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Highly impacted schools face challenges such as high teacher turnover, low academic performance, and high percentages of minoritized students who qualify for free or reduced lunch. Principals who lead highly impacted schools must not only perform the various duties given to all school principals no matter their settings, but they must also confront additional challenges characteristic of highly impacted settings. One major responsibility of all school principals is to build the professional capacity of teachers in an effort to raise student achievement, since teachers are the most important contributing factor to student success (Darling-Hammond, 2000). So how are principals in highly impacted schools getting the job done in terms of supporting teachers, especially considering the many other challenges they combat each and every day?

This basic qualitative research study serves as a contribution to existing scholarship regarding the practices and strategies that principals of highly impacted schools utilize to build teacher professional capacity. In conducting a basic qualitative research study, I was interested in (a) how people interpret their experiences, (b) how they construct their worlds, and (c) what meaning they attribute to their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). My data collection included recorded interviews and observations. I first conducted interviews with a total of 11 principals. Subsequently, I chose three of the principals to observe as a follow up to our initial interview. I also conducted final interviews with the three principals whom I observed. The type of

interview questions I used for this study included grand tour, concrete example, and compare and contrast questions.

After completing my data collection, I engaged in analysis by coding the transcribed interviews. This process revealed five themes that represented the most common practices and strategies that principals of highly impacted schools used to build teacher capacity. These themes included: teachers support teachers (shared leadership); teachers of highly impacted schools must know their leader cares (emotional support); walkthroughs help principals determine the levels of instructional support needed; instructional supports vary in form (instructional support); and, environmental supports help teachers thrive in a highly impacted setting. To demonstrate how these themes played out in principal practice, in my findings chapter I also provide detailed descriptions of what I witnessed during my observations of three of the principals.

One implication of my study is that teachers serving in highly impacted schools require not just instructional support but also emotional and environmental support in hopes of experiencing success (Kraft et al., 2015). Instructional leadership, in other words, is not the only type of leadership that principals in highly impacted schools must practice. In my research study, in fact, emotional support was the type of support that principals used most often. Another implication of this study is that principals serving in highly impacted schools must be vigilant in determining the specific needs of teachers in order to purposefully serve teachers and grow them professionally.

HOW PRINCIPALS OF HIGHLY IMPACTED SCHOOLS ARE GETTING IT DONE: PRACTICES FOR BUILDING TEACHER CAPACITY IN HIGHLY IMPACTED SCHOOLS

by

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Approved by

_____
Committee Chair

This work is dedicated to my baby sister, Tamia, who inspires me each and every day to lead by example. She continues to be the gift that I always wanted, and I am fortunate to watch her unfold into a wonderful young woman. I also dedicate this work in loving memory of my older brother, Roger Torran Smith ("Lumpy"), who always expressed his love and admiration for me in ways I will cherish. I miss you, Lumpy!

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation, written by Chelsea Sadé Smith, 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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Biblical reflections that have guided me through my professional journey and life: *Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity* (1 Timothy 4:12, KJV), and *Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and that the Master you are serving is Christ* (Colossians 3:23-24).

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Faculty and administrators in *highly impacted* schools face challenges that staff in many other schools do not face. Some of these challenges include high teacher turnover, low student performance, high minority population, and high poverty (Okilwa & Barnett, 2017; Parrett & Budge, 2012). The challenges of these schools require their principals to lead fearlessly in hopes of ensuring that each student who sets foot in that building receives a quality education regardless of circumstances. We know through an increase in studies of highly impacted schools that these schools are capable of experiencing success despite the hardships that they confront (Chapman, 2004; Duke, 2015; Harris, 2006). I firmly believe the success of highly impacted schools starts with the leadership and ends with the quality of their teachers. Research says there is a direct correlation between teacher quality and student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). Through my study I sought to understand how principals of highly impacted schools build the professional capacity of their teachers to ensure student achievement is raised.

In this chapter, I introduce my research topic, offer a statement of the problem, describe the purpose of my study, and present the research questions that guided this study. Due to the difficulties highly impacted schools face in improving student achievement, this topic has significant relevance to school leaders of highly impacted

schools (Cosner & Jones, 2016). My study provides explicit insight into what can be done in these schools to grow the professional capacity of teachers, which in turn would have a profound impact on student achievement.

Scenario

To help introduce readers to my topic, I present this hypothetical scenario. Imagine being an observer in a primary school that many of your colleagues would describe as Utopian. You walk endlessly up and down the hallways to hear the sounds of teachers and students interacting positively through their dialogue. The teachers in this building are engaging students in the most creative ways, and the students are hungry to soak in what their teachers are teaching. As you walk into a room, lesson plans are readily available and there is evidence of quality planning. In the lesson plan the teacher has utilized gradual release of responsibility when teaching the concept, pre-planned higher order questions that she intends to ask, and has a section in which she can reflect about teaching and learning. When you talk to students, you notice that they are able to disclose to you what they are learning and why the particular concept is important. Students are given authentic opportunities to demonstrate their understanding of the content they were just taught. The teacher circulates through the room jotting down anecdotal notes, which she could use in the near future when planning future lessons. Students are utilizing the technology that is accessible, while also using opportunities to work collaboratively with their peers.

At this point in your observations, you are curious about what support teachers have received to ensure this environment for learning is taking place each and every day.

Attending the afternoon's mandatory staff meeting and professional development carousels seems to be a great place to start. In the afternoon's meeting, the principal sets the expectations for the adult learning opportunities that will take place for the afternoon. The principal provides teachers with statistics and explanations regarding why the particular learning opportunities will be beneficial to the teaching staff. Although it is a long day due to this afternoon meeting, teachers do not seem disgruntled about having to engage in professional development because they have a sense that it would have a positive impact on future instruction. Teachers eagerly examine assessment data, discuss student work, and share instructional strategies. The principal has expressed to you, the observer, that over the years her teachers have grown tremendously in their professional capacity as a result of the day-to-day supports that occur in the school.

This hypothetical vision of a school describes what many of our nation's educators, especially those who act as building level administrators, would like to see each and every day in their buildings. Unfortunately, this is not always the case in many of our U.S. schools (Chapman, 2004; Duke, 2015; Lashway, 2003; Meyers & Murphy, 2008). Creating this type of atmosphere can be particularly hard in schools that are highly impacted versus those that are not (Bell, 2001; Chenoweth, 2009). In my study I sought to understand what is being done in highly impacted schools to build the professional capacity of teachers.

Statement of the Problem

Over the course of my career as an assistant principal, I have had the privilege to serve in schools that were considered highly impacted. Brown and Green (2014) define

highly impacted schools as those that have high-poverty, poor student and teacher attendance, low student achievement results, and the perpetuation of low graduation rates. Furthermore, the majority of the students are failing and high percentages of the students are eligible for free or reduced lunches. Schools with such challenges can be seen in both urban and rural communities (Cosner & Jones, 2016). Throughout my experience serving in highly impacted schools, many aspects have proven to be difficult. One aspect that I have found challenging, and that reflects research (Kraft et al., 2015), has been hiring teachers who were equipped with the essentials needed to be successful in a highly impacted school. Consequently, much of my time during the school year is spent building the capacity of my teachers to ensure they are successful. Building capacity means equipping them with teaching techniques, opportunities to unpack standards, and external and internal professional development. Although I do not mind having to do these tasks due to them being a part of my duties as an assistant principal, the situation often leaves me wondering what type of preparation my teachers received in their teacher education programs, but most importantly what I can do at the building level to ensure they are successful.

Highly impacted schools oftentimes come with negative connotations (Parrett & Budge, 2012). The public considers them as underperforming, failing schools, with high teacher turnover rates. However, I am confident there are schools deemed highly impacted that are getting positive results (Chenoweth, 2009). Educators would like to think that all teacher preparation programs have prepared teachers to serve in any type of school, but the reality is they do not (Stosich, 2016). Therefore, it is essential that

administrators in highly impacted schools establish effective supports for teachers (Kraft et al., 2015).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to contribute to existing scholarship regarding what administrators in highly impacted schools are doing to make the gains that are necessary to grow teachers, which will ultimately grow students (Cosner & Jones, 2016; Kraft et al., 2015). Through this study I hope to understand how highly impacted school leaders and teachers can employ new strategies that will empower them in their schools in hopes of impacting our most important stakeholders—the students. This study will inform those serving in schools like those in which I have served by clearly spelling out the concrete practices that support teachers in hopes of raising student achievement and creating a positive school culture. Furthermore, I hope that leaders at the university level might read my research and consider making changes to the teacher education curriculum in an effort to prepare teachers in advance of being hired at schools that are highly impacted.

The number of schools that are deemed highly impacted is increasing each year (Cosner & Jones, 2016; Meyers & Murphy, 2008). It is crucial that leaders of highly impacted schools have what they need to successfully lead these schools. Decades of research have determined that leaders must employ core practices that would yield successful school leadership (Chenoweth, 2009; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Cosner & Jones, 2016). These practices include setting directions, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program (Klar & Brewer,

2013). Through this study, I will specifically seek to understand how leaders of highly impacted schools are developing teachers within their buildings.

Research Questions

The purpose of this basic qualitative research study was to determine the techniques, strategies, and practices that administrators of highly impacted schools are employing to build the professional capacity of the teachers who serve in their schools. My primary research question, and sub-question, is:

1. How are principals in highly impacted schools supporting teachers?
    a. Specifically, how do principals of highly impacted schools build teacher capacity through strategic instructional supports?

Background

To fully engage with this study, the reader must have some background knowledge regarding two important areas of scholarship. These areas include (a) understanding the role of a principal, and (b) understanding what teachers need in order to grow professionally. In this section I briefly examine existing research related to each of these areas. I describe these and other related areas of research in more depth in my review of literature in Chapter 2.

Understanding the Role and Responsibilities of a Principal

The role of principal is a multifaceted one. Authors Marzano and colleagues (2005) present their readers with 21 school leader responsibilities they believe to be essential to the successful functioning of a school. The extent to and skill with which the leader performs these 21 responsibilities correlate directly to students' academic

achievement. Some of the responsibilities mentioned include affirmation, change agent, discipline, situational awareness, and visibility, just to name a few. The responsibility that stands out the most to me is that of monitoring and evaluating. According to Marzano and colleagues (2005),

> Creating a system that provides feedback is at the core of the responsibility of monitoring/evaluating. More specifically, within our meta-analysis this responsibility refers to the extent to which the leader monitors the effectiveness of school practices in terms of their impact on student achievement. (p. 55)

Academic outcomes for students is the most important factor for which school leaders are responsible. Efforts in ensuring positive outcomes occur look different in different schools. Research shows that leaders must build collaborative structures and cultures of trust (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). They must create high expectations for adults and students alike. They need to provide support for educator learning, establish structures, and deploy resources in support of student learning (Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, 2011).

Principals also have the distinct roles of maintaining a safe and orderly school, budgeting and allocating funds, and embracing the school's community. Bendikson, Robinson, and Hattie (2012) share that roles such as these are considered to be indirect instructional leadership. Bendikson and colleagues define indirect instructional leadership as any action that "creates the conditions for good teaching and teacher learning by ensuring that school policies, routines, resourcing and other management decisions support and require high-quality learning, teaching and teacher learning" (p. 4).

Principals may have varying ways in which they approach these responsibilities, but it is crucial to the functioning of the school that principals take these roles seriously.

What Teachers Need to Know to Grow

In an effort to grow as professional educators, teachers must engage in many professional development activities that are meant to increase their capacity (Appova & Arbaugh, 2017). For instance, teachers need a leader who works to make sure they are granted opportunities to build their professional capacity. However, teachers need to take partial responsibility in these efforts of growing as a professional educator. Holland (2009) suggests that teachers, especially novice teachers, need to learn all they can about the following in order to grow their practice: school setting, other cultures, teaching techniques, people skills, and empowerment. Knowing and understanding these components helps teachers succeed. It will require self-study on the part of the teacher, but also require the support of their leader to ensure they are on track to obtaining the information and skills needed to be successful (Finnigan, 2012).

Brief Description of Methods

In order to answer the research questions, I conducted a basic qualitative research study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). My study included a series of interviews with and observations of principals of highly impacted schools. After the interviews and observations, I coded transcriptions of the recordings in order to discover several themes. These themes represented common strategies and approaches that administrators used in their attempts to build the professional capacity of classroom teachers. In my final

chapter, I analyze my study's findings in relation to the existing literature regarding best practices for building the professional capacity of teachers.

Significance of Study

Highly impacted schools are failing at increasingly rapid rates for a multitude of reasons (Cosner & Jones, 2016). In addition, highly impacted schools are tougher places for teachers to work compared to other schools (Kraft et al., 2015). As an educator, I feel a sense of urgency to improve schools regardless of the circumstances that surround them. In highly impacted schools, and in all schools for that matter, it is the responsibility of the principal to locate teachers to teach in their building, but most importantly to equip them with the skills they need to be successful in those schools (Duke, 2015). In other words, principals must build the school's capacity to educate the students by supporting and developing excellent teachers. According to Stosich (2016), "school capacity can be defined as the collective ability of the faculty to improve instruction and student learning throughout the organization" (p. 44). The methods and approaches that principals use to support teachers may look quite different in highly impacted schools versus those that are more affluent. Therefore, this study is significant in that it highlights the approaches that principals in highly impacted schools use to build the capacity of their classroom teachers.

Overview of Remaining Chapters

In Chapter II, I review relevant research regarding the fundamentals needed to grow the professional capacity of new and veteran teachers, particularly those serving in highly impacted schools. In addition, I explicitly define what I mean by highly impacted

schools. I also share a conceptual framework I developed based upon my understanding of the existing scholarship related to supporting teachers. In Chapter III, I describe the methodology that I utilized to conduct this study. I include details regarding study type, site selection, participant selection, data collection and analysis, positionality, and trustworthiness. In Chapter IV, I discuss the findings of my research. I conclude the study with Chapter V, in which I analyze the findings and demonstrate how this study relates to and informs the field of education as we know it.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Over the course of my 9 years as a professional educator, I have served in highly impacted schools both as a teacher and as an administrator. Brown and Green (2014) define highly impacted schools as schools that have high-poverty, poor student and teacher attendance, low student achievement results, and the perpetuation of low graduation rates. Similarly, authors Okilwa and Barnett (2017) define highly impacted urban schools as having:

- high levels of racial and ethnic minorities, immigrants, mobility, homeless families, children in foster care, incarcerated students, drug abuse, and English Language Learners (ELLs);
- large percentages of students not achieving at expected levels of achievement;
- high numbers of student truancies, suspensions, and dropouts coupled with low attendance and graduation rates; and
- significant problems with the learning environment, including high teacher and leader turnover, high teacher absenteeism, and low staff morale. (p. 297)

When I served as an assistant principal in an elementary school that had the highest poverty index in a district of about 130 schools and that exhibited the conditions that Brown and Green (2014) and Okilwa and Barnett (2017) describe, I began to

wonder, “How are building level administrators in highly impacted schools supporting teachers?”

The purpose of this chapter is to provide readers with insight into the existing research literature that examines the essentials needed to grow the professional capacity of teachers—both new and veteran. My particular focus is on teachers serving in highly impacted schools. The components that I will address in depth in this literature review include professional development; strategic supports; and motivation, inspiration and trust. It is important to note that many other components to build teacher capacity exist, but the ones described here were presented most often across many of the scholarly works that I had the opportunity to read. I begin by offering readers a thorough understanding of highly impacted schools.

Highly Impacted Schools

Highly impacted schools, also commonly known as low-performing schools, require a great deal of effort in order to turn the school around. In this section I will highlight these efforts. According to Shirrell (2016),

> Principals of low performing, high-pressured schools face a particular tension between the demands of accountability and the demand to build commitment among their teachers. Low-performing schools require a great deal of change; however, these schools also face a great number of problems that principals must proactively and immediately confront, often forcing them to assert control over their teachers’ practice. (p. 560)

In recent years, the nation’s lowest performing schools have increasingly become a focal point of scrutiny and concern. Therefore, there has been a growing body of research surrounding low-performing schools. Chronically low-performing schools often have

some similar problems, such as low reading scores and staffing issues, but they can also have unique problems based on their history, community context, and student body. The obstacles standing between higher performance and these problems may also vary from one low-performing school to another (Duke, 2014). Duke (2014) argues that ensuring capable leadership for highly impacted, low-performing schools is a fundamental social justice issue, because like patients with complex medical problems, students in these schools deserve and depend on professionals with specialized expertise that goes beyond what generalists possess.

According to Herman and colleagues (2008), the *Improving America's Schools Act* was introduced in 1994 as an act holding schools accountable for student performance on state mandated assessments; however, it lacked much force. In 2001, the *No Child Left Behind Act* required a regimen of annual testing in grades 3 through 8 by imposing sanctions on schools that failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP). As reported by Herman and colleagues (2008), during the 2006-2007 school year, 70% of 98,905 schools nationwide (64,546) made adequate yearly progress; 10,676 schools were designated as schools in need of improvement, and 2,302 schools were designated as schools in need of improvement restructuring. According to Chapman and Harris (2004), challenges associated with improving a school are far greater for low-performing schools facing accountability pressures, and pressures were definitely imposed through the *No Child Left Behind Act*. In the review of the literature conducted by Cosner and Jones (2016), they concluded that leaders of highly impacted, low-performing schools facing conditions of accountability had moderate to strong effects on student outcomes when

they: engaged in goal setting and planning; promoted and participated in teacher learning; and, planned, coordinated, and evaluated teaching and the curriculum.

Reeves (2000) conducted a study of what he called "90/90/90" schools with 90% or more students of color, 90% or more free and reduced lunch, and 90% or more of their learning outcomes met. According to Cuthrell, Stapleton, and Ledford (2009) and their review of the study conducted by Doug Reeves, six strategies emerged as being common in these 90/90/90 schools. These strategies include (a) hiring and retaining teachers who believe in their students, (b) focusing on academic achievement, (c) giving assessment a prominent role in the daily activities, (d) increasing collaboration through the school, (e) using creative scheduling, and (f) administrators who spent money on things that worked. It is important to note that techniques used by 90/90/90 schools are consistent. Although the level of implementation may differ, they have been found to be consistent with the strategies they use to produce favorable outcomes.

The work of Barth and colleagues (1999) reminds readers of the work conducted by the Education Trust in 1998. Education Trust conducted a survey of 1,200 schools that had been identified by their states as top performing and/or most improving schools with poverty levels over 50%. They sought to reveal characteristics that contributed to the high academic achievement among low-income students. Much like the work of Doug Reeves, six characteristics emerged from their work. They found that the top-performing, high-poverty schools tend to:

- use state standards extensively to design curriculum and instruction to assess student work and evaluate teachers

- increase instructional time in reading and math in order to help students meet standards
- devote a larger proportion of funds to support professional development focused on changing instructional practice
- implement comprehensive systems to monitor individual student progress and provide extra support to students as soon as it is needed
- focus their efforts to involve parents in helping students meet standards
- have state and district accountability systems in place that have real consequences for adults in the schools (Barth et al., 1999).

Although dated, the work of Barth et al. (1999) emphasizes many behaviors that are often still used today in an effort to improve many of our nation's highly impacted, low-performing schools (Chenoweth, 2009; Cosner & Jones, 2016). In the section to follow, I highlight the specific supports principals offer to teachers that are strategic in nature.

Principals and Strategic Support for Teachers

Our efforts to create successful classroom teachers require different types of support. Much like the role of principal, the role of teacher is multifaceted. Teachers are being asked to do so much more than to simply teach. Often they act as mothers to those who are motherless, as a nurse, as a counselor, and as a social worker (Finnigan, 2012). Principals, especially those in highly impacted schools, must be intentional about providing teachers with the much needed support to ensure they are capable of doing their jobs. For this portion of my literature review I will take a deeper look into the types of supports that principals can offer, which include instructional support, emotional

support, and environmental support. Kraft and colleagues (2015) demonstrate that schools can indeed support teachers with appropriate, deliberate, and coherent approaches to the uncertainties of teaching in urban environments. Teaching in a highly impacted school comes with many uncertainties; therefore, strategic support from administration is necessary.

Cosner and Jones (2016) and Kraft et al. (2015) both provided explicit suggestions regarding ways leaders of highly impacted schools could contribute to the success of their schools. Kraft et al. (2015) explore the premise behind the closed-system approach to schooling versus open systems. The closed-system approach means that schools focus solely on what happens within the school, without being distracted by the challenges outside of schools that many students face. Conversely, under the open-system premise, schools are permeable and inevitably interact with phenomena outside of schools that may affect student outcomes. Through their exploration, Kraft et al. (2015) provide their readers with four organizational responses that address the environmental uncertainty of working with students from low-income families whose experience in school is often unsuccessful. These organizational responses include (a) coordinated instructional supports, (b) systems to promote order and discipline, (c) socioemotional supports for students, and (d) efforts to engage parents. The authors explore these organizational responses through the insight they gained from conducting a study in which they had intensive interviews with 83 teachers and 12 administrators working in six high-poverty schools in one large urban school district. For the sake of this section of the literature review, I have used the findings of Kraft and colleagues' (2015) study to

organize schools' responses into types of strategic support: strategic instructional support, emotional support, and environmental support.

Principals and Strategic Instructional Support

Building leaders and teachers should have a keen awareness of the cultures of students in the schools in which they serve (Cuthrell et al., 2009; Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016). Teachers in highly impacted schools should have a clear understanding of the standards they teach and know how to unpack those standards in order to help their students meet them.

Instructional support defined. Building leaders must answer the call in providing teachers with the necessary instructional support to be successful, especially in this day and age where teacher preparation programs are missing the mark. According to the research of Kraft and colleagues (2015), teachers serving in highly impacted urban schools identified many instructional uncertainties in their work. In an effort to combat these uncertainties, Kraft and colleagues (2015) highlight the importance of coordinating instruction among colleagues. They argue for "coordinating instruction among teachers involved introducing common standards, curricula, and practices across all classes within grade levels or subject areas" (p. 766). The authors go on to stress the importance of providing instructionally focused professional development and individualized coaching for new teachers. In many schools today, building leaders are accommodating this uncertainty through the means of Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings, staff meetings, mandated teacher workdays, and vertical team planning opportunities.

Instructional support for teachers should be an ongoing process. Instructional strategies, methods, and ways of doing things are changing every day. It is the responsibility of building level administrators, especially those in highly impacted schools, to ensure that teachers are always working to grow their professional capacity and that instructional norms are established within the school. According to Goddard, Neumerski, Goddard, Salloum, and Berebitsky (2010), principals should focus on creating school-level conditions that influence teaching and learning at the classroom level. Particularly, principals should work to foster and sustain schoolwide instructional practices. Establishing schoolwide instructional practices would decrease confusion regarding what administrators expect from classroom teachers, and it would also create a common language among the instructional staff as it relates to instruction, thus making it easier to participate in pedagogical conversations. Goddard and colleagues (2010) also delve into the idea of instructional leadership. They argue that to manage the instructional program of the school, the principal must be deeply engaged in supervising and monitoring teaching and learning. Goddard and colleagues (2010) state,

> This means principals should coordinate instruction and curriculum, and should have expertise in teaching in order to do so. Finally, promoting a positive learning climate involves the principal modeling the types of values and practices necessary for supporting instructional improvement. The principal should take actions such as developing and maintaining high expectations and standards, and providing incentives for learning. (p. 339)

It is important to note here that Goddard and colleagues (2010) recognize the importance of the principal modeling instructional practices. This is a great way to support teachers in that they can see their building leaders leading through actual

instruction. Oftentimes in highly impacted schools, the idea of the principal modeling instructional methods is far-fetched. It would be a powerful experience for both principal and classroom teacher for the principal to model instruction for the teacher's benefit as a means of instructional support. Finnigan (2012) shares the sentiments of Goddard and colleagues regarding instructional leadership. Finnigan states, "instructional leadership encompasses a number of leadership areas relating to the principal's role in providing direction—from articulating a vision, to setting high expectations and monitoring performance" (p. 186). Ensuring that teachers receive the necessary instructional support will require dedication on the part of the administrator.

Certain barriers can jeopardize instructional support. It is important that teachers, both new and veteran, are open to the instructional support that is offered to them. Receptiveness on the part of the teacher will be crucial to teaching and learning. Additionally, Lashway (2003) states that uncoordinated curriculum, superficial instructional strategies, scattershot professional development, and timid leadership are other factors that may hold schools back. Building administrators must be intentional about combatting these factors that could hold them back to ensure that teachers get what they need to have a positive impact on student achievement. Authors Brown and Green (2014) remind us that leaders

> must think innovatively, implement reform strategies, plan individualized instruction, and monitor learning. Also, instead of implementing holistic professional development activities, professional development activities must be individualized specifically addressing the needs of the school and the individual or collective needs of teachers. (p. 15)

Professional development. Professional development was a common topic that presented itself across many of the scholarly works. According to Robbins and Alvy (2009), "professional development consists of any activity that directly affects the attitudes, collaboration, knowledge levels, skills, and practices of individuals that will assist then in performing their roles—present or future" (p. 121). Wong and Glass (2005) and Newmann, King, and Youngs (2000) describe the advantages and disadvantages of professional development. Often when thinking of how one can build the capacity of teachers, educators always point in the direction of professional development. Although it is believed that professional development is beneficial when it is comprehensive, it is not always the answer to the problems that teachers face (Hunzicker, 2011).

Wong and Glass (2005) argue for the value of Professional Development Schools (PDSs) and discuss how they were created to answer the call of teachers poorly prepared to serve in urban schools. Professional Development Schools are intended to provide novice and experienced teachers with cooperating teacher workshops, teacher research projects, and school-community events, just to name a few, so that they may experience success in their schools. According to Wong and Glass (2005), "Educators and policy makers have long urged reforms of teacher education to address widely perceived failures to prepare teachers adequately for schools serving the poor" (p. 65). Professional Development Schools is a newer idea to the realm of professional development, but one that has received much attention over the years.

The concept of Professional Development Schools supports the notion that teacher education programs are only a piece to a much larger puzzle in preparing

teachers, especially those teachers serving in highly impacted schools. According to Nieto (2003),

> Rethinking professional development means changing how teachers are prepared for the profession in the first place, and changing the conditions in which they continue to learn throughout their careers. In other words, it means a major shift in the culture of teacher preparation. While schools and colleges of education have changed their practices in the past several decades to incorporate newer research and pedagogy as well as more relevant field placements, it is still too often the case that many new teachers enter the profession with very little idea of what to expect in teaching. Teacher education cannot do it all, of course, and no amount of courses or field placements can prepare new teachers with what it is really like to walk into a classroom and teach. But they can do more. (p. 124)

Newmann and colleagues (2000) assert that administrators must ensure that all professional development opportunities are comprehensive, especially in the urban school setting. According to Newmann and colleagues (2000),

> professional development should concentrate on instruction and student outcomes in teachers' specific schools; provide opportunities for collegial inquiry, help, and feedback; and connect teachers to external expertise while also respecting teachers' discretion and creativity. (p. 259)

Newmann and colleagues argue that professional development should address a full staff's capacity as opposed to meeting the needs of individual teachers. In equipping teachers to be successful in highly impacted schools, this is something that one must keep in mind and be strategic about in his or her planning. Teachers should be involved in their growth and success and in school improvement. Stein and Wang (1988) state, "there is a need to provide training support for teachers who are involved in the implementation of school improvement programs" (p. 171). That is, teachers must have a voice in the

professional development they receive, and be allowed to share this information with others in hopes of building school capacity (Patton, Parker, & Tannehill, 2015).

Copland (2003) focused his studies on the power of distributive leadership as a means of building capacity. Distributed leadership evolves around the idea that leadership does not simply lie in the hands of those in hierarchical positions, but is a collective activity. This view has received consistent support in studies of effective leadership, which have shown that the location of leadership does not necessarily emanate from the formal leader but is dispersed among staff within the school (Spillane, 2012). However, distributed leadership cannot happen successfully until individuals have a strong sense of what their strengths are and how they can contribute to the success of a school. Opportunities for teachers to share learning from professional development may be less productive in schools with weaker levels of existing teacher capacity or lower levels of collaboration among teachers (Stosich, 2016). According to Chapman and Harris (2004), effective leadership is a "shared and dispersed entity" (p. 224). They go on to say that "trust and openness in a leader were perceived as important and this was modeled by giving staff real responsibility to lead" (p. 224).

To determine the true effectiveness of professional development as a means to grow the capacity of teachers, one must understand the different types of professional development that exist. Across the literature, authors have categorized professional development differently. Robbins and Alvy (2009) refer to professional development as "training activities." They go on to argue that training activities need to reflect and model those attributes of good teaching that we want to promote in the classrooms, which

include active learning, a brain-compatible approach, time for reflection, and tasks that respond to multiple intelligences. The Pelavin Research Institute (1996) lists four approaches to professional development, which include workshop/presentation, observation/feedback, inquiry-research, and product/program development. Smith, Hofer, Gillespie, Solomon, and Rowe (2003) refer to professional development as either being traditional or reform. Traditional activities, such as workshops, are very common in the adult education field because they are usual shorter in nature and more convenient for educators to attend. Reform activities, such as study circles, practitioner inquiry, and mentoring, are less common.

All of these approaches are quite different in nature. It would be at the discretion of the building administrator to determine what approach should be used for the benefit of their teachers. Feiman-Nemser (2001) argues that various types of professional development should be offered over a continuum of the teacher's career. This should start with formal education, then induction, then ongoing inquiry activities while teaching, and opportunities for professional development. Smith and colleagues (2003) support this notion of a continuum by stating that "professional development could be successful if it took place over time, was integrated with the school context, and focused on helping teachers not just acquire new behaviors but change their assumptions and ways of thinking as well" (p. 7). Moore and Kochan (2013) also state "professional development should not be perceived of as 'one-shot' opportunities to disseminate information on classroom innovation and reform practices" (p. 168).

Professional development is critical to the development of teachers. Research suggests that professional development is used to address areas of school capacity such as teachers' knowledge and skills, professional community, teachers' leadership, and principals' leadership (Stosich, 2016). When we think of professional development through the lens of a highly impacted school, its importance is even more crucial. Professional development opportunities allow educators to expand their skill set by adding to their repertoire of instructional practices, and opportunities to collaborate and reflect. Existing research suggests that the planning of professional development opportunities be strategic and not fit in the "one size fits all" stigma. However, the goal of professional development should always be to improve teaching practices that would in turn increase student achievement and students' school experience.

Professional learning communities (PLCs). Research results have provided evidence of the potential contribution that PLCs can make to enhance school outcomes (Benoliel & Schechter, 2017). PLCs provide opportunities for teachers in a common grade level or course to collaborate around teaching and learning. Adams and Vescio (2015) state that the focus on communities can engage teachers in ongoing professional dialogue and examination of student work as members learn with and from each other over time. One aspect of PLCs that has been overlooked in both theory and practice is how individual teachers learn within these collaborative groups, especially when one critical definitional aspect of PLCs is a shared vision and mission. A shared vision and mission for PLCs in schools that are highly impacted would prove to be imperative due to the urgency that is placed on these schools to improve student outcomes.

In order for teachers to truly benefit from what is intended of PLCs, the structure of these collaborative meetings must be established. PLCs, if one is not careful, can become forums for griping sessions, pointless information exchanges, and unproductive task assignments. Szczesiul and Huizenga (2014) assert that principals play a crucial role in the process of transforming schools into PLCs by forming the structural and cultural conditions for continuous learning among school members. Principals must determine what structures and systems are most appropriate for their school and teachers to ensure that the envisioned outcomes are achieved. Hord, Roussin, and Rommers (2010) state that trust has been found to be one of the most important factors in school improvement and the precondition for establishing a PLC. Trust plays a critical role, as it will determine the level of interaction among teachers and the principal. According to Benoliel and Schechter (2017),

> Since trust reduces uncertainty and predisposes people to cooperate, principals need to build and maintain trusting relationships among PLC members so as to increase the formation of strong social ties among teachers with different personality tendencies toward improved knowledge sharing. For example, principals should be trustworthy and consistent in their words and actions by showing care and respect for their staff and advancing the school's vision through their actions. Principals can use several strategies to develop a school environment based on trust, such as identifying and improving problems of trust among teachers. Accordingly, by creating a climate that is receptive to new ideas, principals can foster the conditions necessary to enrich their PLC networks. (p. 229)

Efforts to establish trust must be made for PLCs to truly be effective. Similarly, research has emphasized that a feeling of psychological safety, conceptualized as a shared belief

that a group is safe for interpersonal risk-taking, enables members to give important feedback and engage in difficult conversations (Edmondson, 2012).

PLCs must also be designed with shared norms and protocols that would foster an environment for the sharing of information. The clear and consistent focus of PLCs should always be student learning (Benoliel & Schechter, 2017). Richard DuFour (2015) asserts that disaggregation and appropriate analysis of data would yield raised outcomes for students. DuFour (2015) argues that the biggest difference between traditional schools of the past and the high-performing PLC of today is in their approach to data. According to DuFour (2015),

> When members of a collaborative team in a professional learning community analyze the results from their common assessments, they use evidence of student learning in specific ways using the following four questions: (1) Which students were unable to demonstrate proficiency on this assessment? (2) Which students are highly proficient and would benefit from extended or accelerated learning? (3) Did one or more colleagues have excellent results in an area where my students struggled? What can I learn from my colleagues to improve my individual practice? (4) Is there an area in which none of us achieved the results we expected? What do we need to learn as a team to teach this skill or concept more effectively? (p. 24)

Utilization of these four questions in professional learning communities at highly impacted schools allow for a clear and consistent focus on student learning.

Instructional feedback. The expression “Feedback is a Gift” is one that is used quite often in the school setting. The phrase signifies that the feedback, whether it be positive, negative, or neutral, that teachers receive after their administrators or curriculum leaders observe instructional practices in their classrooms is valuable. As states adopt new teacher evaluation systems, school administrators face increasing pressure to

improve classroom instruction through more rigorous evaluation practices, including providing meaningful feedback to classroom teachers about their instructional practice (Lochmiller, 2016). There is increasing research that indicates that the amount of time school administrators spend on teacher evaluation, coaching teachers about their practice, and organizing the school's instructional program are positively associated with student achievement gains (Grissom & Loeb, 2011). In schools that are highly impacted, this would prove to be an important focus in an effort to improve teaching and learning practices. However, according to Wahlstrom and Louis (2008), "the principal is expected to understand the tenets of quality instruction as well as have sufficient knowledge of the curriculum to know that appropriate content is being delivered to all students" (p. 458). Although the task of giving feedback itself is crucial, administrators being knowledgeable about the curriculum for which teachers are responsible is also important. This would also determine the quality of the feedback given; principals cannot grow what they do not know.

Principals must determine the way in which they will give feedback. It is common for principals to leave written feedback, either handwritten or electronically. Methods of feedback will vary according to personal preference. It is best practice that principals explain to teachers how they will receive instructional feedback so teachers may fully understand how to process and interpret feedback they receive (Lochmiller, 2016). This allows teachers to ask clarifying questions about feedback received, and to make the appropriate changes to instructional practices should that be necessary. Finally, instructional feedback should be given on an ongoing basis to promote teacher growth

and support, and to eventually produce better outcomes for students in each classroom (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

Principals and Emotional Support

The emotional state of both teachers and students should be considered in efforts to enhance the teaching and learning taking place in classrooms. Serving as a teacher in a school that is deemed highly impacted can be stressful. There are many factors, both internal and external, that teachers fight against each and every day. Principals contribute to the success of a teacher by acknowledging their feelings and emotions, but most importantly by being transparent about the challenges that may exist in the school. MacGeorge, Samter, and Gillihan (2005) state that emotional support, such as attentive listening, sympathy, and expressions of affection, has the capacity to relieve stress. They go on to discuss how informational support, such as providing information and advice to teachers, appears to assist with their problem-solving efforts. In a study conducted by Gaikhorst, Beishuizen, Roosenboom, and Volman (2017), the most prominent challenges that beginning teachers faced in their urban schools were a high workload, stress, and inadequate guidance and support. Their research supports the notion that emotional support for teachers is critical to their success.

We know through observation and research data that teachers who leave the profession early leave the profession within the first 3 years of teaching due to various stressors. According to McKay (2016), data suggest that teachers leave the profession early because the existing demands of their work are made increasingly difficult by the lack of assistance to support the diverse range of student needs. These factors contribute

to burnout. McKay (2016) elaborates on how administrators can support teachers, particularly beginning teachers, in an attempt to keep them in the profession. She states,

> It is important to understand their emotional struggle as they contend with a range of contradictions and struggles in day-to-day teaching. It is not enough to provide a formula for teaching or to provide quick-tip solution guides to teaching students with diverse needs. We need to listen to beginning teachers' stories to understand how to support then through the emotional demands that threaten to push them out of teaching. (p. 394)

In summary, we must seek to understand the experiences of teachers, support them by sharing our own experiences, and provide the necessary support to help overcome their challenges.

In regards to socioemotional support for students, findings revealed that teachers felt they were unable and unqualified to provide the support students needed; therefore, they relied heavily on their leaders to put people and resources in place that could provide support to students (Kraft et al., 2015). School counselors and social workers can be very effective in meeting many of the needs that students experience living and attending schools in high needs areas. School counselors and social workers tend to work towards alleviating barriers to student learning such as hunger, emotional distress, anger, and lack of school supplies, just to name a few. Principals in highly impacted schools more often than not feel the burdens of what students lack in comparison to their colleagues who may lead more affluent schools. It is vital that student support services be in place in all schools, more so in highly impacted schools, to meet the needs of both teachers and students (Kraft et al., 2015).

Teacher motivation, inspiration, and trust. In any relationship, whether personal or professional, the establishment of mutual trust and respect goes a long way in determining the success of the relationship. This notion especially holds true with the relationship between teachers and their principal. Motivation, inspiration, and trust play an integral role in keeping hardworking teachers in the classroom when being a teacher is not a glamorous position. Finnigan (2012) states that leaders showing concern for the feelings of subordinates and treat people with respect and dignity are positively associated with generating motivation and acceptance among teachers. I would go further as to say that these approaches would also have a positive impact on teaching and learning (Leithwood et al., 2008). Throughout the literature, "trust" is defined in many ways, but for the sake of this literature review I will highlight the definition provided by Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015), who define trust as "the willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the other party is benevolent, honest, open, reliable, and competent" (p. 257). It is my opinion that the ideas of motivation and inspiration are closely linked. Both require a person to provoke willingness within someone to do something and be enthused about doing it.

A common theme in the literature is the importance of principals in highly impacted schools having the ability to motivate, inspire, and establish trust among their staff, which would eventually produce favorable teaching and learning outcomes. According to Leithwood and colleagues (2008), "school leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation,

commitment and working conditions" (p. 32). A study conducted by Finnigan (2012) concluded that

> to bring about school change, principals are in a key position to improve the performance of teachers by improving their motivation. The study suggests that principals should focus on providing instructional leadership, developing teacher-principal trust, and supporting change. (p. 198)

Motivation is an important part of teaching, especially when being a teacher is seen as unfavorable many times in our country. Harris (2006) paints a vivid picture in her article of what this may look like daily for principals who serve in highly impacted schools. Harris states that principals of these schools "displayed people-centered leadership in their day-to-day dealings with individuals. Their behavior with others was premised upon respect and trust, and their belief in developing the potential of staff and students was commonly held" (p. 13).

Chapman (2004) also provides a description of similar characteristics of effective leaders of highly impacted schools. He states, "these leaders are considered to be people-centered with highly developed personal and professional values" (p. 97). Chapman goes on to say that "these leaders combined a strong sense of moral purpose with the desire to promote collaboration and trust within the organization" (p. 97). Authors who conducted studies around motivation all support what Bell (2001) defines as "moral leadership" (p. 10). Bell (2001) defines moral leadership as entailing "a vision that what adults do in schools plays a major role in shaping children's lives and preparing them for lifelong success" (p. 10). If teachers are motivated and have an established a sense of trust with their principal, the environment will be much more conducive to learning for students in

that building. This would be especially important in highly impacted schools. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) elaborate on the idea of trust and schools with the following statement:

> Trust is increasingly recognized as an essential element in vibrant, well-performing schools. This is, in part, because trust undergirds the cooperative behavior necessary for cultivating high performance. Trust becomes salient when people enter into relationships of interdependence, where the outcomes one desires cannot be met without the involvement and contribution of others. Once trust is established, the confidence one holds in the intentions and capacity of the other person to fulfill one's expectations results in feeling a greater sense of ease in the interdependence and a willingness to take risks. Trust also is a dynamic construct in that it can change over the course of a relationship, as the nature of the interdependence between two people changes, and as expectations are either fulfilled or disappointed. Although trust occurs between individuals, it also occurs among individuals within complex human organizations, such as schools. Without trust, organizational effectiveness and efficiency are hampered. (p. 257)

A limitation that exists in the literature with regard to motivation, inspiration, and trust is that focus on this topic is rare, but it is a growing. Oftentimes as administrators we are cognizant that factors such as these are important to the success of our schools, but desire more step-by-step actionable steps of how to do this. The work of Bryk and Schneider (2002) creates a compelling debate on the importance of relationships in the school setting and how they make for good school conditions, thus establishing trust in schools. The work of Finnigan and Daly (2017) echoes this as they assert that having fewer or weaker social-emotional relationships hinders the ability of educators to collaborate on school and district improvement.

Principals and Environmental Support

Initially, when hearing the words "environmental support," one may think it revolves around the idea that the principal is "helping teachers by arranging, organizing, or analyzing the physical setting of the classroom" (Odell, 1986, p. 27). However, classroom arrangement is just one part of what is intended when thinking about the idea of environmental support for teachers. Like many other professions, working in a place that is safe and orderly allows employees to be effective and work at their maximum potential. This is even more true in a school setting. In many teacher evaluation instruments, teachers are evaluated on whether or not they are able to create an environment that is conducive for learning to occur. Principals are often evaluated in the same regard—they are assessed as to whether they have created a work environment or atmosphere where teaching and learning can take place (Copland, 2003; Hughes, Matt, & O'Reilly, 2015). Not only is a positive school environment necessary for learning to occur, but it is likely to ensure the retention of many teachers. According to Hughes and colleagues (2015),

> Principals have the opportunity to create and maintain a positive school culture and climate that ensures a reduction of teacher attrition in hard-to-staff schools. An important aspect of creating this type of positive environment is to provide teachers an ample amount of positive support. (p. 133)

Creating a positive environment includes the importance of principals being clear about what the school's rules and expectations are for both teachers and students. These rules and expectations should be established immediately and be enforced consistently in order to be effective. Any teacher, regardless of the setting in which they teach, will agree

that maintaining order and discipline is crucial to ensure teaching and learning occurs (McKay, 2016). Teachers serving in highly impacted schools oftentimes have more challenging behaviors and circumstances that they face compared to teachers who teach more privileged and/or affluent students; therefore, order and discipline are major factors in their success in a high-needs setting (Chapman & Harris, 2004). Kraft and colleagues (2015) find that "when well-designed discipline policies were implemented collectively and consistently by administrators and teachers across the school, teachers reported being able to focus on instruction and to manage behavioral problems effectively when they arose" (p. 769).

Finally, environmental support could also pertain to the actual interior and exterior appearance of the school building. Schools that are highly impacted are often associated with a negative connotation, assuming these schools are run down in their appearance, lack manicuring of the lawn areas, and are covered with graffiti. This is not the case with all highly impacted schools. Principals of these schools must be purposeful about making sure teachers, students, and staff are proud of the building to which they report daily. Simple tasks of painting and repair work, collaborative beautification activities, litter removal, and welcoming display boards work to change the negative connotation that exists about these schools (Chapman, 2004; Kraft et al., 2015).

In my review of the literature, I concluded that there was less developed literature around the topic of environmental supports. Therefore, it would be exciting to interview principals to get their interpretation of what they believe environmental supports to be. The literature that was reviewed suggests that environmental supports range from the

physical appearance of the building, rules that govern order of the school, to the resources available to teachers to engage in teaching and learning.

Conceptual Framework

From the review of the literature I developed a conceptual framework to structure my research endeavors and data collection process (see Figure 1). This conceptual framework represents the consistent trends that existed across the literature as they relate to building teachers' professional capacity. The framework relies on a relationship graphic that illustrates how the different components are used independently of each other. However, when the school leader uses the different components simultaneously they have the power to build the capacity of a teacher who has the potential to experience success in a school, especially one that is highly impacted.

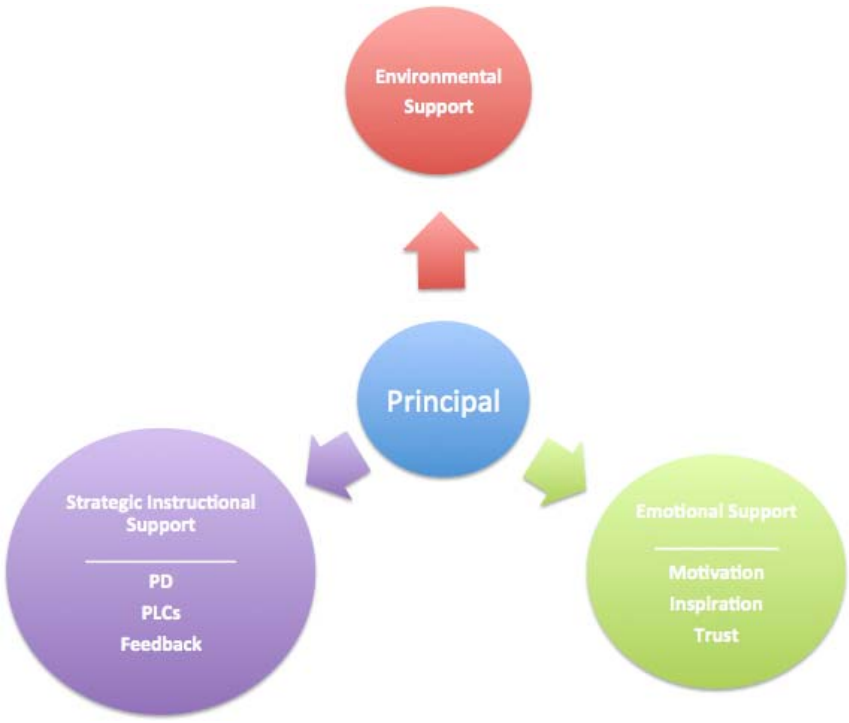

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework "Building Teacher Capacity."

Throughout this research, I referred to this conceptual framework often to ensure that I was getting insight into how building level administrators of highly impacted schools were using these components to build the professional capacity of the teachers in their buildings. Each of the components is important to build the professional capacity of a teacher and is grounded in the research cited in the review of the literature (see Table 1). After conducting the research, it may be determined that components should be added, therefore modifying my conceptual framework.

Table 1

Correlation of Conceptual Framework to Research

Framework Component	Research Connection
Environmental Support	• Odell (1986): Principals should support teachers with arranging, organizing, and analyzing the physical setting of their classrooms. • Copland (2003): Principals must create a work environment or atmosphere where teaching and learning can take place. • Hughes, Matt & O'Reilly (2015): Principals have the opportunity to create and maintain a positive school culture and climate that ensures a reduction of teacher attrition in hard-to-staff schools. • McKay (2016): Principals should maintain order and discipline so teaching and learning can occur. • Kraft et al. (2015): Principals can beautify the school setting by engaging in simple tasks of collaborative clean up, graffiti removal, etc.
Emotional Support	• MacGeorge, Samter, & Gillihan (2005): Principals should engage in attentive listening, sympathy, and expressions of affection. • McKay (2016): Principals must understand teachers' emotional struggle as they contend with a range of contradictions and struggles in day-to-day teaching.

Table 1

Cont.

Framework Component	Research Connection
Emotional Support (cont.)	• Finnigan (2012): Leaders showing concern for the feelings of subordinates and treat people with respect and dignity are positively associated with generating motivation and acceptance among teachers. • Leithwood et al. (2008): School leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions.
Strategic Instructional Support	• Goddard et al. (2010): Principals should focus on creating school-level conditions that influence teaching and learning at the classroom level. • Finnigan (2012): Principals should articulate a vision for quality instruction, set high expectations and monitor performance. • Brown & Green (2014): Principals must think innovatively, implement reform strategies, plan individualized instruction, and monitor learning. • Newmann et al. (2000): Administrators must ensure that all professional development opportunities are comprehensive. • Grissom & Loeb (2011): The time school administrators spend on teacher evaluation, coaching teachers about their practice, and organizing the school's instructional program are positively associated with student achievement gains. • Wahlstrom & Louis (2008): Principals are expected to understand the tenets of quality instruction as well as have sufficient knowledge of the curriculum to know that appropriate content is being delivered to all students.

Summary

Building teacher capacity is a shared responsibility of the principal and the teacher once a teacher is hired at a school. However, principals of highly impacted

schools are charged with ensuring that teachers become proficient at more rapid rates than principals who serve in less impacted schools. There is a sense of urgency that exists in schools that are considered highly impacted. There is a growing body of literature that suggests a principal in a highly impacted school may be more intentional about building the capacity of her teachers through professional development, strategic supports, and motivation; inspiration and trust are prominent ways of doing this. Existing research argues that professional development alone is insufficient for improving teaching and learning school-wide (Stosich, 2016). Therefore, understanding how strategic supports, motivation, inspiration, and trust play a part in improving teaching and learning would be influential in the decision-making at highly impacted schools. This is also beneficial to our collective understanding of how to build the capacity of teachers in tougher environments. This research study allows for more of an understanding of the typical practices of principals serving in highly impacted schools, and provided answers to my research questions that the literature does not necessarily answer. In the next chapter, I describe the methods I used in my research study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to determine what principals of highly impacted schools do to build the professional capacity of the teachers serving in their building, and make recommendations to other principals of highly impacted schools. These recommendations are based on findings revealed during my study and information available through the review of the literature. Educators throughout our nation are quite aware that distinct challenges exist within schools that are highly impacted by factors such as poverty compared to their more affluent counterparts. I seek to understand the ideas, strategies, and actions of principals who have taken on the great task of leading a school that is highly impacted toward a direction of success, and how they ensure the teachers in their building have the means and the capacity to do so. I conducted a basic qualitative research study to determine the techniques and strategies that administrators of this particular setting employ to build the professional capacity of the teachers who serve in their schools. My purpose was also to determine commonalities in the experiences of these building level administrators.

Research Questions

My primary research question and sub-question is:

1. How are principals in highly impacted schools supporting teachers?

a. Specifically, how do principals of highly impacted schools build teacher capacity through strategic instructional supports?

Methodology

In this study, I conducted basic qualitative research. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), "qualitative researchers conducting a basic qualitative study would be interested in (1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 24). For the study I solicited perspectives from different principals who serve in highly impacted schools across one particular school district in North Carolina. To obtain the perspectives of these principals I conducted interviews and observations. I conducted interviews with a total of 11 principals. I then observed three of the original principals as a follow-up to our initial interview. I concluded by conducting three final interviews with the three principals whom I selected to observe.

Participant Selection

The focus of this study was solely concentrated on the work that is done in highly impacted schools; therefore, I selected principals who served in those settings. The selection technique employed is commonly referred to as purposeful sampling. According to Palinkas and colleagues (2015), purposeful sampling involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals who are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest. The criteria for inclusion of participants are included in Table 2.

Table 2

Initial Participant Selection Criteria

Criteria	Rationale
North Carolina Public School (Central North Carolina/Piedmont-Triad Area)	I was particularly interested in schools within the state where I reside and work. Access to these schools was important to ensure that I was able to conduct my study in a timely fashion. I also wished to understand and impact education in the state in which I live.
High Poverty	High poverty is a common characteristic of highly impacted schools (Okilwa & Barnett, 2017). I determined high poverty by considering free and reduced lunch percentages that were 50% or higher.
High number of students of color	High minority population of students is a common characteristic of highly impacted schools (Okilwa & Barnett, 2017).
District Recommendation	District representatives aided in the selection process by identifying schools with the above criteria.

Initial Selection

Based on the aforementioned criteria, I selected 11 principals of schools that have characteristics of being highly impacted. In an effort to gain multiple perspectives, principals were selected from the elementary, middle, and high school levels. I did not prefer a certain number of principals at each level, as long as all levels were represented. Principals were presented with a letter of introduction about myself explaining my area of research interest (see sample recruitment email in Appendix A). I conveyed to the principals of these schools that their contribution to my study would help generate greater

scholarly and public understanding of how highly impacted schools support and grow teachers. I obtained consent from the participants prior to conducting the one-on-one interviews (see Appendix B). Table 3 is a compilation of the research participants and information regarding their school level, their school's free and reduced lunch percentage, years of experience as a school principal, and their gender and race.

Table 3

Research Participants

Principal	School Level	FRL%	Years of Experience	Gender	Race
Principal Alberta	Elementary	100%	5	Female	Black
Principal Barry	High	93%	7	Male	Black
Principal Christy	Elementary	98%	10	Female	Black
Principal Diane	Elementary	100%	<1	Female	Black
Principal Elizabeth	Elementary	100%	3	Female	White
Principal Franklin	Middle	65%	7	Male	Black
Principal Gloria	Elementary	99%	12	Female	Black
Principal Helen	Elementary	65%	7	Female	Black
Principal Isaac	Middle	100%	4	Male	Black
Principal Julia	High	70%	<1	Female	White
Principal Kelly	Middle	100%	3	Female	Black

Principal Profiles

Principal Alberta. Principal Alberta is a native of eastern North Carolina. Principal Alberta came to central North Carolina as a member of a fellowship program and studied education at a local university. Principal Alberta has been a principal for 5

years, but prior to the principalship served in the role of assistant principal and teacher. All of this principal's experience has only been in highly impacted schools with high levels of poverty.

Principal Barry. Principal Barry has a total of 26 years in the field of education, holding positions from teacher, dean of students, central office administrator, to building level administrator. Principal Barry has been the building level administrator at his current school for 5 years. Principal Barry described himself as a participatory leader, meaning that he would not ask his teachers and staff to do anything he is not willing to do himself.

Principal Christy. Principal Christy has been an administrator for 13 years, and 10 years specifically at the current school. Principal Christy has only worked in highly impacted schools, where she believes in developing the whole child and utilizing the talents of all people to move a school forward. Principal Christy described her leadership style as one that has changed over the course of the years, going from transformational leader to more of a servant leader.

Principal Diane. Principal Diane is a first-year principal in the district, having served previously at two different schools as assistant principal in the same district. All experiences for this building level administrator have been in highly impacted schools. Principal Diane has a love of curriculum and enjoys delving deeply in data to inform practices. Principal Diane never intended to be a principal, but was encouraged to do so by a former supervisor who encouraged her to apply to an MSA program within the area as she was already doing administrative duties, unbeknownst to her.

Principal Elizabeth. Principal Elizabeth is currently in her third of the principalship. However, this is her first time serving as principal in a highly impacted school. Highly impacted schools are not foreign to her as she served in similar settings as a classroom teacher and assistant principal. Principal Elizabeth described herself as having high expectations, but values the importance of those expectations being clear so that everyone can experience success.

Principal Franklin. Principal Franklin is in his 18th year in the field of education, serving in various capacities from lateral entry teacher, math coach, assistant principal, and now principal. It was never this principal's intent to be a principal, but knew that he would be a leader in whatever career path he decided to follow. Principal Franklin believes strongly in developing people and being very team-oriented.

Principal Gloria. Principal Gloria began her career in education what she described as "haphazardly." Principal Gloria entered the field of education to gain a better understanding of the school system in which she would be placing her own children. Principal Gloria began her career as a high school science teacher and eventually went into administration in an effort to earn more money in the field. She is currently in her 12th year as a building administrator. Principal Gloria described herself as a servant leader who utilizes the strengths of others and values the input of others.

Principal Helen. Principal Helen is currently serving in her seventh year as a principal. She began as a principal in a neighboring district to the one she is currently serving. Principal Helen is no stranger to her current district as this is the district where she began her teaching career. She is in her third year at her current school, and has a

passion for being someone who has a great impact on many people. Principal Helen described herself as a servant leader, yet fun and happy-go-lucky, and one who has high expectations.

Principal Isaac. Principal Isaac is in his fourth year of the principalship; three of those years have been in his current school, which is a highly impacted middle school. Prior to the principalship, Principal Isaac has been a social studies teacher, athletic director, and assistant principal. Although Principal Isaac did not have initial aspirations of becoming a principal, he felt that it was a logical next step when deciding to pursue his master's degree many years ago.

Principal Julia. Principal Julia is a first-year principal of a highly impacted high school. Prior to obtaining the principalship, she served as assistant principal within the same school, which allowed for a smooth transition. Prior to these roles she served as a lateral entry exceptional children's teacher, and was a former manager of a nonprofit organization. Principal Julia described herself as a leader who is open and approachable, but admits she is still developing her particular leadership style.

Principal Kelly. Principal Kelly is in her third year as a principal. She began as a principal in another state and later moved back to her home state of North Carolina. Her experiences as a principal have only been in highly impacted schools. Prior to becoming an administrator, Principal Kelly was a high school English teacher. Principal Kelly would describe herself as a tough love kind of person in her role as a building level administrator, but believes in the power of making sure the teachers are whole so that they can produce whole students through their efforts during teaching and learning.

Selection of Participants for Observations

After conducting interviews with the 11 selected principals of schools that met the criteria previously presented in Table 2, I selected three principals to observe in their school setting. These observations took place for a half-of-a-day's time in hopes of observing the principal leading important instructional support activities such as a full staff meeting, leading professional development, conducting classroom walkthroughs, or facilitating a professional learning community (PLC) with a group of teachers. To select participants for this second stage, I intentionally looked for language from the first-round principal interviewees that aligned with research regarding school leaders supporting teachers by means of strategic instructional supports. If a participant's interview question responses struck a chord with me regarding their utilization of strategic instructional supports as a primary means to support teachers, they were selected and asked to engage with me further by allowing me to conduct an observation. Participants were also selected based on the connection or rapport I was able to establish with them through the interview process. The same principals that I elected to observe in their school setting were also the principals with whom I conducted my final round of follow-up interviews. During this follow-up, I asked any clarifying questions that I had following the observation, questions specifically around instructional supports, and questions that related to building the professional capacity of teachers who serve in highly impacted schools.

Data Collection

I gathered data from the interviews that I initially conducted with the 11 selected principals, notes from the three observations, and data from the three follow-up interviews with principals whom I observed. I conducted interviews that were guided but semi-structured. According to Lichtman (2013),

> This type of interview involves your developing a general set of questions and format that you follow and use with all participants. Although the general structure is the same for all individuals being interviewed, the interviewer can vary the questions as the situation demands. (p. 191)

Interviews are, in most cases, the primary method of data collection (Bloomberg & Volp, 2012). Therefore, I placed emphasis on the development of my interview questions to ensure they were directly tied to my research questions. Interview questions focused on building teacher capacity and how they work to do this throughout the school year. My interview questions were composed of grand tour, concrete example, and comparison and contrast questions. According to Lichtman (2013), grand tour questions are very general questions, but are good questions to begin with to get your participants talking. Concrete example questions give the participant the opportunity to be concrete, specific, and provide relevant information. Finally, comparison and contrast questions challenge the participant to think about different situations, events, or times and draw comparisons between them. During the initial interviews I sought to understand what professional development opportunities had been given to teachers to that point, how the principal determined what support teachers needed, and how the principal prepared for this professional development. I designed two sets of interview questions: Initial Interview

Questions for School Principals (Appendix C) and Follow-Up Interview Questions for School Principals I Observed (Appendix D). Initial interviews ranged in length from about 45 minutes to 90 minutes in some cases. I recorded the interviews using a voice recorder application available on my smartphone. I had two smartphones available; therefore, I was able to use both to record my interviews in the event that one malfunctioned.

The additional element of observing three of the principals allowed me to see in action how they executed and/or communicated many of the things they revealed to me in the interviews. I employed the approach of qualitative observation by taking field notes on the behavior and activities of individuals at the research site (Creswell, 2014), with the individuals being the principals of the highly impacted school and the research site being their school. The opportunity to observe the principals in their school setting added to the impact of data that were collected and to the study overall. Observations took place during a half-day that was agreed upon by the principal. During this time, I observed many things that were unique to each principal and their particular school. I engaged in activities such as walking alongside the principal conducting walkthroughs or watching them as they facilitated a PLC. Although a host of different things are discussed in walkthroughs and PLCs, my focus was specifically on how principals build professional capacity through strategic instructional supports.

During my observations of the three selected principals, I took observation notes throughout my time in each of the settings. To record my observation notes, I used an observation tool (see Appendix E) to ensure that my notes were organized. This study

required that I observe settings that already existed rather than contrived settings, hence my reasoning for observing principals during a typical day or PLCs that were already scheduled for teachers. My observation notes included time stamps, a script of what was observed, and my interpretation of what was observed. My observations varied anywhere between 3½–4½ hours as that is considered a half-day in the various school settings. The follow-up interviews that were conducted took an additional 30-45 minutes each to complete following the observations. Through my incorporation of interviews and observations I believed I achieved saturation, meaning the data collected began to repeat itself and I was no longer hearing new information from the research participants (Creswell, 2016).

Data Analysis

For the sake of time, all interviews conducted were transcribed by an outside, reliable source. After I received all transcribed interviews, I coded all transcripts in an effort to determine trends or common themes that existed among the information that was collected. According to Savin-Badin and Major (2013),

> When researchers engage in an examination of their data, they generally begin to notice things that stand out in the data set, such as behaviours, events, activities, strategies, states of mind, meanings, patterns, relationships, interactions or consequences. Often, they assign a descriptive label that captures the meaning to each data segment. These labels often are nouns but may also include both adjectives and adverbs; these can convey underlying properties of these concepts. Researchers normally repeat this process with all their relevant data, with similar segments of data being marked with the same label. This process is called coding. (p. 421)

During the coding process, I used both in vivo coding and deductive coding. “In vivo coding refers to a code based on the actual language used by the participant. What words or phrases in the data record you select as codes are those that seem to stand out as significant or summative of what is being said” (Saldaña, 2014, p. 19). Deductive coding includes codes developed as a provisional starting list of codes prior to the fieldwork. This list derives from the conceptual framework, list of research questions, and/or key variables that the researcher brings to the study (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013). As I coded the data, it was important to locate quotes from the transcriptions that would support the themes or concepts that I was able to determine. I kept in mind during this process that emergent codes could form as I began to delve deeply into the data. The utilization of highlighters aided in my ability to color code important points across the various transcriptions. As I engaged in the coding process, I kept a journal to organize my initial thoughts about trends and concepts so as not to become overwhelmed. Eventually, I discovered five themes during my analysis of the interview data. I report these themes in Chapter 4.

I also coded notes I took during observations. To demonstrate how the themes I discovered during my analysis of the interviews played out in principal practice, in Chapter 4 I present detailed descriptions of what I witnessed during my observations of the three principals.

Positionality of the Researcher

My positionality has played an important part in my study. When I began this study, I served as an assistant principal of instruction at a highly impacted high school.

My role was multifaceted in that I oversaw the English, EC, and ESL departments, executed the vision for instruction for the entire school, led the work of the school's curriculum facilitator and literacy coach, observed teachers daily both formally and informally, and acted as testing coordinator. Prior to beginning my role as assistant principal, I served as an elementary school teacher within a large urban school district. All of my experiences have been in highly impacted schools, which has influenced my desire to focus on these types of schools. More specifically, my interest lies in the ability of these schools to perform well as a result of teachers who have the capacity to perform given the difficult challenges that may exist within the school.

I was going into this research as an assistant principal wanting to know how my principal counterparts were doing things within their North Carolina public schools to build teacher professional capacity. This approach may have proved to be uncomfortable for some participants due to lack of trust or simply not wanting to divulge information to someone they saw as an outsider. My love of highly impacted schools was the driving force of this study, and I hope that I was able to convey that to the selected principals. It is only natural for researchers to bring their preconceived notions about a particular topic with them when they begin to research an area of interest. Without this preconceived notion, many of us researchers would not conduct research at all. While I realized this reality, I recognized that it was important that I put initial biases that I might have aside while I researched my area of interest. Throughout the entire process of gathering information and interacting with my participants it was crucial for me to intentionally

filter my thoughts and opinions so as not to impede the flow of information from the participants.

Trustworthiness Strategies

According to Bloomberg and Volp (2012), "in qualitative research, trustworthiness features consist of any efforts by the researcher to address the more traditional quantitative issues of validity and reliability" (p. 125). To ensure that this study was free of potential biases that may have been present throughout the implementation of this study, I employed specific strategies to address this issue.

Member Checking and Other Strategies

In an effort to gain the trust of those with whom I worked, I incorporated the use of member checking. Member checks, also called respondent validation, means that one solicits feedback from participants on one's preliminary or emergent findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This allowed the participants to be privy to my interpretations of the data. Furthermore, in my interpretation of the data it was vital that I provided rich description, grounded commentary, and reflective interpretation so that readers have a clear sense of the purpose of the study and its results. I have always been a strong believer in the power of integrity; therefore, I maintained an audit trail, where I kept all documents and records that would support data collection.

Peer Debriefing

In an effort to enhance the accuracy of my accounts and to add validity to my study, I engaged in peer debriefings. According to Creswell (2014), this process involves having another person review and ask questions about the qualitative study so that the

account will resonate with people other than simply the researcher. This allowed me to gain more insight into how individuals interpret my study, while allowing me to view the study through another lens. This also gave me things to think about as it related to the possibility of my study leading to confusion or needing more clarity.

Benefits and Risks

Principals included in this study may have benefited from the conversations and reflections involved in the interview process and observation setting. As principals reflected on their practices for building teacher capacity, it brought to light some of things the things they do well in their building and some things they may consider modifying. Their reflections may guide their planning in the future as it relates to the supports they provide teachers in their highly impacted schools. Principals may have also benefited from the possibilities of establishing open door communication with principals of schools similar to theirs to share ideas around supporting teachers.

The risks involved with participation in this study were minimal. This is because all identifying information was not used and pseudonyms were used for all participants when necessary.

Summary

Chapter III detailed the methodology of this research study including background information, participant selection, positionality of the researcher, trustworthiness, and benefits and risks. In addition to this, this chapter described the data collection and analysis process in order to provide a thorough understanding of the approach used in this research. In Chapter IV, I present findings from the research including details from the

interviews and observations to capture the perspectives of principals of highly impacted schools and their approaches to building teacher capacity in their buildings.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

In this chapter, I present the findings from the research that I conducted in this study. The findings derive from my examination of the interview transcripts, observation notes, and my personal reflective journal. The study's central research question is: How are building level administrators in highly impacted schools supporting teachers? The secondary question, which was my motivation to observe the building level administrators in action, was, "Specifically, how do principals of highly impacted schools build teacher capacity through strategic instructional supports?" In order to answer the research questions of this study, I conducted interviews with 11 building leaders of highly impacted schools. I then observed three of the 11 administrators for a half-day in their school setting and conducted three follow-up interviews with them.

This chapter is separated into two distinctive parts. In Part I of this chapter, I discuss the central themes that were revealed through the interviews with the principals. In Part II of this chapter, I provide a description of how those central themes play out in practice.

Part I

Theme 1: Teachers Supporting Teachers (Shared Leadership)

Each of the principals whom I interviewed shared that one of the strategies or practices they use most is that of shared leadership. They use the strengths of the individuals in the building to grow teachers who need support. The administrators shared that teachers supporting teachers through shared leadership is essential to the growth of a school and its staff. In my interview with Principal Alberta, she shared,

> I realize I cannot do it all, it is a massive job, and so I find people's strengths and I try to maximize that as far as giving them different things that they can lead up. Giving them responsibilities that go along with their gifts and their talents. There's people in the building that are smarter than me, that are more talented than me, and I need to put them in positions where those talents can come to the forefront and they can help the school and help me. It is a huge task to be principal of this school and I would not be able to do it without a great team.

The mindset of Principal Alberta in the above statement is indicative of her ability to determine the strengths of others and use those strengths to grow the teachers who need extra support.

Another interviewee, Principal Franklin, echoed this same mindset. He shared,

> I am one who is very team-oriented. It is not about me. I believe that I only have a percentage of what is needed to be successful. I tell my people that I do no need yes people around me. I need people who are driven and that are willing to challenge and help me bring forth the vision. I am one who believes in delegating. I am the one who believes in finding the greatness in others, and building that in them, giving them opportunities to lead in different capacities, whether it is my assistant principals or my teacher leaders in the building.

In addition to utilizing the strengths of others, Principal Alberta also recalled the benefits of what can happen in a highly impacted school once one has invested in one's teachers and utilized the talents that exist within them. Principal Alberta stated,

> You give them resources, you show them how it is done, and you slowly start to grow and groom that teacher. Then by building their capacity too, once you pour it into them, then it is time for them to start pouring and helping someone else grow, so you build that teacher up who you helped to groom into a leader.

Throughout the interviews with the various administrators of the 11 highly impacted schools, the principals provided different examples of how shared leadership, especially in the sense of teachers supporting teachers, manifests in their buildings. Principal Barry shared,

> I think the most beneficial teacher support practice that promotes professional growth is being able to observe the practice, the good practices in action, which means visiting others and seeing them live and in color. Hearing from practitioners who perhaps have gone through the journey already and started off with some very difficult environments and situations and have been able to attain high levels of success and hearing from them on how they did it, and then having them model perhaps some side-by-side teaching.

These different types of approaches to teachers supporting each other were evident in all the interviews that were conducted.

Two particular building administrators shared openly about their use of instructional rounds. Principal Diane shared:

> One of the strategies that I use are instructional rounds. We take teachers around and allow them to go into other teachers' classes and see what is happening in other classrooms. When they come out of the classrooms they talk about what the teacher was doing, what the students were doing, and what are some next steps

> they should give this teacher to go a little bit further with their instructional practices. It is not anything where it is judgmental, everything is pretty low reference and can only go by what you see, what you heard, and it is not what you feel, and then we are building to that, but that is really powerful. The teachers really got to see what was happening on the different hallways as well as what was happening in the different classrooms. They took things observed from the classroom and gave feedback to the other teachers, which allowed them to build a capacity amongst each other as a support.

Principal Kelly explained, "We even started instructional rounds where our faculty goes through and they can sign up for different days and they do walkthroughs and they give each other feedback." This approach by Principals Diane and Kelly reflects the confidence they have in their teachers' abilities to guide their colleagues. It is obvious in these two principals' responses that their teachers are receptive to the idea of giving feedback and receiving feedback from their colleagues.

Principal Christy stated that in her school she goes as far as having teachers leading the professional development opportunities that teachers receive. She reported,

> If there are teachers who are doing it (teaching) really well and getting good results, those teachers are used to help us plan PD or provide PD. We have had to resort to a lot of in-house professional development because our district is going through some shifts in that department and so there is no more PD the way we used to have it where you actually teach your teachers how to teach or how to manage, so you have to do it in your building.

These building administrators consistently discussed how they trust their teachers to get the job done within their building. Although opportunities exist outside the building, they trust teachers to support each other in such a way that might improve teaching and learning within the building. Principal Helen stated the following as it relates to supporting teachers within her building:

> If I do not have anyone in the building that has the capacity, sometimes I will seek outside or very seldom do a conference. The ultimate goal is to find somebody within the building that can support them so they can build a strong relationship and comradery, and feel like they have someone to go to for support on an ongoing basis.

Shared leadership, or in the case of my study, teachers supporting teachers, is integral in building the professional capacity of teachers who serve in highly impacted schools. The building administrators with whom I spoke conveyed this notion in different ways, but all stressed its importance in their schools. The role of principal is a multifaceted one and having individuals around you who have a positive effect on each other can lessen the load of the many responsibilities of the principal.

Theme 2: Teachers of Highly Impacted Schools Must Know Their Leader Cares

In the review of the literature, I discovered that teachers in highly impacted schools required three types of support in order to be successful in those schools. Those supports include instructional, environmental, and emotional supports (Kraft et al., 2015). When I shared what I discovered in the existing scholarship with the 11 principals whom I interviewed, eight of the 11 principals suggested that emotional support, in a highly impacted school, is most important to building the professional capacity of a teacher. These principals were able to share practices they employ in their schools to ensure their teachers feel supported as whole people before they go into their classroom in an effort to build up the whole child. For example, Principal Kelly explained,

> I believe very much in if you do not feed the teachers, they will eat the students. I believe that. I believe in doing very tangible things. During the month of March, that was a rough push for teachers. They had not had a break really since MLK holiday. Therefore, during the month of March, every week, I have had a lunch

> catered for my staff, just to say, "Come on. Let us just push through. Let us just push through." I added a jean day, because they did not have any jean days last year. Now they have two. They have Fridays and then today I added a Wednesday college day so our students see us representing our colleges and different universities, but it gives the faculty and staff another jean day. You feel different when you wear jeans; you are just a little more relaxed. Finally, and making sure that they have everything they need. They have received jackets. They have received shirts. For teacher appreciation week, my things have already arrived and they will get a different gift every single day just to say thank you. Just to say, "This is what we want. We want to make sure you have everything you need." I say that to say I give a lot. I do require just as much. To whom much is given, much is required, and I made sure I shared that with my staff. They ask for consistency and communication and I said, in the very beginning, "Be careful what you ask for, 'cause I can give you both now." And so with communication, I do a weekly newsletter, but on the flip side of that, if you do not put it on the calendar for me to get it in that newsletter, it does not happen. Short of me being required to do it, it is not going to happen if it is not on the calendar, so that is how consistent I try to be.

In this statement by Principal Kelly, she provides concrete examples of how she supports her teachers emotionally. Her actions demonstrate her care and empathy for her teachers by putting herself in their shoes to fully understand some of the things that they may be experiencing.

Many of the principals with whom I spoke had their own opinions and definitions about emotional support. Although their opinions and definitions varied, all the principals indicated the desired outcome of emotional support is to build teacher capacity. Principal Barry defined emotional support as

> being empathetic, understanding, knowing what it means for that teacher to be in his or her shoes, relating to the challenges that they may be facing with their students, with their own professional growth, and with their families. Also, on the emotional side, understanding those who have aspirations of doing something else, and those internal struggles.

Principal Julia reported that emotional support could look different across the different people who are in your building. In reference to emotional support, Principal Julia said,

> I think it depends on your teacher. Some teachers need you to support them for things going on outside the school, sometimes they need support for what is going on inside the school or inside their classroom. I feel like they need to know that someone believes in them, and is there to support them, and basically will have their back whether their having a tough moment in the classroom, whether they are having trouble reaching a certain child, whether they're having trouble getting out of bed every day. I feel like that emotional support is whatever that teacher needs to be present, and to be ready to give everything they have got to their kids every day. Sometimes I'm an alcohol counselor, sometimes I'm a marriage counselor, sometimes I'm a butt kicking momma, sometimes I'm a suck it up and rub some dirt on it. So, emotional support, whatever it needs to get them there to be there for my kids. Because if they are not in a good place they cannot do their job.

Principal Julia's comments reveal that support can look very different from teacher to teacher, but the ultimate goal is to support them so that they can actually be present in their schools to teach students.

Many of the building administrators also stressed the importance of allowing teachers the opportunity to come and talk to them, while they simply listen. The principals described how they go about doing this simple, widely used gesture in their buildings. Principal Alberta, for instance, explained,

> I first of all support teachers by being open and being available. If I am out and about, I stop to make conversation. I stop to answer questions. If I am in my office, my door is open and they know they can come in and talk to me. Therefore, I make myself available. I feel like I do a lot of counseling during the day, talking with people. I know many of my teachers see me as mama because they come, they talk, we try to solve problems, and I deal with situations. They call me mama because they feel like I kind of operate in a motherly role to them. Both when things are going well and when things are not going so well. I think they thrive off that relationship, and they have emotional

> support surrounding them from their peers, to the coaches and everything and they have that emotional piece and it has to be an emotional healthy environment, a positive environment.

The efforts by Principal Alberta have become contagious in that they have caused her staff to mimic her behavior by becoming sources of support for each other. The actions of Principal Alberta demonstrate her ability to role model being a supportive colleague, while encouraging others to do the same.

Similarly, Principal Barry stated,

> Giving them a voice, allowing them to share what is important to them, whether it is concerns or issues, allowing them to be able to come and talk to me. What we have done here in the past is have principal dialogue days where teachers come in and speak directly to me about areas of concern or opportunities they would like to be afforded. So I would say in that regard it is pretty much the traditional approach, hearing from them or just observing and/or hearing from them and then deciding how best to address the concerns they have raised.

Principal Barry's practice of creating a space for teachers to express their concerns is a way to tap into their emotional needs. Teachers are often not comfortable expressing themselves to the principal, especially in front of a group. However, if the principal provides a safe space for sharing experiences and ideas without consequences, teachers may become more comfortable having dialogue about the issues that challenge them or matters in which they need support.

Very similarly to Principal Barry, Principal Julia noted,

> We had brief teacher meetings with snacks for about 30 minutes once a quarter, and it was our new teachers, our one- to three-year teachers, our four to 10, and our 11 plus, and we just sat down with them and the administrative team and

> said, “How are things going? What do you need?” We felt like we retained many of our teachers from that year.

Finally, Principal Franklin remarked, “I try to schedule time to do walkthroughs, not necessarily when they are teaching, but when they are not teaching, and go in and just personalize the connection, meaning have personal conversations about how things are going.”

The efforts of Principal Julia and Principal Franklin exhibit the importance they place in getting to know teachers on a non-academic level. To do so, they provide teachers an extended amount of time to discuss the issues and concerns they may be experiencing. Teachers serving in highly impacted schools must have the opportunity to express themselves to their administrators. The principals in my study recognized that not all teachers may possess the courage to do that. In an effort to combat this, Principal Gloria shared,

> One of the things that I wanted to create here is that teachers had a critical friend, because sometimes teachers do not want to come and talk to the principal because you think they are going to use it against them. That critical friend is someone teachers can connect with and talk to.

Principals also discussed with me the importance of celebrating their teachers and staff. Each of them recognized the hard work it takes to teach in a highly impacted school; therefore, opportunities to celebrate and recognize teachers and staff is necessary in their schools. Principal Diane gave examples of how she goes about doing this in her elementary school. She said,

> I try to celebrate everything, small, big, I celebrate it all. Each staff meeting, each grade level meeting, any type of meeting we have, we always open it up with celebrations, and we celebrate the small things as well as the large things. I celebrate their birthdays. Everyone gets a birthday card and a Cold Stone gift card for their birthdays. In addition, each month I try to do something with them. For example, yesterday it was our staff meeting day, and I know this is February to March, which is long, and they are tired, so I gave them the bullet points of things they need to make sure they know and do, and we did not have a formal sit-down meeting, and they were very appreciative of that. So I said, "If there's something that I can send in an email and I know/trust you professionally, you'll get it done. I'm going to do it because I don't like to meet just to meet." They got it done, so it was very impressive to see that. I try to engage myself in activities that are going on at the school. We did the 100th day. I dressed like an old lady. Doctor Seuss, I dressed as admin one and admin two. Anything that is going to excite them and as well as excite the kids, I try to engage in that. When they see me going into the character of whatever is being presented, they tend to appreciate that and to be like, "Oh, you're the girl, yeah." I wear a bright wig and I am going to rock it on out. I engage in things that make them feel good and they feel ownership of, and they have pride with.

Principal Diane's willingness to celebrate all things helps her teachers to operate with a sense of support. Teachers know they will be treated as professionals when their principal trusts they will do what they are asked, and in turn their principal will step outside of herself and do things that enhance the culture of the school.

Principal Helen shared that both celebrating teachers and having time for them to vent is just as crucial to their success. She explained,

> I think they need to be able to celebrate when they have done something really, really well and we try to celebrate constantly. I think they also need to be able to vent and not feel like a complete failure or not feel unsuccessful to the point where they give up or do not want to try. I think it needs to be like a healthy venting to say I do not know where I failed or what I did wrong, but we need to work and see what it is that we can do to make this better.

Finally, in wrapping up my conversations with the principals around emotional support, I would be remiss if I did not share their beliefs around the topic of trust in highly impacted schools and the importance of trust in relation to building teacher capacity. The building administrators spoke of trust as something that should be reciprocated if highly impacted schools and their teachers are hopeful of experiencing success. Principal Alberta noted,

> They have to trust that I am going to take what they say and actually do something with it. They have to trust me that if they come and talk to me about something in confidence that I am not going to go behind their back and they have to trust each other. If you do not, then you have people working in silos, they do not share, they just do their own thing and there is tension amongst the group. If you have the gossip, the rumor mill, I remember there were a couple years back where we had this huge rumor mill here at this school, and it was toxic and people did not trust each other. They were very leery of one another, and then they did not work well together in teams. Or they did not seek out support from certain people that could help them, even from the leadership team because, oh this person does not like me and I heard that they said this about me. It created this environment where people just did not trust each other, they did not build bonds, and everybody was just kind of on a separate mission and that to me made a toxic environment. You cannot make progress in that type of environment.

What Principal Alberta described in the aforementioned statement can cause teachers in a school to experience much tension, making it hard to work together and collaborate. With highly impacted schools dealing with many obstacles, it is crucial for trust to exist in hopes of growing as a unit.

Regarding trust, Principal Isaac suggested that if one does not acknowledge what teachers go through in highly impacted schools, one runs the risk of losing trust. He stated,

> If you do not acknowledge the challenges that folks face in some of our highly impacted classrooms and schools, that lack of acknowledgment also breaks down trust. It says, "You don't believe what I'm dealing with," so you do not act in a way that says, "I am dealing with something that is extraordinary or exceptional, and so therefore I don't trust you to act on my behalf in dealing with something extraordinary and exceptional."

Principal Kelly and Principal Gloria put it plainly, as they reflected on the importance of trust. Principal Kelly explained, "If people do not trust you, it does not matter how smart you are, it does not matter what you can do, they are not following, and no principal or administrative team is able to run a building without the teachers and the support staff in it." Principal Gloria noted, "You got to have trust. People need to trust that you are going to do the right thing. I need to trust my teachers that when I go in the classroom that they are not sitting at their computer and eating popcorn and kids running around, and not teaching."

Emotional support is a crucial component of teacher success, especially for those teachers serving in highly impacted schools. This common theme of teachers knowing their leaders care is something principals think about constantly. Teachers must feel cared for in hopes of them doing their best work. All the principals I interviewed agree that such caring for teachers is indeed important.

Theme 3: Walkthroughs Help Principals Determine the Levels of Instructional Support Needed

The building administrators across the 11 different highly impacted schools spoke to me in great detail about various instructional practices they felt were most frequently used to build the professional capacity of their teachers. Something that I found interesting is that they spoke about the importance of simply being in teachers'

classrooms as a means of determining the needs of their teachers. In various ways they expressed to me that conducting walkthroughs was essential in determining what teachers truly needed to grow in their practices in the classroom. They all expressed to me that it is nearly impossible to help a teacher if you have not observed them informally or formally to determine what their needs are. Their responses around the topic of conducting walkthroughs led to the creation of the theme that walkthroughs help principals determine the levels of instructional support their teachers need.

For instance, Principal Gloria shared,

> The first couple of weeks when we were in school, I did a lot of classroom observations, a lot, informal and formal, and I gave feedback. So I determined what they needed by what they said and then what I observed. One of the things that I found that they needed was classroom management skills, how to talk to students, especially our African American males, how to teach students, especially our African American males and students of poverty. So it was a needs assessment, and a formal one and an informal one.

Principal Alberta also expressed these same sentiments when speaking of the importance of conducting classroom walkthroughs. Principal Alberta stated,

> You have to be in classrooms, doing walkthroughs, so you can get a pulse on what is happening in the building with instruction. I am also in PLCs, so that way I can see what teachers are doing well, I see what they are struggling with, I see the things that I have questions about, I see what is needed. Like if I go in a classroom, I have been in five classrooms maybe, in a day, and I see this trend of everybody's asking lower level questions, nobody asking higher level questions, then that might be something we need to target as professional development.

What I found to be interesting in the responses of the principals is how walkthroughs support them in helping determine the "big picture" of what is going on

throughout the school. In other words, walkthroughs allowed them to determine the trends that exist throughout the school building. Typically, if they noticed a trend is happening throughout the school, it is something that must be addressed immediately in an effort to support teacher growth. Principal Barry reported, "But also observing, kind of knowing what the big picture is, knowing where we want to go, and then what kind of systemic approaches need to be taken in order to get there." Principal Julia explained,

> First you have to know what is going on with each teacher. So you have to be present. They have to know that you have been in their room, and you have to be able to identify what areas require development, and to build it. One of the things we do is make sure we provide them opportunities to build in areas that they need to and provide them feedback on it.

A common practice that these building administrators also discussed was that conducting walkthroughs was not a job they did alone. Rather, they solicited the support of others to ensure this difficult task was accomplished and that those who supported teachers were invested in the process of walkthroughs. Principal Kelly shared,

> I do not believe I received enough feedback in my own career, so I try to make sure that I give that to others. So I do walkthroughs, my assistant principal does walkthroughs, my coaches do walkthroughs. Anyone in the district who wants to, they call often and ask, "Hey, can we come see your instruction?" [I say] "Sure, come through. Feedback is a gift. Come on, bring it on."

Principal Kelly demonstrated in her response that she learned from her experiences as a classroom teacher that receiving feedback was crucial, thus she wanted to provide such guidance for her teachers.

Principal Isaac's approach highlights the importance of the frequency in which administration gets into classrooms. He reported, "One of the things that we really push for in terms of administration is getting into every classroom every day. I can't say that happens every day, but it is a goal for us. We actually have a walkthrough schedule." Principal Franklin added a unique twist to the idea of feedback. He shared,

> I try to arrange and schedule meetings with teachers to see what type of support, or the support that is in place, and how effective it is. Getting that feedback, and then going back trying to make sure that those who are put in teacher leader and coaches roles, and my APs, that they are providing the necessary support that is needed.

The responses from these building administrators regarding walkthroughs then led to more in-depth conversation about instructional supports they tend to utilize most in their building. However, understanding how they go about determining these supports was important to note. Although they did not go into detail about how they explicitly conduct their walkthroughs, such as what forms or formats they tend to use, I believe it is safe to say that regardless of the system they use, walkthroughs are a must.

Theme 4: Instructional Supports that Principals Use Vary in Form

My review of the literature revealed that teachers need emotional, instructional, and environmental supports to be successful in schools that are deemed highly impacted (Kraft et al., 2015). Prior to the start of this research, I always had a passion for teachers who wanted to improve their craft by honing in specifically on instructional strategies and practices. Through my conversations with the principals, I found out they felt supporting the teachers emotionally was most important; however, they did share many

key instructional supports they use to build teacher professional capacity. A theme that emerged in the initial round of interviews was that there are various approaches principal can use to supporting teachers instructionally. I highlight those instructional supports here in this section that principals felt has the most impact on their teachers.

Throughout my initial interviews with principals the term “feedback” was used quite often. In addition to being in classrooms to observe the practices taking place instructionally, these building administrators feel it is important to leave teachers electronic notes, written notes, checklists, or something of the sort that describes in detail what they observed and what that teacher could do to grow. Principal Kelly reported, “I believe in feedback—I said this before, feedback is a gift. I think that is the greatest way to make sure that you are helping people grow. I do not believe I received enough feedback in my career, so I try to make sure that I give that to others.” When I asked Principal Helen how she supported teachers, she replied by stating, “By providing them feedback on a daily basis, by being very visible and easily accessible, by communicating constantly, whether it be email or newsletters and just by being truthful, telling the truth and addressing what I see, in a relatively quick time.”

Principal Helen stressed that principals should not delay in providing any feedback. In her experience, her teachers craved receiving the feedback almost immediately after she had conducted her walkthrough or formal observation. Similarly, Principal Barry indicated that feedback should be timely if it is intended as a means of support for teachers. He stated, “Observation and feedback, that whole process where observing practice and giving them critical timely feedback to help them be better at

doing what they do is important and supporting them." Principal Alberta reiterated that feedback is meant to help teachers grow:

> Giving them feedback. Feedback, feedback, feedback, feedback is a gift. That is the only way teachers are going to grow, because you do not know if something is going right or something is going wrong unless you get feedback. I would say feedback would be number one.

While feedback is important, it is not the only means of instructional support. For example, principals shared how they use planning days to shape their teachers' instructional practices, while allowing for them to have extra time to collaborate with their colleagues in a safe space. Participants described planning days as days that are provided to teachers for them to come together with their grade levels or similar courses to plan for an extended amount of time that is not the regularly scheduled professional learning community (PLC). During planning days, the instructional leadership team would often participate in and support the planning process. Teachers would engage in curriculum mapping, analysis of data, and planning lessons. According to Principal Kelly,

> We have half-day planning days. Today is a half-day planning day, and we will offer a half-day planning day for each grade level, ELA, and math. You come in and you have time one-on-one with a coach. And sometimes even a specialist from central office. And then you can do your advanced planning if that is something you struggle with. You can work on your common assessments. You can work on your data, analyzing your data. Just really making sure that it is individualized to you. And the teachers spend a lot of time with our coaches to make sure that they can communicate those needs.

Teachers at Principal Kelly's school are appreciative of this extended period of time with their sources of support.

Similarly, Principal Helen spoke to the power of half-day planning sessions at her school. She stated,

> The planning days are very, very powerful as well, because this year we decided to do two half days each quarter and they just have an opportunity to map out what they are going to do for four and a half weeks, and when we also started a formative assessment cycle this year, which has been really, really good. And so basically during that half day planning they just map out and then they develop their formative assessments based on the standards that they are supposed to be teaching.

Principal Isaac described half-day planning days as opportunities that are common within his building, so much so that he recognizes that to make the half-day planning sessions possible will require him to use funding to make it happen. Principal Isaac shared, "We are in planning sessions. We facilitate planning sessions. We pay for planning sessions. We pay for professional development. We are just a part of the instructional life with our staff." Oftentimes these planning days occur after principals have allotted funds to pay for substitutes so that teachers could have uninterrupted time to plan. If not able to use funding to pay for substitutes, the principals creatively arranged schedules for the instructional assistants throughout the building to provide class coverage so teachers could have this valuable time for planning. The idea of planning days is increasingly popular across many schools, not just highly impacted schools. Principals shared with me that teachers appreciate this time to plan as it also decreases the amount of stress that many of them experience from having to plan week-to-week.

In addition to planning days, teachers are given time to meet on a weekly basis in these schools during their PLCs. In many districts across the state of North Carolina, PLCs are considered a non-negotiable when principals are planning their master schedules. PLC time is considered sacred to both teachers and building administrators, given this is the opportunity in which teachers, leaders, and instructional staff come together and plan for upcoming lessons, analyze data, and engage in curriculum mapping. Principal Kelly had the following to say when asked about the professional development of teachers:

> I think professional development is amazing. I think training people on new strategies, on new research, showing them the research, or lack thereof, of their practices I think is amazing. Most importantly, I believe in professional learning communities. You can give someone all of the professional development in the world, but if they do not have a teammate—iron sharpens iron. If they do not have a teammate to really push them and bounce ideas off of, eventually they will begin to slack off. You will go back to what you are comfortable with, and that is not the new and the innovative practices or strategies that we have. And so I believe in PD, but I most importantly believe in a professional learning community. So since that is something I believe so strongly in, I force that. You have to have PLC meetings; you have to have vertical team meetings.

Likewise, Principal Christy believes that PLCs provide wonderful opportunities for teachers to engage in team building and build upon their knowledge. She stated,

> We do a lot of discussion and team building and building their knowledge in our PLCs and things like that. Leadership time during staff meetings lets them share with each other as well, and then asking, “What do you want more information about, what do you want more information on so that you can be better,” so a lot of it is structured that way.

In addition to discussing PLCs and their significance, many of the building leaders with whom I spoke talked in great detail about the aspects of in-house coaching as a means of support. Principal Franklin shared, "I have tried to implement an instructional leadership team that is geared towards making sure that teachers are receiving good coaching and good instructional support." Principal Diane also has the same sentiments by detailing what key personnel are needed to conduct in-house coaching for the benefit of teachers. Principal Diane stated, "In-house coaching is done by myself, my AP, my CF, and the ARC and the CKLA reading programs. The only coaching piece that I don't have outside people is my math."

What I found to be especially powerful was the response from Principal Isaac. This particular building administrator stressed the significance of everyone in the building being coached in some capacity. Principal Isaac explained,

> When we talk about building capacity in our building, at one point, every administrator and every teacher in our building were being coached. I even had a coach, and our administrative team had a coach, and our teachers, they have got coaching from administrators, and we paid for job-embedded coaching. And so at one point, everybody in our building had a coach. And so the point of that was to improve the professional capacity of everybody in the building. So I always say that there is something to be learned, and if we are doing something great, we sustain what we are doing great, and were looking at whether or not we need to or we should add something or take something away from it to make it better.

This statement from Principal Isaac is profound in that he believes that everyone can grow, not just the teachers in the building. Yes, building teacher capacity is important, but building the capacity of everyone in the building is equally as important.

Based on this information from the building administrators, it is safe to say they believe the knowledge already exists within their building and that there are individuals, particularly those on their instructional team, who are capable of growing the teachers. However, these leaders do not negate the power of professional development opportunities for teachers. While many of the principals attempt to incorporate embedded professional development to save costs, there are others who provide opportunities for teachers to seek professional learning outside the building, or they pay for consultants to come to the school itself to support the teachers. Principal Gloria has this to say regarding professional development she paid for after conducting a needs assessment of her staff:

> I have a professional consultant who comes over, he's doing 10 sessions on teacher talk, how to talk to teachers, how to value yourself, how to assess student needs, developing your brand, how to set up your classroom, you know, so that students can get the best out of you, how to understand that it's not about you, how to accept your biases but not let them influence how you teach, how to keep your expectations high. Those are some of the sessions.

While Principal Isaac thinks it is important for teachers to have opportunities outside of the school, he is adamant that teachers be prepared to bring the information back to their fellow staff members in an effort to have a positive impact on the school. Principal Isaac shared,

> I just sent a group of folks to a school in Atlanta. I met with them on Friday to start planning for how it looks in terms of creating a positive school culture in our building, creating school-wide larger than life school expectations, creating classroom culture, and all of those types of things. So if I send you somewhere, I try not to just let it go, I try to capture some of that stuff that we spent money on and allow you to bring it back.

With limited funding available for staff development, building administrators are strategic in planning how the information will be presented to staff if only a few teachers are afforded the opportunity to attend professional development outside of the school. These principals insist that creative thinking such as this, among the other instructional practices, is what it takes to build the capacity of teachers in highly impacted schools.

Theme 5: Environmental Supports Help Teachers Thrive in a Highly Impacted Setting

Environmental supports can mean different things to different people. In my initial interviews with building administrators, I discovered principals interpreted environmental supports to mean such aspects as the safety of the school, the school's structure, interaction with the community, resources available to teachers, and its culture and climate. According to Principal Gloria, "Environmental support, I believe, means the building should be intact. They [teachers] should be able to have the supplies that they need. They [teachers] should have easy access to it." Similarly to Principal Gloria, Principal Barry shared the following in regard to environmental supports:

> The environmental piece I think has more to do with the school environment, the physical structures, the physical tools and materials and things that are available to them. And are they conducive to helping a particular teacher or staff member to do his or her job effectively.

Principal Diane discussed the importance of a clean building and making sure that the school building represents the students who occupy the space. It allows for a comfortable environment when the school building reflects its individuals. Principal Diane explained, "Environmental. Keep the building clean. Making sure that it is open and it is inviting. I

have switched out some of our posters with our kids' actual faces and the teachers really like it because they said that it feels more personal when we have our children's faces."

Principal Kelly shared a powerful story about some dynamics she had to change coming into her school to ensure that the environment of her school was a safe and structured one. She stated,

> Environmentally, I think it is my job as a manager of this building to make sure that the structure is strong. So for instance, when I came here they spent three hours on lunch. Well, I have less than 400 children. I kept telling them, "What do you all do three hours at lunch?" Well they said it was so chaotic that they would only send two classes at a time to the cafeteria. Do you know how exhausting that is? They had three different bell schedules. How do you have three different bell schedules for 400 children? In just looking at that and talking through that with them and just saying, "You all, I'm making some changes, I promise you, just trust me. It's going to make your life better." And with that you are able to actually support each other better. My eighth graders said now they feel safe. And you think that kids want to be able to do whatever they want, but they do not. And so if the kids did not feel safe, imagine adults, when you are outnumbered, exponentially, 25 to 1, so I think that is environment. You have to make sure that environment is safe first off, and then supportive as well.

Principal Kelly's illustration demonstrates the importance of doing a needs assessment and taking immediate action to improve the school. She was able to do this and therefore received positive praise from teachers and students. Teachers who serve in highly impacted schools must feel safe and feel as if their environment is one that is structured. Such environmental supports can help teachers feel secure so that they can concentrate on doing a good job instructionally in the classroom. Taking care of the building and ensuring structures are in place, according to these building administrators, send a signal to teachers that you care that teachers have the environment that is conducive for them to do their job.

Summary of Themes

After analyzing my interview data, I discovered the following themes regarding what principals believe are supports teachers need to be successful in highly impacted schools:

- Teachers Supporting Teachers (Shared Leadership)
- Teachers of Highly Impacted Schools Must Know Their Leader Cares
- Walkthroughs Help Principals Determine the Levels of Instructional Support Needed
- Instructional Supports Vary in Form
- Environmental Supports Help Teachers Thrive in A Highly Impacted Setting

Next in this chapter, I provide a thorough and detailed description of the time I spent observing three of the principals. I also discuss how what I observed connects to the themes regarding teacher supports, which were revealed through the interviews.

Part II

Observations and Follow-Up Interviews

After completing my initial 11 interviews with principals of highly impacted schools, I selected three principals who, during the initial interviews, gave responses that highlighted many of the things that were revealed during my review of the literature, I also felt that those building administrators spoke more candidly about their efforts regarding strategic instructional supports. The three principals I selected for observations were Franklin, Helen, and Julia. These principals all served at different levels; therefore, I was able to spend time in an elementary, a middle, and a high school. In this section, I

will provide a thorough, detailed account of what I observed in each school setting. I also demonstrate how the observations relate to the themes that I described earlier in this chapter.

Principal Franklin. My first observation took place with Principal Franklin who is the building administrator of a middle school. Upon arrival to this middle school, which serves about 750 students, I observed Principal Franklin preparing for the day by signing important documents, checking emails, and having brief conversations with staff. Principal Franklin explained to me that coming into his building early each day allowed him to get clerical duties such as these completed prior to teachers and students entering the building. Minutes before the students are to enter, Principal Franklin positioned himself in the middle of a hallway where many students entered the building. As students and teachers enter, he speaks to each one personally. It is obvious in this instant that Principal Franklin knows his students well because he is able to recall their behaviors from the behavior days, and give them tips on how to have a better day. At one point, Principal Franklin compliments a teacher on an instructional strategy that he witnessed the previous day while in that teacher's room. In this moment, I connected these actions to Theme 2, which is teachers of highly impacted schools have to know their principal cares. Principal Franklin being present in the hallways at the beginning of the day, greeting both teachers and students individually, and complimenting teachers on instructional practices are clear indicators that this building leader cares. After the tardy bell rings, Principal Franklin and I quickly go back to his office where he then proceeded

to do the morning announcements. From there, we reported to the school's computer lab where PLCs take place.

Prior to the day of my visit, Principal Franklin informed me that on the day of my visit it would be different in that he would be leading the PLCs, which is not a typical practice. Ordinarily, the school's assistant principals or instructional coaches would execute these meetings. Knowing this, I knew it would be a great opportunity to see instructional leadership or instructional supports. Before the teachers arrive to the meeting space, Principal Franklin utilized the support of the media specialist to ensure that his technology is working properly. He quickly joked with the media specialist as she offers her support.

Principal Franklin then prepared the materials that are needed before teachers enter. Grade level teachers walked into the PLC setting greeted by the principal who had an EQ posted and an agenda for their time together. After greetings and pleasantries, Principal Franklin plays a comic video for teachers to view; afterwards they were instructed to turn and talk to their partner about the video. This video was enjoyable for the teachers because they were observed laughing throughout its playing. Principal Franklin discussed with teachers that although he realized it was the end of the school year and they may experience some burnout, there are things expected of them in order to conclude the year on a high note. Teachers were asked to offer ideas of supports they required to end the year successfully. This action by the principal aligned to a few of the themes generated from the interviews, including teachers of highly impacted schools knowing their principal cares (emotional support), and environmental supports help

teachers thrive in a highly impacted school. Furthermore, this action allowed teachers' input and allowed for their thoughts and feelings to be heard, while the principal allowed for an environment for dialogue such as this to transpire. This part of the PLC concluded with teachers engaging in a quiz in which they answered questions about school norms and focuses. Teachers found this to be exciting, and they became quite competitive.

After the completion of the quiz, Principal Franklin discussed some things of which he is proud, in addition to some things he should not see. Things that he mentioned being proud of included student engagement, teachers studying their craft, and ways in which teachers check for student understanding. Things that he should not see included loss of instructional time and lengthy warm up activities. These conversations aligned with the theme that instructional supports vary in form. For the teachers, this is valuable feedback on how they can improve in the days ahead. Principal Franklin reminded teachers of resources they already have in their possession that could support them in making sure they do not become victim to losing instructional time due to lengthy warm-up activities. The PLC concluded with a support staff member discussing important upcoming dates and testing tidbits for the upcoming testing window. Teachers asked questions for clarity to ensure they understood expectations for the upcoming events. The PLC ended by teachers having a 'Ticket Out The Door' assignment to complete. On three different sticky notes, teachers are to indicate what they can do to end the year on a high note, what administrators can do to ensure the year ends on a high note, and what resources are needed to get through the remainder of the school year. These sticky notes were placed on poster chart paper as teachers exited.

Between PLC meetings, Principal Franklin had an opportunity to quickly chat with one of his assistant principals regarding a parent meeting that had taken place that morning. Following this conversation, the next group of teachers arrived for their PLC. The first PLC was the eighth-grade teacher team, and the teachers arriving were the encore teachers. The encore teachers did not appear as excited as the teachers in the previous PLC, but Principal Franklin possessed the same energy and did the exact same things that he did in the previous PLC. In the midst of him conducting this PLC, my time observing him was up and I quietly exited the room. PLCs in this highly impacted school were a great space for instructional conversations to happen. The PLCs for this occasion were more about reiterating expectations and ending the school year on a good note. Teachers benefitted from emotional, environmental, and instructional supports—all done in a creative way on the part of this building leader.

In my later follow-up interview with Principal Franklin, I utilized the questions from Appendix D. Principal Franklin addressed the significance that PLCs play in teacher growth. Principal Franklin stated,

> If it was not for the PLCS, I do not think our teachers would be as strong as they are. I think that is where primarily most of the coaching is happening. There is some one-on-one coaching happening, but I think in the PLCs we are having an opportunity to enhance and to address a lot of the developing areas that teachers tend to have.

Principal Franklin also mentioned that much like what I observed, the usual facilitators of the PLCs, assistant principals and curriculum facilitators, also solicit feedback from

teachers as to how the PLCs could be improved to support the teachers as they continue to move forward.

Principal Helen. Principal Helen serves as building administrator of a highly impacted elementary school of about 580 students. Upon my arrival, I observed students entering the building, as staff members who were at their assigned morning arrival duty stations greeted them. Principal Helen was in her office preparing for the school day. After students arrived, Principal Helen completed the morning announcements and had a brief conversation with an EC teacher. I then joined the building administrator as she walked around the building to conduct classroom walkthroughs. On the day of my observation, fifth-grade students were preparing to take their benchmark exams. Principal Helen circulated through the fifth-grade classrooms to ensure students were ready, and that the testing coordinator had everything she needed to execute testing.

Principal Helen revealed to me that she had some concerns about the preparation for benchmark testing; therefore, she stepped in to support the testing coordinator with a few tasks. One of the fifth-grade teachers was observed stepping out into the hallway to get the principal's attention. The fifth-grade teacher shared with Principal Helen that there was a student in her classroom who she was certain had accommodations, but had not been pulled to move with her testing group. Principal Helen informed this teacher that she would take care of the matter. Principal Helen then went to the testing coordinator and asked to review the Review of Accommodations (ROA) forms. Principal Helen pulled the ROA form of the student in question, reviewed the testing plan to see where that student should test, and informed the testing coordinator that she would be moving

the student. After moving the fifth-grade student to her correct location, we began to conduct walkthroughs together.

Principal Helen informed me that we would conduct walkthroughs in all 26 classrooms in her building, which includes grades PreK through fifth grade. Principal Helen intentionally wanted me to observe teachers executing a new literacy program because this was the newest initiative within the district for kindergarten through second-grade classrooms. Due to literacy being the subject taught later on in the K-2 classes, we began with going into fourth-grade classrooms. In walking into the fourth-grade classroom I quickly noticed that the grade level was departmentalized. There was a teacher for each subject—math, reading and science/social studies. Principal Helen attempted to give me some background information about each teacher as we entered the room. We did not spend much time in the fourth-grade classrooms, but I was able to notice the school was equipped with much technology and those rooms were colorful and open. This made me think about the theme regarding environmental supports and how they help teachers thrive in a highly impacted setting. The technology available to teachers at this school appeared to make teaching and learning more conducive in those initial classrooms that we visited.

We then proceeded to the third-grade classrooms and the K-2 classrooms. At that point we began to spend about 10-15 minutes in each classroom. When we entered into each third-grade classroom, I noticed that all the teachers were engaged in small group differentiated reading, what some might call guided reading. In the first classroom we entered, I sat next to the kidney table where the teacher was conducting her reading

group. I took note of some of her practices that she utilized and how her students responded to those practices. Students who were away from the kidney table were at centers that appeared to be a computer station, a written assignment, and educational games. Principal Helen walked around to each center of students to inquire about what they were responsible for doing. Students were excited to see Principal Helen and even more excited to explain what they were required to do.

After popping into each third-grade classroom, we then went into the K-2 classrooms. By this point, it was literacy time for these classrooms according to the master schedule. Each teacher was doing something in accordance with the new literacy program. In first grade specifically, teachers were in the midst of the phonics portion of the literacy program. Students were all on the floor while teachers taught about distinguishing between singular songs and syllables. Teachers used PowerPoints that were displayed using their Epson projectors to show pictures to students to aid in teaching this skill. Students sat on the floor the entire time as we maneuvered through the first-grade classes, which in my opinion was a lengthy amount of time. As we moved to the kindergarten classes, these teachers were engaged in what appeared to be more of teacher-directed instruction. All the teachers at one point referred to what looked to be a teacher manual to ensure they were on track.

Throughout all the walkthroughs that were conducted, I took note that there was no written feedback left for teachers in the moment. I did not question Principal Helen about this; however, in alignment to the themes that were revealed, walkthroughs determine the levels of instructional support needed. It was my assumption that Principal

Helen took mental notes of the things she observed during these walkthroughs and will determine, with the support of her instructional team, what supports to offer teachers. Also, although I did not witness Principal Helen leave written feedback, that is not to say it did not happen after my departure. At the conclusion of all walkthroughs, Principal Helen asked me for feedback that would assist her in her efforts to build teacher capacity. Principal Helen was interested in knowing what I would have written in feedback that was given to teachers if I were the principal of that school.

In my follow-up interview with Principal Helen, she shared many of the things that were shared in the initial interview. For clarity, I asked this building administrator what the top three instructional supports offered to her teachers were that yielded the greatest impact. Principal Helen shared that daily feedback, differentiated professional development, and data talks were the supports that yielded the greatest results. I left the observation with questions around how feedback was given by both the principal and the other instructional staff members who were responsible for giving teachers feedback about their instructional practices. Those responsible for giving teachers feedback within this building were the principal, the assistant principal, and the CF. I wondered if their methods for giving teachers feedback were the same or different, and the teachers' preferences in how they received feedback. These are all questions that came to me after the conclusion of the observation.

Given my lingering questions, I conducted a follow-up conversation with Principal Helen over the phone to get those burning questions answered. Principal Helen informed me that following my visit, over the course of 2 days she had face-to-face

conversations with the classroom teachers whose rooms we visited. Regarding methods for giving written feedback, she emphasized that she and her instructional leadership team (ILT) have specific foci when they conduct walkthroughs. For example, one week they may focus specifically on gradual release and how well teachers do or do not do this. Feedback is given on a universal form created by the ILT team at the beginning of the school year. Principal Helen shared that differentiated professional development in her school included teachers with particular strengths delivering content to their colleagues, or hosting half-day planning days for teachers to have an extending amount of planning time with their teammates. Finally, data days, explained by Principal Helen are days where:

> You look at data by sitting down and analyzing it with them. Sometimes I will get them to do different data analysis sheets for me so we can sit down and have conversations about what it is that they analyzed. The conversations we have through data require us to take our personal feelings out of it and just look at what the data says, so then we can decide which way we are going to go.

This response by Principal Helen and the strategies she mentions above coincide with the themes of teachers supporting teachers (Shared Leadership) and instructional supports vary in form. Principal Helen was aware that her teachers possess strengths that could potentially benefit other teachers in her building, and she also recognized that instructional support can look different across the board, but it has the same objective which is to build teacher professional capacity.

Principal Julia. Principal Julia is a first-year building administrator of a highly impacted high school, which many would consider to be in a rural area of the district.

Although the school day does not start for students until 8:45 am, Principal Julia arrives to the school daily at 7:30 am to begin the day. Principal Julia began the school day by greeting the front office staff, who were also there by 7:30 am, reviewed emails that are in her inbox, and created a to-do list for the day. At approximately 8:15 am, the school's data manager entered the office of the principal to discuss next year's projected enrollment and scheduling. Following this conversation, I tagged along with the building administrator as she circulated the building to engage in what I would call "putting out fires" and checking the progress of upcoming events for which the school had to prepare.

Principal Julia stopped by the cafeteria to ensure that the cafeteria staff was prepared to welcome students for breakfast, stopped by the teacher's lounge to ensure the coordination of substitutes, checked in with the counseling staff to discuss the process of registration being complete that week, and requested that a custodian take care of a rat that was in an empty classroom. Principal Julia also made sure that she touched base with her administrative team, School Resource Officer, and Dean of Students all before students entered the building.

After students entered the building, Principal Julia and I began to get into some classrooms by simply walking through. The ninth-grade assistant principal was out the day of my observation, so Principal Julia felt that it was necessary to get into all the ninth-grade classrooms to set a tone. We walked through all ninth-grade classrooms during the first block of instruction. Principal Julia was observed circulating the classroom, reminding students about having their phones out or having their hats on, and greeting teachers. Students whom Principal Julia spoke to immediately complied with her

requests, which led me to believe that positive rapport with students was something that was valued by this building administrator. Some of the ninth-grade classes that were visited were English I, Physical Science, Math I, and a CTE class. The two classes that we visited that stood out to me specifically were the regular Math I class and the honors Math I class. Although only in each class for about 8–10 minutes, I was hoping that I would see a clear distinction in the level of rigor between the two classes. In the regular Math I class, students were reviewing their responses from the morning warm-up activity. Students were constantly asked to refer to their notes they had written during previous class periods to explain their answers. Meanwhile, in the honors Math I class it was more of the same. It was call and response time for students based on an assignment the students had completed. What was different in this honors Math I class was how student work was displayed in the room. Principal Julia also provided me with insight about the two teachers and the math department in general that she thought would be helpful.

We also went into the rooms of teachers that were on planning to check in with them for the day. Principal Julia spoke with a teacher who she described as strong, specifically about her willingness to serve as a summer school teacher. This teacher was pleased and accepted the offer. By 10:00 am, Principal Julia and I had been into all ninth-grade classrooms. The building administrator informed me that at this point she would return to her office to check her email for any important correspondence that needed her attention. While en route to do this, we stopped to talk to maintenance department representatives about the work they were completing in the building that day. Following this conversation, the building administrator proceeded to check emails and voicemails. I

concluded my observation with the principal by observing Principal Julia and the administrative team conduct their daily hall sweep in between class change. During the hall sweep, students who are late to class report to the office of the Dean of Students. When students arrive to the office, they are greeted by members of the administrative team and the School Resource Officer who write them a pass to class and a warning that should they be late again, they will have time in in-school suspension.

Much like my observation experience with Principal Helen, building administrator Principal Julia was very much visible throughout the day by getting into a great number of classrooms. Being in classrooms conducting walkthroughs is important for the professional growth of teachers. Based on my experiences with Principal Julia, what I observed support the themes teachers of highly impacted schools have to know their principal cares, and walkthroughs determine the levels of instructional support needed. During our follow-up interview together, Principal Julia described the top three instructional supports of her school to be on-site coaching, lesson plan support, and teachers having a buddy teacher who had strengths in the areas they were weakest. Principal Julia shared with me some of the "outside of the box" approaches she and her team have used to make teachers, particularly new teachers and those new to the building, become comfortable. Principal Julia shared,

> So because we have so many BTs, we typically try to do a summer induction to staff in which I have a couple of veteran staff members come in, help them [new staff] find their room, help them find their content, help them find all their wiki spaces that they need, help them stock their classrooms, kind of get them settled in before the first day of school with assistance. Then we try to maintain that bond.

This approach to teacher support is one that is creative to the school and has proved to have benefits for the staff, according to Principal Julia. This creative approach also supports the theme of teachers supporting teachers in that new teachers have the opportunity to intentionally collaborate with more experienced teachers for the benefit of professional growth.

Summary of Observations

Having the opportunity to observe principals of highly impacted schools in their school setting allowed me a glimpse into the day-to-day functioning of a school. While I recognize highly impacted schools have unique characteristics, the principals whom I observed performed at high levels, in my opinion, regardless of the challenges their schools face. In the three visits to schools that I conducted, I observed in some form or fashion actions that connected back to all five themes that were revealed in the data from the initial and follow-up interviews. All three building leaders valued the importance of being present or visible in their schools, which is a clear indication of the theme that states, teachers of highly impacted schools have to know their principal cares (emotional support). Classroom visits that took place at two of the schools I visited support the theme of walkthroughs help principals determine the levels of instructional support needed. Overall, across the three observations that were conducted, I am confident I saw actions by all principals that related to the themes that were discovered in the study.

During my observation time with Principal Franklin, I noticed the following themes were very visible: Teachers of Highly Impacted Schools Must Know Their Leader Cares (emotional support), Environmental Supports Help Teachers Thrive in a

Highly Impacted Setting, and Instructional Supports Vary in Form. Principal Franklin's ability to provide emotional support to teachers was evident from the beginning of the observation. Principal Franklin displayed intentionality in providing emotional support to teachers and students by being present in the hallways greeting both teachers and students. He made each interaction with a student and teacher personal by commenting on something that happened the day before, or by simply mentioning something specific to that child or adult, thus displaying a sense of care. I found this to be commendable and beneficial to the teachers and students.

After transitioning into the time for PLCs, which were led by Principal Franklin, two themes were revealed in this setting—Environmental Supports Help Teachers Thrive in A Highly Impacted Setting, and Instructional Supports Vary in Form. The PLCs themselves were a form of instructional support. This was an opportunity to come together collectively and collaborate around teaching and learning. As the facilitator of this meeting, Principal Franklin put a different spin on it for teachers. This particular PLC was focused on how to complete the year on a high note. Principal Franklin solicited the feedback of teachers to determine what they needed to complete the school year, and teachers were eager to provide responses. This demonstrated that Principal Franklin also cared about the environmental supports teachers needed to successfully do their jobs through the end of the school year. Although the themes Teachers Supporting Teachers and Walkthroughs Determine the Levels of Instructional Support Needed were not evident during this opportunity to observe the principal, I believe these things do occur in

this building based on the actions that I was able to see and based on my conversations with this principal.

During the observation of Principal Helen, there were two of the themes that were most evident—Walkthroughs Determine the Levels of Instructional Support Needed and Environmental Supports Help Teachers Thrive in a Highly Impacted Setting. Upon my arrival and as I noted in the observation notes in Part II of this chapter, Principal Helen and I almost immediately began conducting walkthroughs when the school day began. Principal Helen took pride in getting into every classroom during that day. We spent a significant amount of time in each class to possibly conjure up recommendations for each teacher on how to improve their practices based on what was observed. The time spent in each room, and the number of walkthroughs completed was clear evidence of the theme, Walkthroughs Determine the Levels of Instructional Support Needed. As we walked through each room, I noted the plethora of technology and other tools teachers had that allowed them to effectively do their jobs. It was apparent to me that teachers had the materials they needed to appropriately respond to various student learning needs. When I asked Principal Helen about this, she shared the different partnerships that existed between her school and companies, and how she used funding to purchase particular items.

My observation and her response to my questions provide evidence of the theme, Environmental Supports Help Teachers Thrive in A Highly Impacted Setting. In the observation of Principal Helen, I did not see teachers supporting teachers, varied instructional supports, or emotional support, but this is not to say these things were not

occurring throughout the building. Responses from Principal Helen during the initial and follow up interviews revealed that these things happen in her building regularly, but were simply not observed during my time in the building.

In my observation of Principal Julia, two of the five themes were most evident: Walkthroughs Determine the Levels of Instructional Support Needed and Teachers of Highly Impacted Schools Must Know Their Leader Cares. Principal Julia spent a great deal of time within the classrooms and throughout the building simply being visible. I shadowed Principal Julia while she conducted her walkthroughs of all the ninth-grade classrooms. She interacted with students and individually greeted teachers if she was able. When we were not walking into classrooms for the sake of seeing instruction, Principal Julia would walk into the classrooms of teachers who were on planning to simply have conversations around various topics. These two actions on the part of Principal Julia reflect the themes: Walkthroughs Determine the Levels of Instructional Support Needed and Teachers of Highly Impacted Schools Must Know Their Leader Cares.

Throughout my visit, Principal Julia made it a point to be in the hallways when students were there. She engaged with all students and teachers, and checked in with her administrative team. At one point she was observed talking to the Athletic Director to discuss issues that were of concern to the Athletic Director. This conveyed to me a genuine sense of care on the part of Principal Julia. During our visits of the ninth-grade classrooms, we spent enough time in each room to leave feedback that would potentially support teacher growth. Principal Julia did not leave written feedback for teachers at the

time, but she later described the ideas she has regarding the instructional supports that are needed. In future observations that I conduct with principals, I will be sure to get more clarity on written feedback practices and when teachers receive those. Much like my observation with Principal Helen, I did not see teachers supporting teachers, environmental supports, or various instructional supports, but Principal Julia did speak to those things in her initial and follow-up interviews. During my observations, I recognized that not all the themes would be seen simultaneously. That does not necessarily mean that teachers are not receiving the supports they need to build their professional capacity if the things are not all happening for them at one time. I believe some teachers may not need all those things needed for support, whereas other teachers may.

Summary of Chapter

While there are many practices and strategies that principals can use to build the professional capacity of teachers, teachers supporting teachers, teachers knowing their administrator cares, conducting walkthroughs, instructional supports, and environmental supports appear to be the most prominent practices and strategies of principals serving in highly impacted schools that emerged from the study. In Chapter IV, I have provided readers with the evidence for each theme. I have also provided thorough descriptions of what I observed while I shadowed principals who serve in highly impacted schools. I connected the actions of three principals to the five themes that emerged from the initial interviews.

In Chapter V, I present conclusions drawn from the study and how it relates to the established literature in Chapter II. Readers are reminded of the research questions of the

study, and I also provide implications and recommendations based on the findings of the study. I conclude the chapter by revealing how my career role changed while completing this study and the impact the study has had on the change of my position.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Research consistently suggests that highly impacted schools face more challenges than schools that do not have similar challenging characteristics (Parrett & Budge, 2012). To combat the myriad of issues that exist in highly impacted schools, the principal must utilize intentional strategies that would propel the schools forward in an effort to defy the odds. Some of the issues that exist in highly impacted schools include high teacher turnover, low student performance, high minority population, and high poverty (Okilwa & Barnett, 2017). In addition to properly addressing these issues, building level administrators must also ensure they are developing the professional capacity of the teachers in their building.

In this study, I interviewed the principals of 11 highly impacted schools to fully understand some of the typical practices and strategies they use to provide support to teachers. After conducting initial interviews with 11 principals, I observed three of those principals in their school setting. I also conducted follow-up interviews with those three specific principals with the purpose of understanding how they specifically provided strategic instructional support for their teachers. The goal of this study was to identify key practices and strategies used by principals of highly impacted schools to grow professional capacity within teachers. In my current role as school administrator, I have only served in schools that were identified as highly impacted. I find that I am often

seeking ways to grow my teachers in hopes of making them more instructionally sound, and overall better classroom teachers. I do not always have the right answers; therefore, this study allowed me to interact with principals of schools similar to those in which I have worked, with the similar responsibility of growing teachers for the betterment of students.

Through this study I developed a deeper understanding of practices used by principals of highly impacted schools. I analyzed the data gathered from the interviews and observations via coding; I did so in order to identify themes that would help me answer the research questions. The analysis of the data collected and the review of the literature allowed for a deeper understanding of what is required to build teacher professional capacity. I have found that there are various supports afforded to teachers in hopes of improving their practice and building their professional capacity. In this chapter I will begin by answering the research questions and analyzing the findings by referencing existing literature. I will then offer conclusions, implications, and recommendations based upon what I have learned from conducting the study.

Research Questions

The study centered around my primary question, which simply sought to understand how building level administrators of highly impacted schools support teachers. In the secondary question, I more specifically wished to delve deeper into instructional supports that teachers are provided. My primary research question and secondary question are:

1. How are principals in highly impacted schools supporting teachers?
    a. Specifically, how do principals of highly impacted schools build teacher capacity through strategic instructional supports?

Primary Research Question

How are principals in highly impacted schools supporting teachers?

The idea of supporting teachers can be very subjective. My primary research question was intentionally broad in an effort to encourage principals of highly impacted schools to really think about how they support teachers. In my conversations with building level administrators, I discovered that after simply asking the principals, "How do you support teachers?" they began to talk at length about the various supports they offer. Across my 11 initial interviews and observations of principals, I recognized there were five main themes in the responses that were given and actions observed. The five themes were Teachers Supporting Teachers (Shared Leadership), Teachers of Highly Impacted Schools Must Know Their Leader Cares, Walkthroughs Help Principals Determine the Levels of Instructional Support Needed, Instructional Supports Vary in Form, and Environmental Supports Help Teachers Thrive in a Highly Impacted Setting. I describe each of the themes in greater detail.

Teachers Supporting Teachers

Principals overwhelmingly felt that teachers should support each other in helping build their professional capacity. The principals of the selected highly impacted schools expressed that it was important to determine the strengths in others so that those individuals could then help develop others. This idea of teachers supporting teachers can

easily be defined as shared leadership. Shared leadership is the extent to which leadership influence is distributed across the members of a collective as opposed to leadership remaining centralized within one powerful figure (Carson, Tesluk, & Marrone, 2007). Principals who coach their teachers into having this type of influence demonstrates their ability to release, and have others share in the efforts to grow teachers (Kalinovich & Marrone, 2017). Nine of the 11 principals who were interviewed conveyed to me that they needed the support of others to run the school, specifically that of supporting teachers. The principals explained that they are not the only experts in the building; therefore, getting the help of those who have strengths would be essential in building teacher capacity. During my interview with Principal Alberta, she stated,

> I realize I cannot do it all, it is a massive job, and so I find people's strengths and I try to maximize that as far as giving them different things that they can lead up. Giving them responsibilities that go along with their gifts and their talents. There's people in the building that are smarter than me, that are more talented than me, and I need to put them in positions where those talents can come to the forefront and they can help the school and help me.

Principals reported that teachers can support each other in various ways. For instance, principals asked leaders among the teachers to go into classrooms, observe, and leave their colleagues with feedback about their instructional practices, student engagement, lesson plan quality, and a host of other things specific to the needs of that teacher. Additionally, principals facilitated having teachers who require extra support to visit the classrooms of the teacher leaders to observe their practices in hopes of learning things that could be replicated in their classrooms. Principal Helen explained, "I have teachers, some who are good at some things, of course some who are good at other

things. So I pair them and let them support each other." Building administrators also provided teacher leaders with opportunities to lead professional learning opportunities for teachers within the building. In addition, principals understood mentors to be essential. Mentor-mentee relationships are powerful and required for beginning teachers. However, several of the principals stressed the significance of an informal mentor-mentee relationship where teachers, regardless of their tenure status, had someone whom they spoke to and engaged with often about teaching and learning. Principals also shared that these informal relationships more often than not improved the cultural and collaborative spirit that existed in their building.

Emotional Support

For individuals to truly serve others, they must be whole persons themselves. Serving in a highly impacted school comes with some additional challenges and headaches that other teachers may not feel in schools not considered to be highly impacted. Principals in this study recognize that teachers and staff in their buildings require more time and attention to truly be successful. Emotional support, such as attentive listening, sympathy, and expressions of affection, has the capacity to relieve stress (MacGeorge et al., 2005). Knowing this, principals described putting intentional effort towards providing their teachers with this type of much-needed support. Most of the principals suggested that emotional support, in a highly impacted school, is most important in building the professional capacity of a teacher. Much like teacher-student relationships, principals felt it was important that they get to know their teachers through

relationship building and non-academic conversations before they progressed into their role as supervisor and evaluator.

Existing research suggests that teachers leave the profession early because of the existing demands of their work (McKay, 2016); therefore, it is crucial that building level administrators address the demands that exist, while providing teachers with the needed emotional support. If teachers do not receive relief from the challenges that exist in a highly impacted school, it can lead to teacher burnout. Building level administrators must seek to understand the experiences of teachers, support them by sharing their own experiences, and provide the necessary support to help teachers overcome their challenges (Finnigan, 2012).

The topic of trust also came up in conversation quite frequently when talking to the principal participants in this study. Principals explained that teachers have to trust that their administrators have their best interests at heart. Principals in this study described what they do to establish trust in their building. Maintaining an open-door policy where teachers can come and discuss topics freely with the principal was one way to establish trust and rapport among teachers and their administrators. They also discussed the importance of not showing favoritism toward certain teachers. It is crucial, according to the building administrators of this study, that teachers be treated equally and that their levels of support are differentiated based on teacher need. Once trust is established, the confidence one holds in the intentions and capacity of the other person to fulfill one's expectations results in feeling a greater sense of ease in the interdependence and a willingness to take risks (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). In the effort to get teachers

to do their best work within highly impacted schools, trust is key. Without trust, the effectiveness of the organization is compromised.

Emotional support also involves celebrating teachers and celebrating them as often as you can. One might say that it is important to celebrate the small wins. Principals described ways to celebrate teachers by recognizing their birthdays, recognizing academic achievements in their personal lives such as graduating from graduate school or furthering their education in other ways, highlighting instructional practices observed in the classroom, and celebrating baby arrivals and marriages. Expressions of affection like the examples given above have the capacity to relieve stress (MacGeorge et al., 2005). Celebrating teachers in simple yet significant ways can lessen the pressure of what they experience in highly impacted schools on a daily basis. Just knowing your administration cares about your emotional well-being is enough to make an individual feel better.

The Power of Walkthroughs

The building level administrators of this study frequently spoke of visibility. They communicated that in order to truly support teachers in building their professional capacity, principals had to be visible in their classrooms to gauge the type of support that is necessary. Principals explained that it would be difficult to support a teacher if you did not observe them on a consistent basis by conducting classroom walkthroughs. All 11 of the principals I interviewed discussed the importance of being visible throughout the building. They also discussed how they utilized their instructional leadership team (i.e., assistant principals, curriculum facilitator, literacy/math coaches) to also be in classrooms to conduct walkthroughs. The ways in which they conducted the walkthroughs may have

been different, but they all led to the same results—they were used to determine the type of instructional support teachers needed.

Walkthrough schedules, according to the principals, should be created to ensure that all teachers have the opportunity to see you in their classroom. While the principals recognize that the day-to-day of running a school may get in the way of completing all walkthroughs on the schedule, having a schedule allows for you to have something to stick to as much as possible and sets the tone for your day. Conducting walkthroughs on a consistent basis also gives you leverage with completing teacher's formal observations and evaluations with regard to providing them feedback on their instructional practices because you would have spent a significant amount of time in classrooms (Lochmiller, 2016). The pressure exists to raise achievement in all schools. Therefore, principals of highly impacted schools must make sure they are in classrooms daily to support teachers in increasing their skill set. Of the three observations that I conducted in this study, the bulk of my time spent with two of the principals was spent in classrooms conducting walkthroughs, which speaks to the value they placed on this practice. Principal Christy described how she supports teachers by conducting walkthroughs. She explained, "I spend a lot of hands-on time in the classroom with them [teachers]. I will spend a day in one teacher's room just to see what they need help with." This speaks volumes to the dedication of this particular principal.

Instructional Support

Teachers are the number one contributing factor to student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Cosner & Jones, 2016). Building administrators in highly impacted

schools must ensure that teachers receive the instructional support required to, in turn, ensure that students receive the quality education they deserve. In my initial interviews with the 11 principals, I discovered that these principals had various strategies they felt were effective instructional supports. In addition to helping principals identify the needs of teachers, walkthroughs allow administrators to leave valuable feedback to teachers regarding their instructional practices. All the principals were in consensus that administrators must leave teachers with written feedback that praises teachers for practices that are done well, but also feedback that would improve their less desirable practices. The amount of time school administrators spend on teacher evaluation, coaching teachers about their practice, and organizing the school's instructional program is positively associated with student achievement gains (Grissom & Loeb, 2011). Ensuring that teachers receive feedback on a consistent basis would have powerful impact on student learning and the improvement of teacher practices.

Principals in the study also spoke at length about the importance of professional development. Methods of executing professional development within their buildings varied in that some building administrators relied heavily on conducting in-house professional development utilizing the people in their building, while other principals paid to send teachers to professional learning opportunities outside of the building, and still others relied on support offered by the district. Regardless of the method used, professional development still serves the purpose of building teacher professional capacity, equipping them with tools and strategies that could be used in the classroom for the benefit of teaching and learning. Professional development consists of any activity

that directly affects the attitudes, collaboration, knowledge levels, skills, and practices of individuals that will assist them in performing their roles (Robbins & Alvy, 2009). Many of the principals preferred the in-house professional development due to their trust in their own people. If a staff member delivered content or strategies in which they exhibited particular expertise, the building administrators were confident that the teachers' other colleagues would be more receptive to the information presented. Additionally, the study principals stressed the importance of teachers having input in the type of professional development they receive. Teachers must have a voice in the professional development received in hopes of building school capacity (Patton et al., 2015). I believe this will lead to teachers being more invested and participatory in the professional learning opportunities they receive.

The principals in the study also spoke in depth about professional learning communities (PLCs) and what they are intended to do. PLCs focus on engaging teachers in ongoing professional dialogue and examination of student work as members learn with and from each other over time (Adams & Vescio, 2015). This professional learning environment becomes even more powerful knowing that research results have provided evidence of the potential contribution that PLCs can make to enhance school outcomes (Benoliel & Schechter, 2017). The building administrators spoke candidly about how they structure PLCs and the key players involved in the process. Individuals involved include the teachers of the particular grade level or content area, administration, instructional lead team members, and any district coaches or support persons should they be available to attend. The building administrators discussed the importance of having an

agenda for the PLC and having members of the grade level or content area take on roles such as minute/note taker and timekeeper. Assigned roles ensure that all persons involved remain on task and that progress made in the PLC is properly documented.

PLCs are also wonderful opportunities to promote growth. During the PLC there should be opportunities for instructional strategies to be shared by the experts and by the teachers who display strength in a particular area. Allowing teachers to share strategies among their colleagues also allowed for the development of teacher leadership. The principals in this study suggest that allowing teachers to present in PLCs also establishes a sense of trust between teacher and administrator; the teacher will feel as though their administrator trusts their professional abilities. Since trust reduces uncertainty and predisposes people to cooperate, principals need to build and maintain trusting relationships among PLC members so as to increase the formation of strong social ties among teachers with different personality tendencies toward improved knowledge sharing (Benoliel & Schechter, 2017). Data analysis is also a focus of PLCs. Protocols and structures must be in place for teachers to properly analyze student data, which will drive the conversations about instructional planning. These conversations should lead to the unpacking of curriculum standards for better understanding and to the development of future lesson plans. Although PLCs can seem all encompassing, they are believed by the building administrators in the study to be necessary.

Although there may be additional instructional supports that exist in different schools, the ones described here are those that principals of highly impacted schools tend to utilize most. If executed effectively, instructional feedback, professional development,

and PLCs can grow the professional capacity of teachers in highly impacted settings greatly, according to those principals who were interviewed. Much like any strategy, these supports must be implemented correctly and consistently in hopes of having a meaningful impact on those for whom it is intended.

Environmental Support

My initial interviews with building administrators of highly impacted schools revealed many things regarding environmental support. Environmental support means different things to different people. Overall, I was able to conclude these principals felt building structure and safety, availability of resources, community interaction, and school culture and climate constituted what it meant to provide environmental support. The unique personalities of the principals would determine how they went about doing these different things. Specifically regarding school structure and safety, the principals in this study spoke about the significance of ensuring that the school was clean, and that there were structures and protocols in place for safety and maintaining order. All the principals agreed that, as established in existing research, maintaining order and discipline is crucial to ensure teaching and learning occurs (McKay, 2016). Establishing the school-wide expectations and modeling those early will yield better results than doing those things later. Expectations for school order and safety procedures must be clear and practiced often to ensure compliance and offer clarity for those who need it.

In order for teachers to perform their duties as outlined to them by the state, district, and school, they must have the supplies and materials to do so. Principals in this study expressed having the ability to supply teachers with what they need to make

teaching and learning happen. When teachers feel as if they have what they need to do their job, they are happier thus generating a positive culture and climate. Community interaction, according to the principals, speaks to the support received from the parents, community members, and other stakeholders connected to the school. If these stakeholders believe in the vision and mission of the school, or in other words support what the school is doing for children, teachers and staff of the school tend to also feel as though they are a part of the community as a whole. Overall, when teachers feel they work in the midst of a positive environment, building administrators are more likely to retain those teachers (Hughes et al., 2015).

Secondary Research Question

Specifically, how do principals of highly impacted schools build teacher capacity through strategic instructional supports?

All of the building administrators in the study shared their practices and strategies for providing teachers with instructional supports. I addition, the 3 building administrators whom I selected to observe and conduct follow-up interviews with described, in concert with the established research, that focusing on instructional support for teachers was an essential part of their role (Cosner & Jones, 2016). Much like the responses provided to me in the initial interviews, the principals in the follow-up interviews went deeper in their responses as they described their instructional supports. In my follow-up interviews regarding strategic instructional supports these building administrators reiterated the value of PLCs, instructional feedback, and professional development, all of which were common talking points during the initial interviews.

Having an awareness of the importance of these approaches, in my opinion, is the first step in building teacher professional capacity. Regarding PLCs, each principal spoke eloquently about the processes they have in place and how they monitor the effectiveness of PLCs. Principals play a crucial role in the process of transforming schools into learning communities by forming the structural and cultural conditions for continuous learning among school members (Szczesiul & Huizenga, 2014). When principals are truly invested in this crucial role, PLCs can become a catalyst towards overall school change.

Regarding instructional feedback and professional development, the principals who were observed explained how important it is for them to be aware of the standards teachers are responsible to teach. During my observation of Principal Julia, she stated to me, "You cannot grow what you yourself do not know." This was a powerful statement. I interpreted this to mean that building administrators must engage in self-study of the curriculum standards so they can effectively support their teachers as the instructional leader. Knowing the standards also allows the principal to determine what professional development may be required for teachers. Researchers believe that principals are expected to understand the tenets of quality instruction as well as have sufficient knowledge of the curriculum to know that appropriate content is being delivered to all students (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). Without this knowledge of the curriculum, instructional delivery could potentially be off pace and off subject, which would represent a disservice to students and teachers. One would say that building principal capacity is also important, especially those who serve in highly impacted schools.

Revised Conceptual Framework

In Chapter II, I introduced my Conceptual Framework, which was derived from my review of the literature. This initial conceptual framework represented the consistent trends that existed across the literature as they relate to building teachers' professional capacity. The framework relied on a relationship graphic that illustrates how the different components are used independently of each other. However, when the school leader uses the different components simultaneously they have the power to build the capacity of a teacher who has the potential to experience success in a school. I revisit the conceptual framework as depicted in Figure 2.

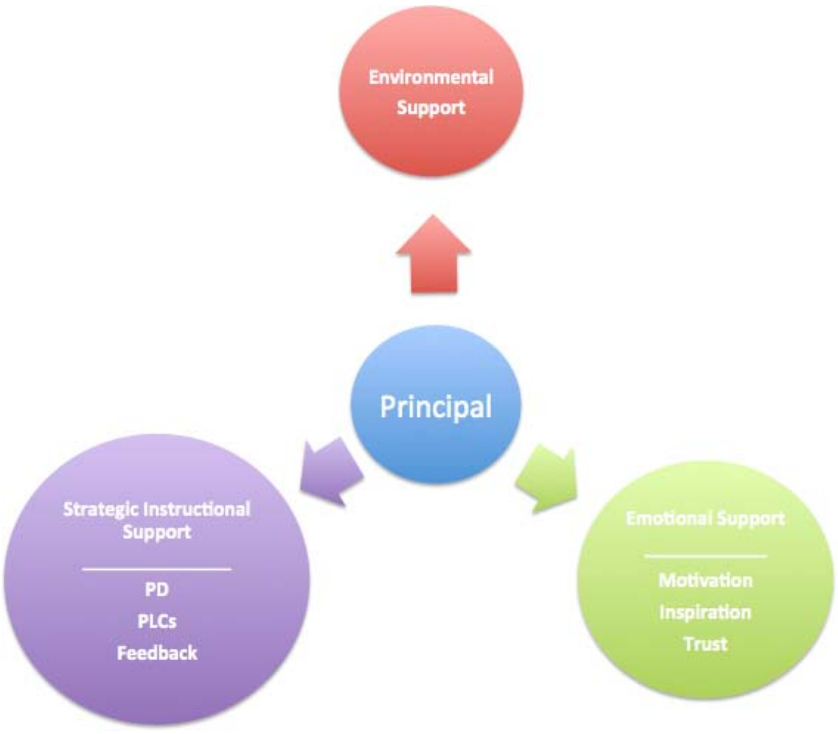

Figure 2. Conceptual Framework "Building Teacher Capacity" Revisited.

After I completed my research, I revisited my initial conceptual framework. For the most part, the data I gathered through my interviews and observations supported the basic structure of my original conceptual framework. However, the research revealed two additional components that were essential to building the capacity of a teacher serving in a highly impacted school. First, principals should spend a significant amount of time conducting walkthroughs in classrooms to determine what those strategic instructional supports will be. Second, teachers must be encouraged to support teachers. Therefore, a revised conceptual framework is depicted in Figure 3 to include the addition of these very important components. The revised conceptual framework is a hierarchy diagram, which illustrates the importance of the building administrator and what supports are needed to build teacher capacity.

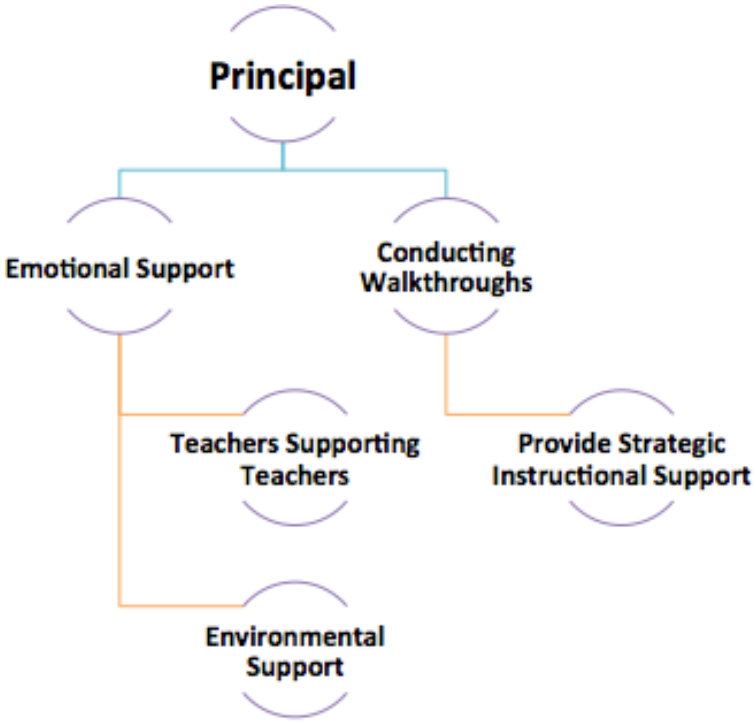

Figure 3. Revised Conceptual Framework "Building Teacher Capacity."

Implications

What I Learned from the Study

Conducting this study allowed me to open my eyes to many things. Throughout my years as an educator, I have been fond of highly impacted schools. I have always embraced them as learning institutions where I could potentially have the greatest positive effect on students. My passion for highly impacted schools led to my wanting to know more about how to grow teachers who also have a passion for serving in those settings. The building administrators with whom I had the pleasure of interacting to complete this study shone light on many practices that I know to be effective; however, they also allowed insight into how they do these things, particularly in their schools. In the established literature, research reveals that teachers serving in highly impacted schools require instructional, emotional, and environmental support in hopes of experiencing success (Kraft et al., 2015). Each principal from my study allowed me to understand how he or she offers these supports in their schools. While each strategy or practice was unique to each principal, I learned a multitude of different strategies and approaches that I could potentially use in my school setting.

My observations of the three different principals allowed me a ringside view of what principals felt were important. Although they spoke a lot about instructional support, I quickly discovered that visibility and taking care of people were most important. Prior to this study, I was well aware that serving in any capacity in a highly impacted school takes significant hard work. Working in a highly impacted school requires a particular type of work ethic and dedication. It requires you to stay abreast of

best instructional practices to better serve students. After having learned and perfected those best instructional practices, it is possible for one to become a teacher leader and support others.

Due to the challenges that exist in schools such as these, emotional support is a great necessity. Principals must get to know teachers both personally and professionally, and provide them with the emotional support that would fuel them to be capable of serving students as healthy and happy adults. The role of principal in a highly impacted school is a tremendous task, but one that I am capable of accomplishing now that I have gained insight into the professional lives of the 11 building administrators with whom I worked.

What the Participating Principals Learned from the Study

In the study I believe that the principals learned more than ever before that there is value in the work they do. Without revealing too much, I shared with principals when their responses were similar to those that I had heard already. This is confirmation for them in many ways that, "I am doing something right!" These building administrators now know, if they did not already, that there are scholars and educators such as myself who aspire to lead schools much like theirs, but to do so with proven strategies and practices that have been successful in their schools and that have yielded a greater impact on student achievement. I believe the principals in this study will delve deeper into the themes that were revealed in this study once those themes are shared with them. They may be able to gain some takeaways from findings discussed in this study that may not

have been ways in which they led their schools, but could potentially yield positive results.

What the District Could Learn from the Study

I hope the study district would take away from this study that there are great things occurring in highly impacted schools. Principals are working hard to meet the needs of teachers and students based on the challenges that exist. Due to instructional, emotional, and environmental supports being the primary supports needed by teachers, it would be beneficial for principals to sit down with district level leaders to discuss collaborative efforts to support teachers. Building administrators cannot do it alone. Building administrators of highly impacted schools are often required to do more with less, but with the support of the district the possibilities are endless.

Principals of highly impacted schools are often thinking about the ways in which they can build the professional capacity of the teachers in their buildings. District and central office staff should be thinking of ways to build the professional capacity of the building administrators who lead these schools. I hope that this study will be a catalyst to get conversations started about how to grow the leaders of highly impacted schools; however, I think such a change would start by principals being transparent about the support they need to lead their schools.

Recommendations and Next Steps

This basic qualitative research study aimed to answer the question, “What are the practices and strategies used by principals of highly impacted schools to build the professional capacity of teachers?” From the research, interviews, and observations, I

collected some noteworthy information. The following recommendations can be made from the findings:

- Principals must solicit the support of teachers with particular strengths in an effort to build the professional capacity of other teachers, thus creating teacher leaders.
    - Teacher leaders conduct peer observations and provide feedback.
    - Teacher leaders lead professional learning opportunities within the school.
- Principals must be intentional in demonstrating they care about their teachers. This includes being visible, allowing teachers to come talk to you without fear, caring about teachers as people first (as opposed to simply an employee), and showing empathy.
    - Principals engage in ‘small talk’ to build level of comfort among teachers and build relationships.
    - Principals make rounds moving throughout the building to be seen by both teachers and students.
- Principals and their designees must be in classrooms daily observing and/or conducting walkthroughs to determine the level of instructional support teachers need.
    - Principals conduct walkthroughs and leave timely feedback that would improve teacher practice.

- Principals must recognize there are many different ways to support a teacher instructionally. These supports must be known and used appropriately in hopes of growing each teacher in the building.
    - Principals engage in self-study of various instructional practices that might best support teachers.

The principal participants of this study provide valuable information that supports the recommendations that I have made in this section. Principal Alberta shared,

> I find people's strengths and I try to maximize that as far as giving them different things that they can lead up. Giving them responsibilities that go along with their gifts and their talents. There's people in the building that are smarter than me, that are more talented than me, and I need to put them in positions where those talents can come to the forefront and they can help the school and help me.

Principal Franklin seeks similar help and support from the individuals in his building as well to grow the teachers in his school. He explained,

> I am one who believes in delegating. I am the one who believes in finding the greatness in others, and building that in them, giving them opportunities to lead in different capacities, whether it is my assistant principals or my teacher leaders in the building.

These examples from Principals Alberta and Franklin align with the first recommendation and demonstrate how you can value someone and their abilities, but use their distinct abilities to support others in your building.

The second recommendation is all about principals and their demonstration of care. Leaders in schools that are highly impacted must be intentional about demonstrating a caring approach, as highly impacted schools are often tougher environments.

Oftentimes teachers just want to simply know that their leader is in the "trenches" with them. My observation data revealed that the principals I observed valued being visible by their teachers, students and staff. During my interview with Principal Gloria she stated, "I think building relationships is very important." Many, if not all, of the other principals that I interviewed during this study shared the same thoughts. Principals shared that establishing relationships assist with gaining the trust of teachers. Principal Helen stated, "People work better for you if they like you. People work better for you if they trust you; people will go the extra mile and do things for you. They'll do anything you ask if they know there is some mutual respect and trust there."

Regarding the third recommendation, it is essential that leaders and/or their designees be in classrooms everyday observing instruction in order to offer support. Principal Isaac stated, "One of the things that we really push for in terms of administration is getting into classrooms every day." Much like the principals that I observed, principals in highly impacted schools must be in the classrooms of their teachers in hopes of offering specific support on how to help individual teachers. Principal Diane shared, "I do walkthroughs by giving them glows and grows. I am able to give them a strategy or some tools to support them growing." Conducting walkthroughs and being in classrooms allows principals the opportunity to provide support specific to each teacher because they recognize that support looks different for everyone.

The last recommendation, simply stated, is that principals must recognize there are different ways to support teachers instructionally. The research revealed that there are various strategic instructional supports such as PLCs, professional development, and

instructional feedback. Principal Isaac explained, “We give a whole lot of feedback. We are in Professional Learning Communities. We are in planning sessions. We pay for planning sessions. We pay for professional development. We are just a part of the instructional life with our staff.” This statement by Principal Isaac is indicative of what it means to provide various instructional supports, but also being a part of those supports as an administrative team. In my opinion, being a part of what he calls the “instructional life” demonstrates to teachers what you value as a building leader.

Conclusion: My New Role

After completing the data collection process and beginning the writing of Chapter IV, positions within my district came available for building level administrator at various schools. Over the years, I have been encouraged by many individuals to place my name in the pool for a principalship as they felt I was ready and deserving of an opportunity to lead a school. I had resisted the peer pressure of applying to any principal positions due to my desire to complete my dissertation study without any other distractions. However, when I received the information about the principal positions that had become available, one particular school in general caught my attention. As one might guess, it was a highly impacted school! As mentioned previously, I have a passion to work in or simply serve schools that have challenges that others may deem as difficult. These tend to be environments where I thrive. Needless to say, I took a chance and applied for one particular school where the Free and Reduced Lunch percentage was 100%, and the demographic breakdown was 68% African American, 24% Hispanic, 3% White, and 4%

Asian and other. Turnover in the recent years were at an all-time high. However, these traits are what attracted me to the school.

After continued research and interviews with stakeholders of the school, I was fortunate to be named the principal of this highly impacted school. Since being named principal, I have been ecstatic about the opportunity to lead! The opportunities I have had to interact with principals who have led highly impacted schools for a length of time have given me the motivation and the drive I need to lead a school of my own. The data revealed through my interviews and observations of building administrators have been engrained in me, which will direct my path in how I provide support to my teachers in an effort to build their professional capacity. The data revealed five main themes regarding how principals support teachers in highly impacted schools: Teachers Supporting Teachers (Shared Leadership), Teachers of Highly Impacted Schools Must Know Their Leader Cares, Walkthroughs Determine the Levels of Instructional Support Needed, Instructional Supports Vary in Form, and Environmental Supports Help Teachers Thrive in a Highly Impacted Setting. Knowing this, I have a great basis on which to start my first year as a principal.

The execution of this study has allowed me to delve deeply into my passions in the field of education, while also preparing me for the position that in hindsight I did not know would be mine. I am overjoyed about the opportunity to lead and to do so in a highly impacted school. I recognize that teachers are the number one contributing factor to student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000), and it is up to me as the leader to build their professional capacity to ensure that students in my building experience

success. I realize that challenges may plague my school, but I am determined to persevere and do whatever is within my power to ensure that quality teaching and learning take place in my building.

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APPENDIX A

SAMPLE RECRUITMENT EMAIL

THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA
GREENSBORO

Sample Recruitment Email

Greetings!

My name is Chelsea Smith and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. I am conducting a research study on principals who serve in highly impacted schools and how they address the professional capacity of teachers that serve in their schools. I am emailing to ask if you would be willing to participate in my study through an interview about your current role. If you select to participate, you will be asked to engage in at least one 1-hour interview. Some participants will be asked to participate in a 1-hour follow-up interview, and asked to allow me as principal investigator to observe them in their school setting. Your name and any other identifiable information will be requested as part of your participation, but the information will remain confidential.

Participation is completely voluntary. If you are willing to participate, or would like additional information prior to making a decision, please reply to this email. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Chelsea S. Smith
Doctoral Candidate
University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Approved IRB
2/1/18

APPENDIX B

IRB APPROVED ADULT CONSENT

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO

CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT

Project Title: HOW PRINCIPALS OF HIGHLY IMPACTED SCHOOLS ARE GETTING IT DONE? : PRACTICES FOR BUILDING TEACHER CAPACITY IN HIGHLY IMPACTED SCHOOLS

Principal Investigator and Faculty Advisor: Chelsea S. Smith (PI) & Dr. Craig Peck (FA)

Participant's Name: _____

What are some general things you should know about research studies?
You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in the study is voluntary. You may choose not to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. There may not be any direct benefit to you for being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies. If you choose not to be in the study or leave the study before it is done, it will not affect your relationship with the researcher or the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.
Details about this study are discussed in this consent form. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study.

You will be given a copy of this consent form. If you have any questions about this study at any time, you should ask the researchers named in this consent form. Their contact information is below.

What is the study about?
This is a research project. Your participation is voluntary. Through my study I seek to understand how principals of highly impacted schools build the professional capacity of their teachers to ensure student achievement is raised. I hope to identify strategies used by principals to address the professional capacity of teachers who serve in their schools.

Why are you asking me?
You are being asked to participate because you are a school administrator who serves in a school that is highly impacted by high poverty, high minority population, which are characteristics of highly impacted schools.

What will you ask me to do if I agree to be in the study?
Participants will be asked to engage in at least one 1-hour interview. Some participants will be asked to participate in a 1-hour follow-up interview, and asked to allow me as principal investigator to observe them in their school setting.

Is there any audio/video recording?

Approved IRB
2/1/18

Audio recording will be used during interviews. Because your voice will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears the recording, your confidentiality for things you say on the recording cannot be guaranteed although the researcher will try to limit access to the recording as described below.

The identity of each participant will be kept confidential by the use of pseudonyms, along with interview recordings, transcriptions, and responses being saved and secured on password-protected computer. Once all data is stored for the appropriate amount of time, all data will be discarded to assure confidentiality.

What are the risks to me?
The Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro has determined that participation in this study poses minimal risk to participants. If you have questions, want more information or have suggestions, please contact Chelsea Smith (principal investigator) at cssmith6@uncg.edu or Dr. Craig Peck (faculty advisor) at c_peck@uncg.edu

If you have any concerns about your rights, how you are being treated, concerns or complaints about this project or benefits or risks associated with being in this study please contact the Office of Research Integrity at UNCG toll-free at (855)-251-2351.

Are there any benefits to society as a result of me taking part in this research?
I hope that my study may add to the existing body of literature that exists around highly impacted school principals and how they address teacher professional capacity.

Are there any benefits to *me* for taking part in this research study?
Participants in this study may benefit from the opportunity to reflect on their current role as a principal in their respective schools. Participants could potentially gain and share strategies that future leaders of schools similar to theirs may glean from after reading my study.

Will I get paid for being in the study? Will it cost me anything?
There are no costs to you or payments made for participating in this study.

How will you keep my information confidential?
All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. To maintain confidentiality, all interview recordings and responses, and transcriptions will be secured in an electronic cloud, UNCG Box. Also, all participants will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. I will create a master list linking the participants' names to a pseudonym, but this master list will be keep in a locked file cabinet only accessing by keys off of UNCG's campus. All data will be discarded after stored for the appropriate length of time.

What if I want to leave the study?
You have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw at any time, without penalty. If you do withdraw, it will not affect you in any way. If you choose to withdraw, you may request that any of your data which has been collected be destroyed unless it is in a de-identifiable state. The investigators also have the right to stop your participation at any time. This could be because

you have had an unexpected reaction, or have failed to follow instructions, or because the entire study has been stopped.

What about new information/changes in the study?
If significant new information relating to the study becomes available which may relate to your willingness to continue to participate, this information will be provided to you.

Voluntary Consent by Participant:
By signing this consent form you are agreeing that you read, or it has been read to you, and you fully understand the contents of this document and are openly willing consent to take part in this study. All of your questions concerning this study have been answered. By signing this form, you are agreeing that you are 18 years of age or older and are agreeing to participate, in this study described to you by Chelsea S. Smith.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Approved IRB
2/1/18

APPENDIX C

INITIAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Background

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. How did you become interested in becoming a school principal?
3. What drew you to become the principal of _____ Elementary/Middle/High School?
4. How would you describe your leadership style?
5. In your opinion, how would you define highly impacted?
6. Would you define your school as highly impacted? Why?
7. What makes your school unique and why?

Supporting Teachers

8. How do you support teachers?
9. From your perspective, what does it mean to build the professional capacity of a teacher?
10. What are typical practices you use to determine the professional development needs of teachers?
11. What do you find to be the most used practices or strategies to build teacher professional capacity within your school?
12. In addition to the most used pratices discussed in the previous question, what practices do you personally find to be most beneficial to the professional growth of teachers?
13. Do your teachers have a voice in the learning opportunities they receive?
14. Do you solicit the feedback from teachers following professional development? If so, how do you go about doing this? Does this feedback inform your practices?

15. In my review the existing literature, teachers require emotional, environmental, and instructional support to be successful? What do those components mean to you?

16. Does motivation, inspiration and trust play a part in increasing the professional capacity of teachers serving in your building? If so, how?

17. In your opinion, what is the impact on students when their teachers increase their professional capacity?

18. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

APPENDIX D

FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR SCHOOL PRINCIPALS I OBSERVED

1. Are there any special contexts that I should be aware of about your school now that I have observed you in your school's setting?

2. What is your student demographic breakdown? Free & reduced lunch percentage?

3. How often does your staff meet as a whole staff? PLCs? Departments?

4. Do you solicit the feedback from teachers following learning opportunities provided to them? If so, how do you go about doing this?

5. What instructional supports do you provide your teachers?

6. What impact has Professional Learning Communities had on the instructional practices in your building?

7. Are there any other strategies that you employ to build the professional capacity of your teachers that you may not have shared already? What are they?

8. Do you have an instructional team? If so, how do they aid in building the capacity of your teachers?

9. How do you monitor if your teachers utilize the instructional supports afforded to them?

10. If teachers do not grow in their instructional practices, what are your next steps?

11. What is your vision for your school in the next five years?

APPENDIX E

OBSERVATION TOOL

Observation Tool

Date: _____

Time	See	Wonder/Think	Reflect/Analysis