experience took place at a high school that is predominantly African American and Latino. His coaching career consists of twenty years of coaching.

Coach Taylor values doing what is right for kids. He explained that he feels that procedures, protocols, and rules can sometimes get in the way of doing what is best for kids. He shared that sometimes it is important to look at things from a different perspective,

if that means that we have to use resources that we haven't used, or if that means we have to do something a little different than I am open to doing it, because ultimately we want kids to have the best experience possible.

Coach Taylor shared that his leadership philosophies focus on involving others around him, "I like group think, you know I think there is more than one way to skin a cat so I am very receptive to listening to different ideas on ways to do certain things." He believes people should be included in the decision-making process but said there are also times when a leader or coach has to make the final decision and "stand on it." He shared one of the adages he refers to often, "you measure twice and cut once, which means you think about it a little before you go make a hasty decision." Coach Taylor conveys his vision to those around him by talking about it.

Coach Taylor shared that in addition to talking about your vision and making sure it is clearly understood, you must live it. He used a coaching example to explain: "like if I said my vision is I want us to be the best man-to-man defensive team in the state then I need you to buy in." He talked about explaining it, showing it, living it, practicing it, and understanding the pitfalls as well:

if I say we want to be the best man-to-man team in the state and we never do defensive drills then I'm just talking and not practicing what I preach, so I think

your structuring it with your organization, your vision, and your practices have to align.

The coach shared that part of aligning can mean being a good listener. Coach Taylor's advice for me was to keep doing what I am doing.

In summary, Coach Taylor believes in doing what is right for kids. He believes in honesty. Coach Taylor conveys his vision by communicating with groups of people and listening. He noted the importance of listening to his parents. Relationships is also noted from other participants. Table 1 contains a summary analysis of the data from the participants.

Table 2

Summary Analysis of Participant Data

Participant	Vision	Beliefs & Philosophies	Wisdom
Principal Smith	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • open conversations • communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • kids first • value staff • support staff • honor strengths and weaknesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • don't procrastinate • set priorities • deal with conflict quickly
Principal Brown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • modeling • communicate • work together • feedback and input 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relationships • serve • think like a teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you cannot "love them smart" • high expectations • weak administrators keep poor teachers
Principal Martin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • story telling • conversations • modeling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • servant leader • serve students, families, teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listen for as long as it takes • what you don't address, you bless

Table 2

Cont.

Participant	Vision	Beliefs & Philosophies	Wisdom
Principal Wood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • modeling • continually assessing the culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all children can learn • relationships • distributed leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • walk out on a limb • get out of your comfort zone
Principal Jones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • modeling • not some 'great statement' you have to 'live it' • conversations • relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • kids first • servant leadership • lead by example • forgiveness • nonjudgmental 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus Christ is the greatest teacher (lessons from Jesus Christ)
Principal Clark	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • modeling • speak about it daily • build on the culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • storyteller • kids first • democratic principles • respect for authority • respect for rights of others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it safe? • Is it legal? • Is it good for kids?
Coach Roberts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • live the life you talk about • modeling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lead by example • compassion • knowledge • belief led 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be passionate • if you start something, finish it • if you commit, be committed
Coach Williams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lead by example • communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • do what is right • give back 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listening to my parents
Coach Gonzalez	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • do the best you can in everything • show them it work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • kids drive me • set good examples • have a good work ethic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • read about successful coaches
Coach Johnson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communication • set goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hard work • be a good role model • lead by example 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be honest about mistakes • continue to learn • if you are not learning, you are not growing

Table 2

Cont.

Participant	Vision	Beliefs & Philosophies	Wisdom
Coach Miller	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hold athletes accountable • teach them respect • teach them to believe • follow a plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be a good person • teach athletes about their future • model good character • high expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listen to the athlete • don't coach the athlete out of being good • don't think you know everything
Coach Taylor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listen • communication • group think 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • do what is right for kids • be honest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listen to your parents

Common Themes in the Interviews

A further analysis of the participants' vision, beliefs and philosophies, and wisdom shows common themes, some of which may be utilized by principals like myself who are transforming low performing schools. One common theme from participants was building relationships and supporting and valuing people. Each principal interviewed had building relationships or supporting and valuing people in their vision or philosophies and beliefs.

Building Relationships and Supporting and Valuing People

Principal Brown, Principal Jones, and Principal Wood all specifically talked about the importance of relationships with regards to beliefs and philosophies or the vision. Those principals who did not specifically utilize the word relationship still referenced the importance of valuing and supporting people. Principal Smith shared that something she works very hard on is valuing her entire staff, "Our instructional assistants, they are

teachers, and that everybody has value.” Principal Smith values people and that has a direct effect on building relationships with her staff members. Principal Martin did not mention relationships or valuing people when I asked specifically about her vision or beliefs and philosophies but she did say she believes in serving students, families, and teachers. In addition, when I probed more when interviewing her, I asked, “What do you value and believe?” Mrs. Martin responded with

I value people more than I value things, and I value their thoughts more than I value what they have, I just value people and I feel like education really is the business of people and so I feel like that is the meat of what we do really.

Mrs. Martin’s focus on valuing people and serving people certainly helped her with building relationships.

Mr. Clark is the only principal that did not mention relationships or valuing people. Mr. Clark believes in democratic principles and respect for others. From this, one could surmise he understands the importance of valuing people. Mr. Clark is the principal of the alternative school and has a very small staff. It should be noted that according to his latest Teacher Working Conditions Survey, 100% of his teachers think his school is a comfortable place to work and learn.

Kouzes and Posner explain leadership as a relationship itself, “It’s a relationship between those who aspire to lead and those who choose to follow” (Kouzes & Posner, 2006, p. 48). Leadership requires engaging others, whether it is with a few people or many people. Kouzes and Posner also explain that no matter how much formal power and authority a position gives someone, a lasting legacy will only happen if others want

to be in the relationship with the leader, thus the importance of relationships and valuing people.

Kids First and Serving Kids

All of the principals interviewed talked about kids being first or serving kids when they discussed their beliefs and philosophies. Principal Smith, Principal Jones, and Principal Clark all explained that kids come first in all decisions that they make. Principal Brown and Principal Martin did not utilize the terms “kids first” but rather they explained that they feel as if their job is to serve students. Principal Brown is a strong advocate for students and their families, “I think the advocacy piece of education is important for me, and helping, helping people, helping teachers and adults in building advocate for kids.” Principal Martin said she is here to serve students and families, “just any way that I can support and serve our students and families, that’s what I’m here to do.” It is clear that Principal Martin puts kids first with her servant leadership style. It is necessary for students to be first in order to improve student achievement and improve low performing schools. Case study research indicates that successful schools share a common purpose and common belief that all students can learn (Duke et al., 2005). School leaders must keep students at the forefront of their decision making.

Communication

All of the principals interviewed, except for one, shared that communication was a part of the way they share their vision with staff members. Principal Wood is the only principal that did not mention communication. While he did not specifically mention communication when conveying his vision, he did explain that he gets everyone

involved, “getting everybody involved all the way down to the custodian, and not letting people think it is just the principal and the teachers.” It is apparent that all of the principals see the need to be effective communicators. Principals build trust through clear communications and expectations. Trustworthiness goes beyond integrity and includes real competence as well. Leaders need to be true to their word and very good at what they do (Fullan, 2014). Kirtman (2013) explains that spreading trust also means ensuring that there is a clear understanding of key communications.

Modeling

All but one of the principal participants explained that modeling was a key to imparting their vision to the staff members. Principal Smith is the only principal who did not talk about modeling with regards to the vision for her school. Principal Smith shared that there were many times when she felt her staff would “take pause” to hear first what she thought the vision for the school should be, “I want them to be able to tell me what they really think.” Principal Smith indicated that she felt her staff members challenging her with difficult conversations would help them get to a vision for their school, “I think when you have those conversations, then you are aligning people with the vision because the vision just can’t be my vision, it needs to be our vision.” Modeling is important for principals to understand.

Modeling, Leading, Teaching

The coaches interviewed all talked about modeling, leading, or teaching. Coach Roberts explained that coaching and mentoring athletes involves many aspects, “it’s got to be mind, body, and soul.” He also explained that he thinks the best leaders are those

that are seen doing what they said they were going to do outside of the school or practice facility, Coach Roberts believes in leading by example. Coach Williams also explained the importance of being a good role model for students, “be a pillar in the community and be seen, do what’s right.” He shared that he talks with his coaches about being good role models,

we don’t want parents sitting out there watching us practice but if your kid or somebody’s kid wanted to come and be a part, then we want a friendly atmosphere, so she doesn’t have to hear anything she should not hear.

He explained that his coaches are not going to curse but they may raise their voices. Coach Williams and his assistant coaches are role models. Coach Gonzalez believes in modeling hard work and showing the athletes that the system works. His main belief is to have a good work ethic in all that he does, “set good examples, be different than everybody else, that works out pretty good for us.” Coach Johnson shared that he believes in the importance of being a good role model for the athletes, “I try to be a good role model and be a good sport, not arguing with the officials, I try to lead by example. I don’t like someone that tells me to do one thing and then does something else.” He explained that a lot of his philosophy came from his former high school coach that had a lasting impact on him. He shared that he models honesty and hard work, “if I want my athletes to work hard, and my students even in class to work hard, I need to show that, I need to be that example.” Coach Miller did not specifically use the word model or lead by example but it was clear from interviewing him that he models and teaches effort and hard work to his athletes. He was the only coach I interviewed that did not stop his

practice for me to interview him. I stood with him and asked my interview questions while he continued to monitor his athletes on the track. He was clearly modeling the importance of not missing a practice. He shared that he had a lot of athletes that came through his program and they are doing well because they believed and followed the plan. Coach Miller teaches his athletes as well as trains them. Coach Taylor did not specifically use the words leading by example or modeling but rather discussed actions aligning with words, “you’re structuring it with the organization.” The coaches also shared the importance of accountability for the athletes.

Accountability

The coaches also shared the importance of accountability for the athletes. It is interesting to note that in the era of accountability in education, principals did not discuss accountability in regards to vision, mission and beliefs, or wisdom. All of the coaches discussed the athletes being held accountable. Coach Roberts referenced having his players understand the importance of practice and believing in themselves, “you’re going to make that play before this year is out, repetition is a key too, if your task is the same, repetition and doing that will actually help you be successful.” Coach Williams holds his athletes accountable for their performance and for giving back to the community. His football players are book buddies with elementary students. He explained he feels it is important to teach his athletes to give to others. Coach Gonzalez teaches his athletes to work hard, “we try to outwork every team, work harder than any kid and any school in our area or anywhere.” Coach Gonzalez holds his athletes accountable for having a good work ethic. Coach Johnson holds his athletes accountable by expecting them to work

hard and learning the fundamentals, “if I can teach these girls the fundamentals and let them have some fun learning about it, and then they’ll be successful, whether they win or lose, it’s all about giving effort.” Coach Johnson works hard as a coach and he expects his girls to work hard as well. Coach Miller holds his athletes accountable for their behaviors, their academics, and their future, “I don’t allow them to do things that are contrary to their best interest.” Coach Miller works with many athletes that live in poverty and does not allow this to be an excuse for them, “economics should never be an excuse that these kids should fail or shouldn’t get a chance.” Coach Miller has high expectations for his athletes and does not allow for excuses. Coach Taylor’s competitive nature and his fight to win and get what he wants for his athletes showed through in his interview. He shared a story of getting a technical foul and not regretting it, because it was for his athletes. He also shared his honesty in getting the best for his players, “I can be honest and say it in a way that you know, you understand, but you may walk away saying, he kind of chewed me.” Coach Taylor’s drive to win with his athletes is evident.

Listening and Learning from Others

All of the coaches noted they listen and learn from others, whether it was someone significant in their lives or their beliefs that led them to listen and learn. Coach Roberts considers himself to be “belief led” and he shares this with his players, “Today my devotion is on the parable of the sower of seeds and where the seeds might lay and what Jesus might have meant by that.” Coach Roberts’ Christian beliefs that he learned growing up continue to drive him as a coach. Coach Taylor and Coach Williams both noted the importance of listening to their parents. Coach Taylor recalled questioning his

mom, “Why do I have to do it?” He noted he always listened to his parents but wishes they had explained more to him. He shared that when explaining to others, leaders should be sure to explain ‘why.’ Coach Williams noted that growing up, “You listen to your parents.” His mother always reminded him to ‘do what he was supposed to do’ and his father told him to call him if he ever needed him. Coach Gonzalez continues to learn from others by reading about successful coaches and attending clinics. He also encourages his athletes to read. Coach Johnson believes in continually learning, “I think if we’re not learning as a teacher or coach, we’re not growing and our team won’t grow.” Coach Johnson believes in continuous growth. Coach Miller believes in listening to those around him, especially his athletes, “don’t think you know everything, sometimes you have to listen to them.” The coaches believe in listening and learning. Two of the principal participants noted listening or learning. Principal Martin shared that she believes leaders should listen for as long as it takes. Principal Martin understands the importance of listening to learn. Principal Jones shared that he believes Jesus Christ is the greatest teacher so he has learned from Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER V

A PRINCIPAL'S THREE-YEAR JOURNEY TO TRANSFORM A SCHOOL

In Chapter V I present my real-world leadership experiences. The purpose of this chapter is to share the real challenges that I experienced while transforming a low performing school.

“The real-world leadership experience” is a composite story of my three-year journey as a principal working to transform a low performing school. I was previously the principal at a low performing school for 6 years and I have a passion for transforming low performing schools. I have been the principal at Hill Elementary for three years. I have maintained journals since my arrival at Hill Elementary. I have a total of seven journals with various notes, reflections, crucial conversations, stories, and brutal truths.

The composite story that follows is what a leader transforming a low performing school encounters. The story contains the key events that helped me learn and grow as a leader. While I was transforming Hill Elementary, I was simultaneously conducting my research and learning from the coaches and principals I was interviewing. The key events contain my beliefs and how I responded. The key events also contain how the principals and coaches may have responded to the events, based on their visions, beliefs, and philosophies.

Key Event #1: Arrival at Hill Elementary

I began at Hill Elementary in January 2013. I was approached about the position because of my previous experience in a similar Title I school. I thrive on challenges as a leader and transforming low performing schools is a daily challenge. I knew my 6 years of previous experience as a principal would serve me well at Hill Elementary. I also knew I was going into a challenging position but I would find out very quickly that it was much more challenging than my previous principalship. I was introduced to the staff at Hill Elementary in December 2012, prior to the district's Christmas break, I informed the staff of my background as an educator and leader and explained that I would always put 'kids first' and I would always make decisions based on 'kids first.'

Prior to my official start date at Hill Elementary, our director sent my assistant principal and me to visit another Title I school that had gotten out of failing status. My assistant principal and I came back and discussed and reflected on what we saw. The principal had shared a poem that had great meaning to her and she said she would re-read it from time to time. The poem is titled "It Couldn't Be Done."

It Couldn't Be Done

Somebody said that it couldn't be done,
But, he with a chuckle replied
That "maybe it couldn't," but he would be one
Who wouldn't say so till he'd tried.
So he buckled right in with the trace of a grin
On his face. If he worried he hid it.
He started to sing as he tackled the thing
That couldn't be done, and he did it.

Somebody scoffed: "Oh, you'll never do that;
At least no one has done it";

But he took off his coat and he took off his hat,
 And the first thing we knew he'd begun it.
 With a lift of his chin and a bit of a grin,
 Without any doubting or quiddit,
 He started to sing as he tackled the thing
 That couldn't be done, and he did it.

There are thousands to tell you it cannot be done,
 There are thousands to prophesy failure;
 There are thousands to point out to you one by one,
 The dangers that wait to assail you.
 But just buckle it in with a bit of a grin,
 Just take off your coat and go to it;
 Just start to sing as you tackle the thing
 That "couldn't be done," and you'll do it.

By Edgar Albert Guest

The poem really resounded with me because of the challenges a leader faces in transforming a low performing school. Leaders in low performing schools encounter people who have the mindset that "it cannot be done" or it already would have been done. I have found you have to keep your staff focused on what can be done. "It Couldn't Be Done" kind of lights a fire inside that makes you want to fight for kids to have the best each day. Leaders must have a passion within them and create a positive culture around them. I spent a great deal of my first month at Hill Elementary listening and observing but there were also some changes that needed to be made in order to do what was best for kids.

I knew since I was arriving in the middle of the year that I would spend a great deal of time observing, listening, and planning. However, I also knew from my previous experience as a principal that there are times when you must make changes that are best for kids. One thing I addressed immediately was staff members going across the street

during a break in their schedule to make purchases from the local store. I also found that I had staff members ordering food and having it delivered to school. I addressed these staff members with one on one conversations explaining that we needed to put kids first and we could not lose a minute of instructional time. In addition, staff members had been allowed to be out sick without notifying an administrator. I handled that situation with an email to those individual staff members. I remember being shocked that any of this was ever allowed. I am so passionate about putting kids first and doing what is best for kids, it is a strong belief of mine.

My arrival at Hill Elementary (Key Event #1) taught me a valuable leadership lesson. As a leader who has always worked in low performing schools that need to be transformed, I assumed I would begin with a focus on improving instruction and working together in collaborative teams. Instead I learned to adjust my leadership style. I had to reframe and focus on communicating to staff members the dramatic need for change. I had to communicate clear purposes and find advocates within the staff before we could improve instruction and work together. I learned the importance of situational leadership. I also learned that while low performing schools have many of the same needs for improvement, the leader will need to adjust his/her style at times, in order to maintain the improvement process. Key Event #1 shows my strong beliefs for putting kids first, being passionate about what you do, and never giving up. When I look back upon Key Event #1 I realize there was a need for open conversations with staff members. Having open conversations with staff members builds trust and helps to build relationships.

Principal Smith, Principal Martin, and Principal Jones all noted having open conversations with staff members. I learned from the principals that open conversations are keys to communicating with their staff members. Coach Williams, Coach Johnson, and Coach Taylor also specifically noted communication. Upon reflecting on this Key Event and the principals' and coaches' beliefs in communicating their visions for success, I realize the value of open and honest conversations. Open and honest conversations help leaders to develop relationships. Why have I learned relationships are so important in leading? A great part of leadership is about relationships with those around you.

Key Event #2: Grade Level Meetings

I attended all of the grade level meetings and realized quickly that there was not a focus on data driven instruction in reading or math. I remember thinking as a leader, what have I gotten myself into? How in the world am I going to move this school forward? I knew I would need to prioritize. What would get us the most growth from students for the rest of the school year? I knew from listening at the grade levels that the lack of focus on data driven instruction was a number one priority for the remainder of the school year. When I attended my first grade level meetings I listened, observed, and took notes. I had learned from my previous tenure as a principal that when you are new to transforming a school that you take that opportunity to get all that you can for your kids.

I spent the majority of my first couple of months at Hill Elementary listening. I believe it is very important for leaders to listen but we often forget how much we can learn by doing so. After we purchased the guided reading text for the small literacy

groups I knew from attending grade level meetings that teachers needed work stations for literacy and math activities. We had discussed the importance of students being engaged in purposeful and meaningful instruction during literacy and math small group time. If students were not working with the teacher then we wanted them working on meaningful work that would continue to help them grow. We purchased literacy and math small group materials. We also discussed the Foundations program being implemented with consistency and fidelity in kindergarten and first grade. Foundations is a program that teachers conduct with all of the students for thirty minutes each day. It focuses on students learning their letters, phonics, phonemic awareness, and some writing. I have never been a “program” principal but the kindergarten and first grade teachers felt it was beneficial for their students. We decided to leave the Foundations program in place but I made a mental note to do some more research on the Foundations program. I believe it is imperative to implement respected research based strategies for students. Now that we had materials and resources in place for students, it was time to examine our human resources and ensure all personnel were being utilized to do what was best for kids.

In my walkthroughs in the classrooms I had observed some practices that were not best practices. I had even observed round robin reading! I was astonished because I thought we all knew that round robin reading went away over twenty years ago. I was proactive though instead of being reactive. My academic coach and I had a meeting with the instructional assistants. We decided to ask them what they felt they needed to be successful in serving our students. Several of them explained that they needed a refresher on guided reading training and would like our academic coach to provide that for them.

We arranged a session for them and planned for future “lunch bunches.” Lunch bunches are sessions for instructional assistants or teachers where the academic coach conducts training with them and they have lunch. We also ensured that instructional assistants did not have any down time in their schedules. I knew from my experience at my previous school that the next step was to ensure I had effective teacher teams collaborating together. In my previous principalship I had to help rebuild dysfunctional teacher teams so I had learned various lessons about building teacher teams. I learned even more about rebuilding teams at Hill Elementary.

I had to learn a valuable lesson about rebuilding successful teams that work together to focus on student achievement. I learned that just because a team of teachers is working in a grade level team or a professional learning community, it does not make them a genuine team. I actually had teams of teachers that met Patrick Lencioni’s 5 dysfunctions of a team:

1. Inattention to results
2. Avoidance of accountability
3. Lack of commitment
4. Fear of conflict
5. Absence of trust (Lencioni, 2002).

I have also learned that strengthening teams is a continuous work in progress. A valuable personal lesson I learned is that I view myself as collaborative in nature and I do like to collaborate with others. However, I question processes frequently and I have high expectations for those around me.

Principal Smith, Principal Martin, Principal Jones, and Principal Brown all believe in serving, valuing and supporting teachers. Principal Brown specifically noted his continuous focus on working together “‘give them a chance to give their feedback and input’ . . . talk through things with people.” Principal Brown even noted the importance of “thinking like a teacher.” These principal participants taught me that being a supportive and collaborative leader is still an area of growth for me.

Key Event #3: Creating Collaborative Data Teams

Our district was offering data team training and requiring a grade level team from each school to attend. I asked our leadership team and teacher leaders how they felt about the training and if they thought Hill Elementary should train every grade level team. I feel it is important to get teacher feedback and “buy in” when making decisions. It was not difficult to get “buy in” because our end of grade test scores and other data did not look promising. The leadership team and grade teams decided we should train every grade level. It proved to be one of the best decisions we would make as a school. We all attended training that summer and we were able to implement data teams for the following school year. We started the next school year excited to focus on data driven instruction. The data team training had taught us a great deal about providing data driven instruction to our students. The teachers and I learned about creating norms for teams, common formative assessments, teaching for mastery and post assessments. What did all of this mean about the way we would do business for kids?

We started by creating norms for each team. The norms would be how they would collaborate together as a team. I had learned how important norms are for teams

because of my previous experience of working with teams without norms. The teams met with me and my assistant principal and developed their norms. We ensured that all team members had input into developing the norms. Once the norms were developed the team members voted for a data team leader. The data team leader would lead the meetings and develop the meeting agenda with input from all team members. We decided to have data team meetings every Thursday while students are in specials. We decided to focus on literacy first. The data team process for students and teachers looks like this:

1. Assess students
2. Teach students based on the assessment
3. Reassess to see what students have learned
4. Reteach where students have gaps in achieving

The teachers began sharing their students across the grade level during small group literacy time. Once the literacy process was in place we moved to focus on math as well. Currently, our second through fifth grade data teams share students in reading and math. As a leader I think the data team process helped remove us from the “failing” status we were once in. When you are working on transforming a low performing school you have to prioritize the areas you are working to improve on.

I have always believed and modeled that it is a strength for a leader to “own” their strengths and weaknesses so that they can improve as a leader and person. I have to admit that I am very open to feedback and improving but I do not actively seek out people to provide that to me. I asked a central office school improvement and curriculum

leader to start attending our data team meetings. She was able to provide us with observations and information that I had never even considered before.

I learned the valuable lesson of seeking feedback that is objective. Seeking objective feedback can take your teams to another level. I also learned the valuable lesson of listening. Listening to understand is very different than listening to respond. As a leader I know I often listen to reply.

Principal Brown believes in actively seeking feedback and input from his teachers. I learned from Principal Brown that when he seeks feedback from his teachers he is an active listener, listening to understand, not listening to respond. Two of the coaching participants noted the importance of listening. Coach Miller and Coach Taylor both believe in the importance of listening. Coach Miller even noted “listening to the athlete” and not “thinking you know everything.” These participants taught me the importance of truly listening. It is an area of growth for me as a leader because I am a “do-er” by nature. I have read more since interviewing the participants about what listening really means. Listening by nature, is not easy for me to do because listening is not just about the words people are speaking, “It’s also about what is unspoken. It’s about reading between the lines. It’s about paying attention” (Kouzes & Posner, 2006, p. 113). Perhaps being a “do-er” makes the “paying attention” part for me difficult. I am always thinking of what to do next, thus, not actively listening.

Key Event #4: Assistant Principal Moves to a Principalship

We started the 2014-2015 school year together but on the first day of school for our students we made the announcement that she would be moving to a principalship.

The timing was terrible because it was the first day of school but the announcement had to be made that day because the school board had approved it the night before. My assistant principal leaving had an impact on our school culture. She was a strong instructional leader and she had developed many relationships with students, teachers, and community members. Our school community was sad to see her go. We knew she was irreplaceable but our leadership team and I created an interview committee to find a new assistant principal. I had an intern my first full year at Hill Elementary and we had worked well together. The committee and I chose her for our new assistant principal. She was with us for almost 2 years and then she was appointed to be a principal as well. It was at this time that I realized that the district leaders viewed me as a principal who could grow and coach leaders. I am a humble leader and a lifelong learner. I took this opportunity to do some reflecting and talk with both assistant principals about what I did to help them grow as leaders. I knew our discussions would only further my growth as a leader. The following is what they shared with me that I taught them and helped them grow:

1. Know thyself
2. Put kids first at all times
3. Empower teacher leaders
4. Address bad practices
5. Lead by example
6. Surround yourself with good people
7. Take care of teachers because they take care of our kids

8. Always remember where you came from or started
9. Have a coach or mentor you can call and talk to anytime
10. Work with your assistant principal as a team

I am fortunate to have yet another assistant principal at Hill Elementary who brought with him some experience from the middle school level. He shared with me what I have taught him in our work together.

I have learned that growing leaders is a passion for me and a strength I have. I have also learned that having turnover in assistant principals (even when they are being promoted), is not best for kids, staff, or the principal when you are trying to transform a school. A strong administrative team has the most impact on improving instruction, other than the classroom teachers.

I believe it takes practice to get better at anything and that includes leadership. Leading by example sounds simple but there is practice involved. More importantly, deliberate practice and the availability of feedback. I think that deliberate practice and feedback helped my assistant principals grow quickly. They had me to be an example, coach, and mentor. Kouzes and Posner (2016) confirm my beliefs, “You need a coach, mentor, or some other third party to help analyze how you did. And that person needs to be someone who is capable of giving constructive, even painful, feedback” (p. 16). Feedback is a crucial means to keep growing as a leader. I believe that is part of leading my example.

All of the principal participants except one believed that modeling or leading by example should be part of a leader’s vision or philosophies and beliefs. All of the

coaches interviewed believed in modeling or leading by example. Leading by example is a belief of mine that aligns with the participants' beliefs.

Key Event #5: Personnel Issues

My second year at Hill Elementary would prove to be the most challenging year. I think one of the most difficult leadership lessons that I still struggle with centers around making assumptions. I do not intend to make assumptions but when I reflect I realize that I frequently make the mistake of assuming. My second year at Hill Elementary my secretary informed me that an auditor was coming for an audit of the financial records, receipt books from teachers, etc. . . . I did not think anything of this because of the previous audits at my other school and audits are common for secretaries. I assumed that my secretary had been doing everything correctly because as the principal I was signing all records, checks, etc. . . . or at least I thought I was. The auditor and finance person from our central office informed me that they were going to have to turn over the information to the human resources department. I made a phone call to the human resources director. My secretary was placed on paid leave, pending an investigation and she later resigned. I cannot really explain in words all of the feelings that I had as a leader. I felt betrayed, I questioned myself as a leader. . . . How did I not know errors were made? What could I have done differently? This was just the beginning of personnel issues I would endure that year at Hill Elementary.

There was a lot of "talk" amongst the staff about what happened to our lead secretary that had been a well-respected individual and an integral part of the Hill school community. It began to create "pockets" of negative culture. As a leader you learn that it

is important to continually assess the school culture. I had some teacher leaders and members of the leadership team share with me that our school culture was becoming negative and some of it centered around people who had been at Hill Elementary for a long time and had not been held accountable for doing their jobs. The majority of the toxicity came from instructional assistants. I knew I had to address these employees because all of them had received verbal warnings. The administrator turnover at Hill Elementary was constant so these employees had the mindset of, "I will still be here once she is gone." I knew I had some tough conversations and memo writing ahead of me. Just as my assistant principal and I started the conversations and memo writing for these employees, we had an interim superintendent to start leading our district. He would visit my school fairly frequently and we would have frank conversations about how difficult it is to lead at a school like Hill Elementary. One day he asked me, "Jenni, what is the biggest challenge right now at this school?" I proceeded to explain about my instructional assistants and their mindset and mediocre performance. He responded, "Address them, get them out of here, we do this for kids. You have my full support." During that school year there were four instructional assistants that we consistently addressed with memos and below standard on their evaluations and at the end of the school year, they no longer had jobs at Hill Elementary. It was all very tough on me as a leader though because they are people that have lives and families. I am a very caring and compassionate person so it was hard for me to see that four people no longer had a job. I just had to remind myself that I had to do what was best for kids. I knew the staff

was talking about me as a leader because it set a tone in the building. It set a tone that “status quo” was not going to be acceptable.

I have learned how to separate kids from adults. When I say that, I honestly meant that I had to picture doing what is best for kids and keep kids pictured in my head. I think that doing that has helped me deal with personnel issues. Unfortunately, dealing with personnel issues has now become a strength of mine. Dealing with personnel issues means holding adults accountable.

All of the coaching participants believe in holding athletes accountable. Principal Brown and Coach Miller specifically noted the importance of high expectations. I have always believed in maintaining high expectations for myself and for others around me. I learned from Principal Brown and Coach Miller the importance of high expectations and how it can affect the culture. I have never been the type of leader that has been “picky” about the dress code for my staff members. After my interview with Principal Brown I began thinking about expectations for staff members, expectations that were “non-negotiables.” As a leadership team, we developed some “ABC’s” that are non-negotiables:

- Accountable for the CORE 4 (curriculum, pedagogy, data, rigor)
- Behavior of ourselves and others
- Culture of our classrooms and school
- Determined to persevere and succeed
- Expectations that are high

In addition to our “ABC’s” we have collected guided reading lesson plans and provided specific feedback to teachers. I believe all of the “ABC’s” relate to being the best we can be each and every day.

Key Event #6: Your Actions Can Speak Louder than Your Words

In my nine years of leading low performing schools I had never endured a personal attack on my character. As a leader you know and understand that teachers will talk about you and that just goes along with leadership. I was not prepared for this kind of talk though and I need to share this part of my story because of the important lesson I learned from it.

We had a bus that frequently had behavior problems on it. My assistant principal and I would often ride the bus because of this. She did not particularly like riding the bus and I did not mind so I usually rode the bus. It was usually 2-3 times a week that it was necessary to ride the bus. The kids enjoyed when we rode the bus and we had less bus referrals for discipline. I was surprised when a substitute came to me and informed me that she needed to talk with me about something. I had known this particular substitute for over 10 years and she would inform me from time to time about what she would see and hear when she would sub for us. On this particular day I was not prepared for what she would share with me. She informed me that she had heard some assistants saying that I was having an affair with the bus driver. I informed her that they were slandering my name and his and I recommend they stop so they would not have to speak to my lawyer. Fortunately, the rumor ended very quickly after my statement to her.

I was strong on the outside but deep down inside I was truly hurt and upset that people could be so mean. I came home that night and sat on my couch and cried. It was a turning point for me in my career at Hill Elementary. I was already at a low professionally and now I was being attacked personally. I had been thinking of looking elsewhere for a position because of the stress and challenges but I have never been a quitter. My husband came home that night and I told him about it. He laughed and said “Jenni you cannot let those people get to you.” I thought, he is right, I cannot let them get to me, I do this for kids. The whole experience made me mad and kind of lit a fire inside of me, like, I won’t quit on these kids because of petty adults who were angry with me because I addressed their poor performance. In the end, it just made me stronger as a person. I already knew how closely leaders’ actions are observed but this was a painful lesson that helped remind me. This event taught me to never give up. Never give up can be a much overused saying but it is one that has been instilled in me since I was in high school. In this situation, I knew I could not give up for kids. Giving up was not an option. I summoned up the courage required as a leader to address the appropriate people and move forward. When I look back on this event now I realize that it was an adverse experience that just made me a stronger leader. So I believe that some of the most adverse experiences we face as leaders can actually make us stronger and better leaders.

I speak often of never giving up and I didn’t. I was interviewing the coaches around the time period that this event happened. Coach Robert’s words still resonate with me today, “If you commit, be committed.” “If you start something, finish it, be passionate.” I now understand that being passionate means that sometimes leaders have

to suffer. Kouzes and Posner's (2006) words explain this as well: "People should never take on the job of leadership if they're unwilling to see beyond their own needs. If they do, they will ultimately fail" (p. 18). Leaders have to remain passionate and never give up.

Key Event #7: Learning Leaders

I believe it is important for leaders to keep themselves inspired. Leading can be lonely and sometimes it feels like no one else can understand what you are going through. I have found that reading helps me with this. I read to keep myself inspired. I read quotes, daily motivations, and the latest educational leadership books. My assistant principal and I were talking one day about one of the latest books I was reading, *The Principal, Three Keys to Maximizing impact* by Michael Fullan. I shared with her that in the book Fullan explains that learning leadership is the most powerful incentive to stay in teaching. How could we provide more learning leadership at Hill Elementary and keep our school moving forward? We had a strong team of teacher leaders on our leadership team but with all that we needed to accomplish, meeting once a month was not enough. The idea of learning leadership kept coming to mind for me because of the way I empower teachers to lead. I kept thinking, how can I empower them to lead more? I thought . . . what if we create a learning leaders group here at Hill Elementary? My assistant principal and I decided to go forward with the idea. We sent an email to our leadership team and key teacher leaders, inviting them to participate. We explained this would be a group of teacher leaders learning more about leadership while simultaneously

focusing on moving Hill Elementary forward. We would meet once a week to focus on learning as leaders together and to focus on moving our school in the right direction.

One of the first focuses for the Learning Leaders was the culture of our school. Our school needed a mascot. We did not have a mascot because the previous mascot was viewed by some groups of people as being disrespectful to a particular culture and heritage. Prior administrators at Hill Elementary did not go forward with changing the mascot because the superintendent did not want them to. My current superintendent wanted us to go forward with the change. We had students research mascots and write about what they thought would be a good mascot for our school. I invited the town manager and other community members for a luncheon so we could get their input as well. The leadership team narrowed down the student choices for a mascot and created a ballot. The entire student body and staff voted and a new mascot was chosen. We also created a student pledge for all students to say in the morning. We decided we would start out the next school year with our new mascot and our new student pledge.

The Learning Leaders group would prove to be one of the best choices I made during a difficult year of leading. It kept us moving forward like the “motion leadership” that Fullan describes. “Motion leadership” is the kind of leadership that causes positive movement forward (Fullan, 2013b). Moving the school forward made me think of moving myself forward and growing myself as a leader. I learned from working with my Learning Leaders group that there are points when leaders follow. I realized that I did not have to come up with the good ideas all of the time. Sometimes our task as leaders does not require our thinking, “it requires our listening to and following the ideas of

others” (Kouzes & Posner, 2006, p. 128). From working with the Learning Leaders group I also learned to listen to truly understand and not listening to simply respond.

Learning Leaders involved empowering others around me to lead along with me. I also thought more deeply about learning from others around me. Kouzes and Posner (2006) remind us of an important task as leaders, “Our task as leaders doesn’t require our genius, it requires our listening to and following the ideas of others” (p. 128). For me, this means to actively listen to those around me.

Principal Wood is a principal participant who believes in learning from others and taking risks. Principal Wood is the only principal participant who specifically noted taking risks. Principal Wood taught me the importance of “getting out of your comfort zone.”

Key Event #8: Leadership Coach

My interim superintendent would visit our school at least once a month upon his arrival to our school district. He and I often discussed leadership and he supported me with the personnel issues I had to address. He would always ask after his visits if there was anything he could do for me and I usually said “no, thank you for your continued support, I appreciate you.” On one particular visit when he asked if there was anything he could do, I said, “yes, there is, I have always wanted a leadership coach.” He offered to coach me informally while he was the interim superintendent. We discussed how dealing with adversity when leading can actually make a leader stronger. He shared with me that I was very critical of myself and he hoped that did not affect the way I was in front of my staff.

Key Event #8 taught me the importance of continuing to learn and grow as a leader. I also learned the importance of having an honest and loving critic in your life. I think this is one of the most powerful lessons I learned from this study.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Chapter VI presents conclusions and implications, recommendations for leaders transforming schools, and a personal reflection of my journey. The purpose of this study was twofold, to learn about coaches 'and principals 'visions, beliefs and philosophies and wisdom as well as to examine what I could learn from them that could help principals transforming low performing schools. My real-world leadership experiences and the findings in the participants' data show common themes that principals can utilize to transform low performing schools.

When most people hear the word “principal” they think of the noun meaning the head of all others, the top executive, the person who controls all the levers (Mendels, 2012). Principals today have to develop a different mindset to transform schools and become the lead teacher which ironically goes back to when it was first in connection with school leadership in the 1800s. In the 1800s the word “principal” was an adjective in front of another word, “teacher” (Pierce, 1935, p. 11). The “principal teacher” assumed some administrative tasks as school began to grow beyond one rooms. The original principal was concerned with instruction above all (Pierce, 1935, p. 11). The principal's priority today is improving instruction and coaching teachers. There are, however, many other things principals need to do in order to be effective in transforming

schools. The participants' data showed common themes that successful coaches and principals attend to.

Communication

Every study participant indicated the importance of communication in either explaining their vision or their beliefs and philosophies. The principals spoke of open conversations, seeking feedback and input and telling stories at times. The coaches explained the importance of communication by teaching athletes to be held accountable, doing the best they can, setting goals, and teaching athletes to follow a plan. Communication is key to leading and coaching. One of Pat Summit's Definite Dozen was "learn to be a great communicator." (Summit & Jenkins, 2013). In addition, Coach K utilizes five powerful words for his coaching and one of them is communication (Krzyszewski & Spatola, 2006). It is interesting to review The Key Events for me as a leader at Hill Elementary and see where communication was necessary for success:

- Key Event #1: Arrival at Hill Elementary
- Key Event #2: Grade Level Meetings
- Key Event #3: Creating Collaborative Data Teams
- Key Event #4: Assistant Principal Moves to a Principalship
- Key Event #5: Personnel Issues
- Key Event #6: Your Actions Speak Louder than Your Words
- Key Event #7: Learning Leaders
- Key Event #8: Leadership Coach

All of the Key Events I have experienced as a leader at Hill Elementary have required me to be an effective communicator and develop relationships with people. It is important for a leader to be an effective communicator in order to be successful. To effectively communicate a message, it is essential that a leader conveys the meaning as well as the feelings involved in the message, which may require inventive and original approaches by the leader (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Additionally, the message must be remembered.

Relationships

Each principal participant discussed relationships in some capacity in regards to their vision and beliefs and philosophies. The principal participants shared the importance of developing relationships with those around them and in supporting teachers. I had assumed that relationships would be a common theme for the coaches but surprisingly relationships were not noted by the coaches. While relationships were not mentioned specifically, the coaches still indicated how they care about and nurtured kids.

Relationships were important in all of my Key Events at Hill Elementary except for personnel issues. Personnel issues however, did require that I have good relationships with the human resources department and it required that I keep kids at the forefront of my thinking. Kouzes and Posner consistently reference relationships with regards to leadership. In fact, they believe leadership is a relationship: “Leadership is fundamentally a relationship between those who aspire to lead and those who choose to follow, and if no one is following you, then there’s no relationship there. There’s nothing that connects what you see to what they want” (Kouzes & Posner, 2016, p. 87). It is important that all leaders today focus on relationships in order to lead effectively.

Kids First

All of the principal participants noted the importance of putting kids first in some capacity in regards to their vision and beliefs and philosophies. The evidence that they put kids came from their servant leadership beliefs, high expectations for their students, and beliefs that all children can learn. The coaches' data show they put the athlete first by holding them accountable, caring about them, and nurturing them.

Coach Roberts shared, "we discipline our children, we do that out of love, but they don't always like it." Coach Williams shared how some students on the football team may be homeless, "we've had kids on our team before that are homeless, that are living out of a motel, seems like we get them through it." Coach Williams also explained the importance of feeding his athletes because he is not sure how much they may eat at home. Coach Gonzalez shared that he felt like leaders should never give up on kids regardless of what the kid does, "you might just save one kid, and if all of us adults will save one kid, just one, look how much better the world would be, just one kid." Coach Gonzalez believes that coaches and principals are in positions to help many kids. Coach Johnson values his athletes and the relationships he has with them. He believes it is important that you develop the athlete's confidence,

I don't want to destroy an athlete's confidence, and I'm old school, I think I have seen too many times when someone told an athlete they were slow, or whatever, they become what we tell them they are, I try to remain positive with them.

Coach Johnson values how his athletes feel and how they develop as athletes. Coach Miller also values developing and disciplining his athletes to be the very best they can be,

“I often tell them, I have more faith and more confidence in yourself than you do, and it’s not supposed to be that way.” He builds confidence in his athletes and disciplines them to be their best, “everything we do is geared toward them putting themselves in a position where later on they’ll have a higher quality of life than what they have right now.” Coach Miller is retired but is still coaching and developing athletes. Coach Taylor explained that he always wants to do what is best for the athlete and wants them to understand and feel good about what they are doing. While relationships are not specifically noted by the coaches, one can see that the coaches put the athlete first by teaching them, nurturing them and holding them accountable.

As the principal at Hill Elementary I have had to keep the students at the forefront of all of my thinking. The specific events that denote that kids were at the forefront of my thinking were grade level meetings and creating collaborative data teams. Focusing on grade level teams and data teams held adults accountable for doing what is best for kids. Dean Smith was a coach that did an exceptional job of holding athletes accountable but yet cared for them as well. Playing hard was part of Dean Smith’s coaching philosophy. Playing hard meant caring, practicing, fun, and fatigue (Smith et al., 2004). There are times as a principal that I feel like we play hard in order to be successful.

Accountability

All of the coaching participants noted holding the athlete accountable when asked about their vision, beliefs and philosophies or wisdom. The coaches do this by teaching the athlete, setting goals for the athlete or showing them a plan that works. It is interesting to note that a theme of accountability was not apparent in the principals’ data.

Instead, principals noted supporting and valuing staff, thinking like a teacher, and distributed leadership. Many of my Key Events as a leader of Hill Elementary involve accountability of other adults and myself. Grade level meetings and collaborative data team meetings involve the accountability of teachers. I was accountable for personnel issues. I empowered others to learn and lead with Learning Leaders. John Wooden is one of the best coaches of all time and he had a strong focus on accountability and industriousness. Industriousness to Wooden meant that his athletes were fully engaged, totally focused, and completely absorbed (Wooden & Jamison, 2009), a seemingly ideal way for all students and staff to be at schools.

Modeling, Leading, Teaching

The participants all noted modeling, leading, or teaching in regards to their vision, beliefs and philosophies or wisdom. I think this is of particular interest for principals trying to transform low performing schools because of the focus on the principal being the “lead learner.” I created my Learning Leaders group based on my reading of Fullan’s leadership research. There still seems to be a need for successful principals to learn more about transforming low performing schools. How can they be a successful learning leader? Self-coaching is just one way that Kouzes & Posner advice for principals to continue to grow. They explain that the primary instrument for leaders is the self and that’s all leaders have to work with, “what leaders do with themselves makes the most difference. Mastery of the art of leadership comes from mastery of the self. Ultimately, you will see, leadership development is self-development.” (Kouzes & Posner, 2016). In order for leaders to grow, they must master themselves first.

Future Research

There are several next steps for future research in principals learning from others. Fullan explains that the principal must be a learning leader or lead learner, a system player, and an agent of change. The data from the principal participants shows a strong understanding of modeling and leading. There seems to be a need for further understanding for being a system player and an agent of change. First, a study of principals at solely low performing schools could produce different results and could be worthy of investigation. Only two of the principal participants, other than myself, were at low performing schools. One of those participants has since left the principal ship to work with an educational company. Second, a study of principals that seek out leadership coaches could help with learning more about the principal being the “lead learner.” Quite a bit of my learning about myself as a leader came from my mentors and a leadership coach. A study of principals with leadership coaches would be interesting to see how this affects their leadership. Third, it would be interesting to further study the impact of relationships on the principal as a leader. I know that as a leader, there were certain relationships that I had with people that helped to develop me as a leader. Fourth, it should be noted that the principals deal with larger groups to lead than the coaches so the leadership becomes more difficult. Hemphill (1950b) found that as the sizes of a group increase, the members make greater demands on the leaders. In addition, Bass (2008) notes that “larger groups made significantly stronger demands on the leaders’ strength, reliability, predictability, coordination, impartial enforcement of rules, and competence to do the job.” p.769. One can presume that leading larger groups is more

challenging for a leader. The challenges I have faced and my study has led me to some recommendations for principals, particularly principals transforming low performing schools.

Recommendations for Leaders Transforming Schools

Leaders involved in transforming schools need to be effective communicators. They need to ask themselves, do I communicate on big occasions or do I really do the small stuff of frequent communication? (Fullan, 2011). I have learned that small and frequent communication helps to build a positive school culture. Small and frequent communication can be challenging with all of the priorities a leader has when transforming a school. Small and frequent communication requires patience. It can be as simple as walking the hallways after the students are gone or having a personal conversation with a teacher so you can get to know them. As a leader, you have those conversations that begin developing trust with teachers. Trust is the most frequently occurring word that characterizes a culture of leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2016). It is also a key to building relationships.

The importance of building relationships is crucial to being an effective leader. I believe that quite a bit of leadership is about relationships.

Leaders involved in transforming schools have key areas they need to focus on:

1. Shaping a vision
2. Creating a positive school culture
3. Developing leadership capacity in others
4. Improving instruction

5. Managing people, data, and processes to foster school improvement (Wallace Foundation, 2012).

I believe that all of these key focuses require leaders to deeply understand the need to develop relationships.

I believe developing relationships is a key to being a successful transformational leader. It is an area I would recommend leaders transforming schools spend some time studying thoroughly. After 10 years in leadership, this study has helped me to realize the importance of relationships. All of the key focuses to transforming a school are connected with relationships. Shaping a school's vision requires relationships with staff members and developing the vision together. Developing a positive school culture requires positive relationships with all stakeholders. In order to build the leadership capacity in others, there must be a relationship. Improving instruction requires the school leader to coach teachers. Coaching teachers means the leader has to develop relationships with the teachers. In order to continually foster school improvement, the leader has to develop relationships with stakeholders. I believe it is also important for leaders transforming schools to have a relationship with a coach, mentor, or loving critic.

I recommend developing a relationship with a coach, mentor, or loving critic because leading is lonely. It is often said that leading is lonely but I know that transforming schools requires the courage and strength to persevere through many adverse circumstances. It was during one of my most difficult years that I sought out a leadership coach to work with me and my leadership team. My coach provided me with leadership wisdom, periodic conversations, and I worked on several self-assessment

tools, including the 360 feedback tool. It is important to get open and honest feedback in order to improve as a leader. Credibility is at the foundation of leadership, at least from a behavioral perspective (Kouzes & Posner, 2006). Leaders need to do what they say they will do. The question becomes, “Do you know how you are doing?” Leaders need to ask for feedback on their behaviors so their words and actions align for the long haul. My study has helped me to grow and reflect as a leader.

A Personal Reflection of My Journey

My study has allowed me to learn more about myself as a leader. I have utilized the lessons I have learned in my practice at Hill Elementary. I have learned to be a courageous leader. It has required commitment on my part to finish the job I started at Hill Elementary. I still remember the conversation I had with Coach Roberts as if it was yesterday. He talked with me about being passionate, staying committed, and finishing what you start. The adversity I faced required courage on my part. I would never describe myself as courageous but through experiences and reflection I realized that I have gained strength and confidence through my experiences at Hill Elementary. As Eleanor Roosevelt stated, “You gain strength and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, ‘I have lived this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along.’” Most leaders, including myself, do not want to hear that adversity will make you stronger and more courageous but it is true. I now feel like I have left my mark at Hill Elementary. While I learned that I am a courageous person, I also learned more about the importance of relationships in leadership.

One of my strengths as a school leader is developing relationships with those around me. However, conducting this study has helped me to understand that relationships are the foundation for leaders transforming schools. Why do I believe this? Each one of the successful principal participants noted relationships with those around them. In addition, leaders transforming schools need to focus on the following; vision, culture, improving instruction, developing others, and managing people and processes. Developing relationships are an integral part for all of these focuses. I know as a leader that working with people and my human resource lens are my strengths. I have learned through this study and through feedback from my leadership coach that I must not lower work standards of myself or others because of my strong focus on people issues. As I move forward as a leader I know I will focus more on active listening, coaching, and making connections with those around me. I believe this will create higher levels of performance. My study has also taught me about the importance of having people in your life who will provide you with support, wisdom, and help you continue to grow as a leader.

All of the coaches noted continuous learning and growing and/or wisdom from people in their lives. I have learned the importance of having a loving critic in your life. A loving critic cares enough about us to give us open and honest feedback back about how we are doing. The late John Gardner, a leadership scholar, once remarked, "Pity the leader caught between unloving critics and uncritical lovers" (as cited in Kouzes, 2009). Kouzes and Posner recommend this be contemplated every day and I agree. Otherwise, how will leaders really know how they are doing? I have also learned that getting

feedback requires work. Getting feedback also means that as a leader you make yourself vulnerable. Learning to be a better leader requires vulnerability and it requires great self-awareness. Because I was part of the study myself, I have learned a great deal about self-awareness and reflection.

Self-awareness is a predictor of success in leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2006). I did not realize that self-awareness was a predictor of success in leadership until I worked with my leadership coach. Through my work with my leadership coach I have become more self-aware. I worked through a variety of self-assessments that helped me to examine myself both personally and professionally. My leadership coach helped me to make meaningful progress in my work as a leader. I know now that I have to continue to learn and grow as a leader.

We often hear people say that it is important to be a lifelong learner. My study has taught me that learning about leadership is a lifelong endeavor. I have learned that I need to learn constantly, whether it is one adverse situation at a time, one lesson at a time, or one reflection at a time. It is my job to continue to develop the habit of learning every day. Learning leadership is essential to me becoming the best leader I can be.

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